



### LIFE ON THE GREAT ST. BERNARD.

If I could be a summer monk, and change my vows, like my clothes, with the winter, I know no fraternity that offers stronger temptations than the Augustins of the Saint Bernard on the Alps. To escape the bustle of the world, yet be in the world; to have moving before our eyes an easy succession of society—a constant living phantasmagoria, often highly piquant, and always amusing; to indulge in literature, without the toils of authorship, the teasing of dilettanti, or the agonies of exulting criticism; to ramble over a sunclad kingdom of mountains, with the kingdom undisputed, among all the royal and heroic strugglers for a grave ten thousand feet below; to "sit on rocks, and muse o'er flood and fell;" to turn painter, poet, pilgrim, and dreamer, at one's own discretion, and without having the fear of living man before our eyes; and to do all this with the saving and singular consciousness, that we are doing some good in our vocation, that humanity is the better for us, and that our place would be missed among mankind. Utopia might grow pale to the beatitudes of the little republic under the protection of St. Augustin.

But summer is, unfortunately, a rare guest, and its visit one of the shortest possible duration. The sunshine that subdues the plain, with the fidelity of a wife, is, at the famous Hospice, capricious as a first love.—I had entered its walls on a day made in the prodigality of the finest season of the year. The snowy scalps of the hills were interspersed with stripes of verdure, that had seen the light for the first time within memory; the bee, that, more than all creation beside, gives assurance of summer to my ear, was roaming and humming away among the thistle-down and mosses, that even the Alpine frost is not always able to kill. I could imagine, in the air that passed in slight gusts from time to time, the odours of the Italian flowers. I lingered long at the gate of the convent, enjoying the magnificent serenity of the sky, the air, and the hills, and felt no trivial reluctance at abandoning so alluring a contemplation for a corridor crowded with servants, and a chamber embedded in a wall as thick as if it had to stand a siege. Even the indulgence of the convent table could not wean me from the conviction that I could have got through my travel pleasantly enough, though the Hospice had, like the Santa Casa, been transported to some new Loretto.

But I had not been two hours under its roof before a burst of wind, that reminded me of nothing but the roar of Niagara, shot down the side of Mont Velan, stripped away the gathered snow of half a century in an immense sheet, and hurled it full upon the convent. All was in an in-

stant commotion within. The table was deserted by the chief part of the brotherhood, who hurried to see that the casements and doors were made secure. The ground-floor of the building, which is occupied with stables and storehouses for wood and the other supplies for the convent, was a scene of immediate confusion, from the crowding in of the menials and peasantry. I ventured one glance from my window—summer was gone at once; and "the winter wild" was come in its stead. The sun was blotted out of the heavens; snow, in every shape that it could be flung into by the wind, whirlpool drift and hail, flashed along. Before night, it was fourteen feet high in front of the Hospice. We could keep our fingers from being icicles only by thrusting them almost into the blazing wood fires: the burst of wind shook the walls like cannon-shot; and I made a solemn recantation of all my raptures on the life of an Augustin of St. Bernard.

As the night fell, the storm lulled at intervals, and I listened with anxiety to the cries and noises that announced the danger of travellers surprised in the storm. The fineness of the season had tempted many to cross the mountain without much precaution against the change; and the sound of horns, bells, and the barking of the dogs, as the strangers arrived, kept me awake. By morning the convent was full; the world was turned to universal snow; the monks came down girded for their winter excursions; the domestics were busy equipping the dogs; fires blazed; cauldrons smoked; every stranger was possessed and tured to the chin; and the whole scene might have passed for a Lapland carnival. But the Hospice is provided for such casualties; and, after a little unavoidable tumult, all its new inhabitants were attended to with much more than the civility of a continental inn, and with infinitely less than its discomfort. The gentlemen adjourned to the reading room where they found books and papers which probably seldom passed the Italian frontier. The ladies turned over the portfolios or prints, many of which are the donations of strangers who had been indebted to the hospitality of the place; or amused themselves at the piano-forte in the drawing-room—for music is there above the flight of the lark; or pored over the shelves to plunge their souls in some "flattering tale" of hope and love, orange groves, and chevaliers plumed capped and guitarred into irresistible captivation. The scientific manipulated the ingenious collection of the mountain minerals made by the brotherhood. Half a dozen herbals from the adjoining regions lay open for the botanist; a finely bound and decorated album, that owed obligations to every art but the art of poetry, lay open for the pleasantries, the me-

morials, and the wonderings of every body; and for those who loved sleep best, there were eighty beds.—*Tales of the great St. Bernard.*

### A SPANISH VILLAGE.

Soon after entering this sierra, I passed through the most miserable village that I have seen in any part of Spain. It is quite impossible for one who has never seen the very lowest of the Spanish poor, to form the smallest conception of the general appearance of the inhabitants of this village. I saw between two and three hundred persons, and there was not one whose rags half covered him. Men, women and children were like bundles of ill-assorted shreds and patches. I threw a few biscuits among the children, and the eagerness with which they devoured them, reminded me rather of young wolves than human beings. The badness of the pavement, and the steepness of the street, made it necessary for the diligence to go slowly; and I profited by the delay to look into some of the miserable abodes of these unfortunate beings. I found a perfect unison between the dweller and his dwelling. I could not see one article of furniture; no table, no chair; a few large stones supplied the place of the latter; for the former there was no occasion; and something resembling a mattress upon the mud floor was the bed of the family.—Leaving this village, I noticed two stone pillars, and a wooden pole across, indicating that the proprietor possesses the power of life and death within his own domain. I forget the name of the grandee at whose door it is all this misery; but if the power of life and death be his, and if he cannot make the former more tolerable, it would be humanity to inflict the latter.

### CURIUS FACTS REGARDING VEGETABLE REPRODUCTION.

It has long been known that crows, and other birds and animals, deposit seeds in the earth, from whence trees and plants are produced. The Rev. Mr. Robinson, in his Natural History of Westmoreland and Cumberland, says, that "birds are natural planters of all sorts of trees, disseminating the kernels upon the earth, till they grow up to their natural strength and perfection." He tells us, "that early one morning he observed a great number of crows very busy at their work, upon a declivity ground of a mossy surface, and that he went out of his way on purpose to view their labour. He then found that they were planting a grove of oaks. The manner of their planting was this: They first made little holes in the earth with their bills, going about and about till the hole was deep enough, and then they dropped in the acorn, and covered it with earth and moss. The young plantation," Mr. Robinson adds, "is now growing up to a thick grove of oaks fit for use, and of height for the crows to build their nests in. On telling the circumstance to the owner of the ground, who observed the acorns to grow up, he took care to secure their growth and rising. The season was the latter end of autumn, when all the seeds are fully ripe."

It is surprising how many different means nature adopts in perpetuating the duration

of animal and vegetable life. Mr. Edwards justly remarks, that even the droughts of autumn continue to increase and propagate seeds and plants. These sudden and long-continued droughts occasion deep chinks and cracks in the earth, wherein are deposited the seeds of trees, and the larger plants that require depth for their growth, and are at the same time placed beyond the reach of animals which feed on them.

The seeds of the common lichen grow in little pecks, which, when fully ripe, and ready for diffusion, are scattered by a natural contraction of the contraction of the edges of the peck, which suddenly bursts them open, and, forcing the internal surface outward, throws the seeds at a considerable distance from the parent plant. But for this wise provision, they would be choked under the old plant for the want of air and light.

Mice also bury a great number of seeds for their winter store, many of which vegetate.

Some seeds, such as those of the thistle, are provided with a kind of down, by which, as with wings, they are carried, with the help of the wind, to great distances, and others fix themselves on the ground by means of glutinous substances attached to them.

The South Sea Islands, which have been raised to their present elevation above the ocean, are entirely the production of myriads of minute polypi or worms, which construct the different kinds of coral. These coral formations are first covered by sand, and then by marine substances; then with the excrements of birds, in which are undigested seeds, that spring up and flourish in the deposits which have been formed on the reefs.

Some plants are migratory, while others are fixed to particular localities, from which they never wander. In Hampton Court Park, there is a small pink, which inhabits a particular mound of earth; and although it has long been known on that spot, yet it has never extended beyond it.

It is curious to observe the influence which particular soils have on different flowers. Whoever has attended to the cultivation of tulips, must have noticed, that, by planting them on too rich a soil, the colours will spread; and others, which have steadily remained of one colour in some particular soil, will, on being removed to another, break into a variety of colours. If the common field primrose is taken up, and the root separated, and planted in another soil, the blossom loses its brilliant yellow hue, and becomes of a pale brown or chocolate colour.

Perhaps one of the most extraordinary phenomena connected with animal life, is the tendency of plants to follow light, which seems so necessary to their health, and even existence. This makes them display what Blumenbach calls real motion. In the Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences at Boston, there is an excellent example of this tendency described.

In the spring, a potato was left in the cellar where some roots had been kept during the winter, and which had only a small aperture for the admission of light at the upper end of one of its sides. The potato, which lay in the opposite corner of the aperture, shot out a runner, which first ran twenty feet along the ground, then crept up along the wall, and so through the opening by which light was admitted.

Providence, ever mindful of the wants of the human race, has endowed these plants which are of the greatest importance to mankind either with the property of adapting themselves to a great variety of climates, or, when confined to any individual climate, of flourishing there in almost any kind of soil. This is the case with several species of grain, the potato, &c., and that valuable plant the cocoa. Palm vegetates vigorously in sandy and stony, as well as in the richest earth.

Many plants, common duckweed for example, are not firmly attached to the ground by the roots, but can change their situations at certain seasons of the year, sinking at one time to the bottom, and at others coming to the surface of the water.