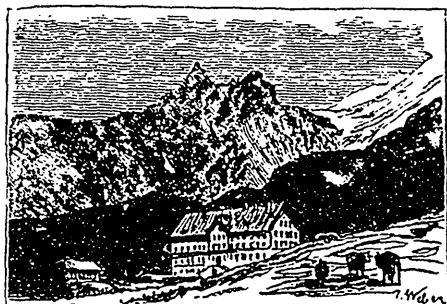


WITH THE MONKS OF ST. BERNARD.

BY S. H. M. BYERS.



SIMPLON HOSPICE.

THE great Simplon road exceeds in beauty and picturesque charms all other mountain highways, and will bear comparison with most of them in respect to the grandeur of its surroundings. Its construction constituted one of the greatest triumphs achieved by man over natural obstacles; in point of time it

was the first of modern Alpine highways which connect North and South, and it formed the model for later undertakings of the same kind—Napoleon's decree had broken the ancient spell! Already the iron horse transports us with lightning speed to the foot of the Simplon, and in a few years will have made its way through the heart of the mountains.

Along the slopes, in wide loops and intricate windings, now over meadow-land, now through woods, runs the boldly-planned mountain-road, which our eye can follow as far as the summit of the pass. When thunder-storms break over us and grey clouds glide ghost-like along the cliffy steeps, only here and there a huge rocky peak is seen rising above the sea of mist. At such a time the aspect presented by this mountainous landscape has a charm of its own; especially if the traveller is fortunate enough to see his shadow, surrounded by a many-coloured halo and enlarged to gigantic proportions, cast upon the storm-clouds in front of him by the sun in his rear.

In winter passengers and luggage are transferred from the unwieldy diligence into little sledges, each seating but one person. When the weather is fine the journey is really a most enjoyable one. It is otherwise after a fresh fall of snow, or when the cold north wind is blowing, and avalanches are descending from the barren mountain-sides, threatening to smother the traveller in their chill embraces. At such time the cavalcade is headed by the triangular snow plough drawn by five or six horses. From time to time it happens that one such caravan is snowed up for one or