

Vespers are over. In the hall  
The monks are gather'd round the board  
To celebrate the joyful feast  
With the best cheer their stores afford.

The noble dogs are feasting now,  
Fed with kind hands and loving care,  
For if they share their masters' toils  
Their joys and feasts they also share.

"Brethren and friends," the Prior said,  
"The night grows wild, the storm gets  
high,  
The dogs are restless; some must go,  
If help is needed. to be nigh.

"This night we'll sing our hymn to GOD  
With shepherds and the angelic host;  
But you will praise whilst yet you serve,  
And by the serving praise Him most."

So, taking hatchets, torches, ropes,  
The monks and dogs together went;  
They make towards the mountain-pass,  
And soon the dogs are on a scent.

Smelling and sniffing through the storm,  
Their noble heads bent to the snow,  
Close follow'd by the stalwart monks,  
They bravely up the mountain go.

"Full sure, I guess," said Brother Ralph,  
"Some traveller is out to-night,  
And sure I am that for his life  
With storm and snow he'll have to fight.

"And if but once he miss the path  
Hard by the precipice which winds,  
A fearful sight 't will be for him  
The mangled traveller that finds.

"But, see, the dogs are on the track;  
See how with one consent they go;  
They've turn'd the point, they're out of  
sight:  
And, hark! that baying down below!"

The monks rush on with breathless speed,  
All on the strain, no word they say;  
But as they breast the storm-blasts' rage,  
With silent earnestness they pray.

They turn the point, and down below  
The eager, striving dogs they see,  
All on a narrow ledge that hangs  
Projecting o'er the icy sea.

There's one way down, but e'en in light,  
When all is calm, on summer's day,  
While in pursuit of mountain goat,  
The hunter dreads that dizzy way.