

LETTER XLI.

DEAR:--

To-day we came to Frankfort, and this afternoon we have been driving out to see the lions, and in the first place the house where Goethe was born. Over the door, you remember, was the family coat of arms. Well, while we were looking I perceived that a little bird had accommodated the crest of the coat to be his own family residence, and was flying in and out of a snug nest wherewith he had crowned it. Little fanciful, feathery amateur! could nothing suit him so well as Goethe's coat of arms? I could fancy the little thing to be the poet's soul come back to have a kind of breezy hovering existence in this real world of ours--to sing, and perch, and soar; for I think you told me that his principal grace and characteristic was an exquisite perception and expression of physical beauty. Goethe's house was a very grand one for the times, was it not? Now a sign in the window tells us it is used as a manufactory of porcelain.

Then we drove through the Jews' quarters. You remember how queer and old they look; they have been much modernized since you were there. Cocher stopped before one house, and said something in German about Rothschild, which C. said sounded like "Here Rothschild hung his boots out." We laughed and rode on.

After this we went to the Romer, the hall that you have told me of,

where the emperors were chosen, all painted with their portraits in compartments; and I looked out on the fountain in front, that used, on these occasions, to flow with wine. Then I walked around to see all the emperors, and to wish I knew more about history. Charles V. is the only one of whom I have any distinct recollection.

Then we went to a kind of museum. Cocher stopped at the door, and we heard a general sputtering of gutturals between him, W., and G., he telling them something about Luther. I got it into my head that the manuscript of Luther's Bible was inside; so I rushed forward. It was the public library. A colossal statue of Goethe, by an Italian artist, was the first thing I saw. What a head the man had! A Jupiter of a head. And what a presence! The statue is really majestic; but was Goethe so much, really think you? That egotistical spirit shown in his Diary sets me in doubt. Shakspeare was not self-conscious, and left no trace of egotism; if he knew himself, he did not care to tell what he knew. Yet the heads are both great and majestic heads, and would indicate a plenary manhood.

We went into the library, disturbing a quiet, good sort of bibliopole there, who, with some regret, put aside his book to guide us.

"Is Luther's Bible here?" W. and G. opened on him.

"No;" but he ushered us into a cabinet.

"There are Luther's shoes!"

"Shoes!" we all exclaimed; and there was an irreverent laugh. Yes, there they were in a glass case,--his shoes, large as life,--shoes without heels; great, clumping, thick, and black! What an idea! However, there was a genuine picture by Lucas Cranach, and another of Catharine, by Holbein, which gave more consolatory ideas of her person than that which I saw before at Basle. There were also autographs of Goethe and Schiller, as well as of Luther and Melanchthon.

Our little bibliopole looked mournfully at us, as if we were wasting his time, and seemed glad when we went out. C. thought he was huffy because we laughed at Luther's shoes; but I think he was only yearning after his book. C. offered him a fee, but he would not take it. Going down stairs, in the entry, I saw a picture of the infant Goethe on an eagle. We rode, also, to see a bronze statue of him in some street or other, and I ate an ice cream there to show my regard for him. We are delighted on the whole with Frankfort.

Now, after all, that I should forget the crown of all our seeings, Dannecker's Ariadne! It is in a pavilion in a gentleman's garden. Could mere beauty and grace delight and fill the soul, one could not ask for more than the Ariadne. The beautiful head, the throat, the neck, the bust, the hand, the arm, the whole attitude, are exquisite. But after all, what is it? No moral charm,--mere physical beauty, cold as Greek mythology. I thought of his Christ, and did not wonder

that when he had turned his art to that divine representation, he should refuse to sculpture from classic models. "He who has sculptured a Christ cannot sculpture a Venus."

Our hotel here is very beautiful. I think it must have been some palace, for it is adorned with fine statues, and walls of real marble. The staircase is beautiful, with brass railing, and at the foot a marble lion on each side. The walls of my bed room are lined with green damask, bordered by gilt bands; the attendance here is excellent. In every hotel of each large city, there is a man who speaks English. The English language is slowly and surely creeping through. Europe; already it rivals the universality of the French.

Two things in this city have struck me singularly, as peculiarly German: one was a long-legged stork, which I saw standing on a chimney top, reminding me of the oft-mentioned "dear white stork" of German stories. Why don't storks do so in America, I wonder? Another thing was, waking suddenly in the middle of the night, and hearing the hymn of the watchman as he announced the hour. I think this is a beautiful custom.

In the morning, I determined to get into the picture gallery. Now C., who espoused to himself an "Amati" at Geneva, has been, like all young bridegrooms, very careless about every thing else but his beloved, since he got it. Painting, sculpture, architecture, all must yield to music. Nor can all the fascinations of Raphael or Rubens vie

in his estimation with the melodies of Mozart, or the harmonies of Beethoven. So, yesterday, when we found the picture gallery shut, he profanely remarked, "What a mercy!" And this morning I could enlist none of the party but W. to go with me. We were paid for going. There were two or three magnificent pictures of sunrise and sunset in the Alps by modern artists. Never tell me that the old masters have exhausted the world of landscape painting, at any rate. Am I not competent to judge because I am not an artist? What! do not all persons feel themselves competent to pronounce on the merits of natural landscapes, and say which of two scenes is finer? And are painters any greater artists than God? If they say that we are not competent to judge, because we do not understand the mixing of colors, the mysteries of foreshortening, and all that, I would ask them if they understand how God mixes his colors? "Canst thou understand the balancing of the clouds? the wondrous ways of Him who is perfect in wisdom?" If, therefore, I may dare to form a judgment of God's originals, I also will dare to judge of man's imitations. Nobody shall impose old, black, smoky Poussins and Salvator Rosas on me, and so insult my eyesight and common sense as to make me confess they are better than pictures which I can see have all the freshness and bloom of the living reality upon them.

So, also, a most glorious picture here. The Trial of John Huss before the Council of Constance, by Lessing--one of the few things I have seen in painting which have had power deeply to affect me. I have it not in my heart to criticize it as a mere piece of coloring and

finish, though in these respects I thought it had great merits. But the picture had the power, which all high art must have, of rebuking and silencing these minor inquiries in the solemnity of its morale. I believe the highest painter often to be the subject of a sort of inspiration, by which his works have a vitality of suggestion, so that they sometimes bring to the beholder even more than he himself conceived when he created them. In this picture, the idea that most impressed me was, the representation of that more refined and subtle torture of martyrdom which consists in the incertitude and weakness of an individual against whom is arrayed the whole weight of the religious community. If against the martyr only the worldly and dissolute stood arrayed, he could bear it; but when the church, claiming to be the visible representative of Christ, casts him out; when multitudes of pious and holy souls, as yet unenlightened in their piety, look on him with horror as an infidel and blasphemous, --then comes the very wrench of the rack. As long as the body is strong, and the mind clear, a consciousness of right may sustain even this; but there come weakened hours, when, worn by prison and rack, the soul asks itself, "Can it be that all the religion and respectability of the world is wrong, and I alone right?" Such an agony Luther expressed in that almost superhuman meditation written the night before the Diet at Worms. Such an agony, the historian tells us, John Huss passed through the night before his execution.

Now for the picture. The painter has arrayed, with consummate ability, in the foreground a representation of the religious respectability of

the age: Italian cardinals, in their scarlet robes, their keen, intellectual, thoughtful faces, shadowed by their broad hats; men whom it were no play to meet in an argument; there are gray-headed, venerable priests, and bishops with their seal rings of office,--all that expressed the stateliness and grandeur of what Huss had been educated to consider the true church. In the midst of them stands Huss, habited in a simple dark robe; his sharpened features, and the yellow, corpse-like pallor of his face, tell of prison and of suffering. He is defending himself; and there is a trembling earnestness in the manner with which his hand grasps the Bible. With a passionate agony he seems to say, "Am I not right? does not this word say it? and is it not the word of God?"

So have I read the moral of this noble picture, and in it I felt that I had seen an example of that true mission of art which will manifest itself more and more in this world as Christ's kingdom comes; art which is not a mere juggler of colors, a gymnastic display of effects, but a solemn, inspiring poetry, teaching us to live and die for that which is noblest and truest. I think this picture much superior to its companion, the Martyrdom of Huss, which I had already seen in America.

JOURNAL--(CONTINUED.)

Wednesday, August 3. Frankfort to Cologne. Hurrah for the Rhine! At eleven we left the princely palace, calling itself Hotel de Russie, whose halls are walled with marble, and adorned with antique statues of immense value. Lo, as we were just getting into our carriage, the lost parcel! basket, shawl, cloak, and all! We tore along to the station; rode pleasantly over to Mayenz; made our way on board a steamer loaded down with passengers; established ourselves finally in the centre of all things on five stools, and deposited our loose change of baggage in the cabin.

The steamer was small, narrow, and poor, though swift. Thus we began to see the Rhine under pressure of circumstances.

The French and Germans chatted merrily. The English tourists looked conscientiously careworn. Papa with three daughters peered alternately into the guide book, and out of the loophole in the awning, in evident terror lest something they ought to see should slip by them. Escaping from the jam, we made our way to the bow, carrying stools, umbrellas, and books, and there, on the very beak of all things, we had a fine view. Duly and dutifully we admired Bingen, Cob-lentz, Ehrenbreitstein, Bonn, Drachenfels, and all the other celebrities, and read Childe Harold on the Rhine. Reached Cologne at nine.

Thursday, August 4. We drove to the cathedral. I shall not recapitulate Murray, nor give architectural details. I was satisfied with what I saw and heard, and wished that so magnificent a



conception, so sublime a blossom of stone sculpture, might come to ripe maturity, not as a church, indeed, but rather as a beautiful petrification, a growth of prolific, exuberant nature. Why should not the yeasty brain of man, fermenting, froth over in such crestwork of Gothic pinnacle, spire, and column?

The only service I appreciated was the organ and chant: hidden in the midst of forest arches of stone, pouring forth its volumes of harmony as by unseen minstrelsy, it seemed to create an atmosphere of sound, in which the massive columns seemed transfused,--not standing, as it were, but floating,--not resting, as with weight of granite mountains, but growing as by a spirit and law of development. Filled with those vast waves and undulations, the immense edifice seemed a creature, tremulous with a life, a soul, an instinct of its own; and out of its deepest heart there seemed to struggle upward breathings of unutterable emotion.