

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 2 (1936-1937)
Heft: 4

Artikel: Famous Swiss dogs
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-943286>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 18.08.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

kept secret until a public vote has been cast, deciding the first prize. The winner of the sweepstake receives the most popular picture, whereafter the jury's decision is revealed.

Competitions among industrial exhibitors will be another novelty. In this section products exposed to wear and tear, such as linoleum used on the floors of the Exposition halls, will be examined at the end of the show, a distinction going to the one judged to be in best condition.

The entire history and development of the Swiss people will be carefully portrayed, including the evolution of government from the feudal and patriarchal régimes to present-day institutions.

A special pavilion will be devoted to the efforts Switzerland is at this time making for the military defence of her independence and neutrality, and a specially entertaining department will show how the Swiss spend their leisure hours.

=====

SUCCESS OF DEFENCE LOAN.

The President of Switzerland addressed his people over the air in regard to the spontaneous success of the heavily over-subscribed defence loan. He expressed his sincere thanks, as well as the intense pride and gratification felt by his Cabinet, the Parliament, in fact the entire population. All cantonal authorities were requested to celebrate the occasion by ringing the church chimes of all towns and villages, to decorate and be-flag the public and private houses fittingly. It was indeed a great celebration and rejoicing throughout the land on Saturday the 17th day of October 1936.

Swiss clubs in London, Milan, Paris, etc. also celebrated the event with the happy feeling that they too, contributed in some measure towards the success of the appeal.

=====

FAMOUS SWISS DOGS.

So universal is the fame of the St. Bernard dogs that it goes without saying that they rank first among the aristocracy of Switzerland's canine world. Their home, as their name suggests, is the Great St. Bernard Hospice, founded over one thousand years ago by Bernard de Menthon, a saintly priest, and inhabited up to this day by brethren of the order of St. Augustine. Winter lasts from eight to nine months in that isolated mountain region and the snow is sometimes piled up as high as 12 to 15 feet. Blizzards are sudden and descend with such fury that many travellers would surely perish were it not for the vigilance and devotion of the monks and their marvellously trained dogs.

While summer travel to the Great St. Bernard Hospice is increasing yearly, no buses and no private cars can reach those snowbound heights in winter. Yet, the Great St. Bernard Pass has a few wayfarers even at that time, mostly men who are financially unable to make use of modern railroad facilities, also shepherds who inhabit this solitary realm and occasional skiers.

Electricity, steam heat, telephone and radio have in recent decades improved living conditions in the Hospice. The brethren are now informed beforehand of impending arrivals from Martigny, in the Swiss Rhone valley, or from Aosta in Italy. If travellers are expected and a storm or avalanches should suddenly happen to descend upon the region of this historic refuge, the scientifically trained, super-intelligent dogs are

sent out to meet them or to search for them. The animals are instructed to bark when they have discovered someone and to wake up those whom they find asleep. If the person thus rescued is unable to walk, the dog will drag him for a certain distance and by barking he will summon the monks who are ever ready to brave storms and dangers when a human being needs help.

Historic records show that the Hospice was without any dogs up to 1670 A.D. From then on the brethren kept a few watch dogs, but it is not clearly established of what breed they were. These animals soon took delight in accompanying their masters on their many errands of mercy and were quickly appreciated for their unerring sense of location. The race which has for the last 250 years been described as St. Bernards has, according to Prof. Albert Heim of Zurich, the noted naturalist, been gradually developed by the Monks through careful breeding and training in life-saving work. The short-haired variety is the original kind. In 1830 some of the brethren decided to cross their dogs with Newfoundlands, in order to raise animals which would be protected against the inclement climate with longer hair. However, this crossing did not affect the physical characteristics of the St. Bernards, and only the hair became longer. But experience showed that long hair was not desirable in that high altitude, as the melting and subsequent freezing of the snow produced icicles on the shaggy coats. The result was that the long haired specimens were sold or given away, and this explains why the St. Bernard dogs in the mountains have short hair and those in the lowlands long hair. The long-haired St. Bernards are, however, accepted as thoroughbreds.

It is said that if the atmosphere is calm a dog gets the scent of a person in distress at a distance of 600 to 900 feet. If a wind blows toward him he gets it at a distance of several miles. Should a traveller have been overwhelmed by an avalanche a dog will locate him although the snow covering him may be from six to nine feet deep. The dogs sense the approach of storms and avalanches, and numerous incidents have occurred where these sagacious animals went out on their own accord to meet travellers, then, after standing still and surveying the situation, gently conducted them by a detour out of the path of some impending disaster.

It usually takes two years to teach a dog all he must know before he can be trusted out alone as a seeker and guide, but even after this period training is not stopped.

Just as the brethren of the Great St. Bernard are heroes in their work dedicated to humanity, so have the dogs developed heroic qualities which have brought them world fame. Barry was one of these noble beasts and an inscription on a memorial erected to him at the Hospice relates that "he saved forty persons and was killed by the forty-first." The forty-first was a soldier who had been dug out of the snow by Barry. Awakened by the dog the half-dazed man believed himself attacked, and killed the faithful animal with his knife. Barry's monument, showing the dog with a little child seated on his back, glorifies his rescue of a ten-year-old girl. He had found her half-buried in the deep snow, asleep from exhaustion. Gently Barry licked her face until she woke up from her stupor. Then the intelligent animal crouched down and succeeded in getting the little girl to sit on his strong back and in this position he finally carried her through treacherous snow drifts and crevices to the Hospice-- a dog hero forever.

=====

Members who have not paid their subscription for the present year are urgently requested to forward the fee to the Secretary. Defaulters will not be supplied with the next issue of our publication.

=====

Address correspondence to:-

W. Ungemuth, Secretary,
Clarence St., Northcote. .
AUCKLAND.