

LETTER XLVI.

ERFURT, Saturday Evening.

MY DEAR:--

I have just been to Luther's cell in the old Augustine Convent, and if my pilgrimage at Wittenberg was less interesting by the dirt and discomfort of the actual present, here were surroundings less calculated to jar on the frame the scene should inspire. It was about sunset,--a very golden and beautiful one, and C. and I drove through various streets of this old town. I believe I am peculiarly alive to architectural excitements, for these old houses, with their strange windows, odd chimneys, and quaint carvings, delight me wonderfully. Many of them are almost gnome-like in their uncouthness; they please me none the less for that.

We drove first to the cathedral, which, with an old deserted church, seemingly part of itself, forms a pile of Gothic architecture, a wilderness of spires, minarets, arches, and what not, more picturesque than any cathedral I have seen. It stands high on a sort of platform overlooking a military parade ground, and reached by a long flight of steps.

The choir is very beautiful. I cannot describe how these lofty arches, with their stained glass windows, touch my heart. Architecture never

can, and never will, produce their like again. They give us aspiration in its highest form and noblest symbol, and wonderful was that mind which conceived them. This choir so darkly bright, its stalls and seats carved in black oak, its flame-like arches, gorgeous with evening light, were a preparation and excitement of mind. Yet it's remarkable about these old-time cathedrals, that while their is every grand and solemn effect of architecture, there is also always an abundance of subordinate parts, mean, tawdry, revolting, just like the whole system they represent. Out of this beautiful choir I wanted to tear all the tinsel fixtures on its altar, except two very good pictures, and leave it in it noble simplicity.

I remarked here a black oak chandelier, which the guide said was taken from the cathedral of Cologne. It was the very perfection of Gothic carving, and resembled frostwork in its lightness. The floor of the cathedral was covered with effigies in stone, trod smooth by the feet of worshippers; so we living ones are ever walking above the dead, though we do not always, as here, see the outward sign thereof.

From the cathedral we passed out, and stopped a moment to examine the adjoining church, now deserted, but whose three graceful spires have a peculiar beauty. After a turn upon the platform we descended, and drove to the Augustine Convent, now used as an orphan asylum. We ascended through a court yard, full of little children, by some steps into a gallery, where a woman came out with her keys. We passed first into a great hall, the walls of which were adorned with Holbein's

Dance of Death.

From this hall we passed into Luther's room--a little cell, ten feet square; the walls covered with inscriptions from his writings. There we saw his inkstand, his pocket Testament, a copy of the Bible that was presented to him, (by whom I could not understand,) splendidly bound and illuminated. But it was the cell itself which affected me, the windows looking out into what were the cloisters of the monastery. Here was that struggle--that mortal agony--that giant soul convulsing and wearing down that strong frame. These walls! to what groans, to what prayers had they listened! Could we suppose a living human form imperishable, capable of struggling and suffering, but not of dying, buried beneath the whole weight of one of these gloomy cathedrals, suffocating in mortal agony, hearing above the tramp of footsteps, the peal of organs, the triumphant surge of chants, and vainly striving to send up its cries under all this load,--such, it would seem, was the suffering of this mighty soul. The whole pomp and splendor of this gorgeous prison house was piled up on his breast, and his struggles rent the prison for the world!

On a piece of parchment which is here kept framed is inscribed in Luther's handwriting, in Latin, "Death is swallowed up in Victory!" Nothing better could be written on the walls of this cell.

This afternoon I walked out a little to observe the German Sabbath. Not like the buoyant, voluble, social Sunday of Paris, though still

consecrated to leisure and family enjoyment more than to religious exercises. As I walked down the streets, the doors were standing open, men smoking their pipes, women knitting, and children playing. One place of resort was the graveyard of an antiquated church. A graveyard here is quite different from the solitary, dismal place where we lay our friends, as if to signify that all intercourse with them is at an end. Each grave was trimmed and garlanded with flowers, fastened with long strings of black or white ribbon. Around and among the graves men, women, and children were walking, the men smoking and chatting, not noisily, but in a cheerful, earnest way. It seems to me that this way of treating the dead might lessen the sense of separation. I believe it is generally customary to attend some religious exercise once on Sunday, and after that the rest of the day is devoted to this sort of enjoyment.

The morning we started for Eisenach was foggy and rainy. This was unfortunate, as we were changing from a dead level country to one of extreme beauty. The Thuringian Forest, with its high, wooded points crowned here and there with many a castle and many a ruin, loomed up finely through the mist, and several times I exclaimed, "There is the Wartburg," or "That must be the Wartburg," long before we were near it. It was raining hard when we reached Eisenach station, and engaged a carriage to take us to the Wartburg. The mist, which wreathed thickly around, showed us only glimpses as we wound slowly up the castle hill--enough, however, to pique the imagination, and show how beautiful it might be in fair weather.

The grounds are finely kept: winding paths invite to many a charming stroll. When about half way up, as the rain had partially subsided, I left the carriage, and toiled up the laborious steep on foot, that I might observe better. You approach the castle by a path cut through the rock for about thirty or forty feet. At last I stood under a low archway of solid stone masonry, about twenty feet thick. There had evidently been three successive doors; the outer one was gone, and the two inner were wonderfully massive, braced with iron, and having each a smaller wicket door swung back on its hinges.

As my party were a little behind, I had time to stop and meditate. I fancied a dark, misty night, and the tramp of a party of horsemen coming up the rocky path to the gateway; the parley at the wicket; the unbarred doors, creaking on their rusty hinges,--one, two, three,--are opened; in clatters the cavalcade. In the midst of armed men with visors down, a monk in cowl and gown, and with that firm look about the lips which is so characteristic in Luther's portraits. But here our party came up, and the vision was dispelled. As none of us knew a word of German, we stood rather irresolutely looking at the buildings which, in all shapes and varieties, surround the court. I went into one room--it was a pantry; into another--it was a wash room; into a third--it was a sitting room, garnished with antlers, and hung round with hard old portraits of princes and electors, and occupied by Germans smoking and drinking beer. One is sure that in this respect one cannot fail of seeing the place as it was in Luther's time. If

they were Germans, of course they drank beer out of tall, narrow beer glasses; that is as immutable a fact as the old stones of the battlement.

"H.," said C., "did the Germans use to smoke in Luther's day?"

"No. Why?"

"O, nothing. Only, what could they do with themselves?"

"I do not know, unless they drank the more beer."

"But what could they do with their chimney-hood?"

So saying, the saucy fellow prowled about promiscuously a while, assailing one and another in French, to about as much purpose as one might have tried to storm the walls with discharges of thistle down; all smoked and drank as before. But as several other visitors arrived, and it became evident that if we did not come to see the castle, it was not likely we came for any thing else, a man was fished up from some depths unknown, with a promising bunch of keys. He sallied forth to that part of the castle which is undergoing repairs.

Passing through bricks and mortar, under scaffolds, &c., we came to the armory, full of old knights and steeds in complete armor; that is to say, the armor was there, and, without peeping between the

crevices, one could hardly tell that their owners were not at home in their iron houses. There sat the Elector of Saxony, in full armor, on his horse, which was likewise cased in steel. There was the suit of armor in which Constable Bourbon fell under the walls of Rome, and other celebrated suits, some covered with fine engraved work, and some gilded. A quantity of banners literally hung in tatters, dropping to pieces with age. Here were the middle ages all standing.

Then we passed up to a grand hall, which is now being restored with great taste after the style of that day--a long, lofty room, with an arched roof, and a gallery on one side, and beyond, a row of Romanesque arched windows, commanding a view of the country around. Having finished the tour of this part, we went back, ascended an old, rude staircase, and were ushered into Luther's Patmos, about ten or twelve feet square. The window looked down the rocky sides into an ocean of seething mist. I opened it, but could see nothing of all those scenes he describes so graphically from this spot. I thought of his playful letter on the "Diet of the Rooks," but there was not a rook at hand to illustrate antiquity. There was his bedstead and footstool, a mammoth vertebra, and his writing table. A sculptured chair, the back of which is carved into a cherub's head, bending forward and shadowing with its wings the head of the sitter, was said to be of the time of Luther, but not his chair. There were some of his books, and a rude, iron-studded clothes press.

Thus ended for me the Lutheran pilgrimage. I had now been

perseveringly to all the shrines, and often inquired of myself whether our conceptions are helped by such visitations. I decided the question in the affirmative; that they are, if from the dust of the present we can recreate the past, and bring again before us the forms as they then lived, moved, and had their being. For me, I seem to have seen Luther, Cranach, Melancthon, and all the rest of them--to have talked with them. By the by, I forgot to mention the portraits of Luther's father and mother, which are in his cell. They show that his mother was no common woman. She puts me in mind of the mother of Samuel J. Mills--a strong, shrewd, bright, New England character.

I must not forget to notice, too, a little glitter of effect--a little, shadowy, fanciful phase of feeling--that came over me when in Luther's cell at Erfurt. The time, as I told you, was golden twilight, and little birds were twittering and chirping around the casement, and I thought how he might have sat there, in some golden evening, sad and dreamy, hearing the birds chirp, and wondering why he alone of all creation should be so sad. I have not a doubt he has done that very thing in this very spot.

JOURNAL--(CONTINUED.)

Monday, August 15. From Eisenach, where we dined cozily in the



railroad station house, we took the cars for Cassel. After we had established ourselves comfortably in a nich rauchen car, a gentleman, followed by a friend, came to the door with a cigar in his mouth. Seeing ladies, he inquired if he could smoke. Comprehending his look and gesture, we said, "No." But as we spoke very gently, he misunderstood us, and entered. Seeing by our looks that something was amiss, he repeated the question more emphatically in German: "Can I smoke? Yes, or no." "No," we answered in full chorus. Discomfited, he retired with rather a flushed cheek. We saw him prospecting up and down the train, hunting for a seat, followed by his fidus Achates. Finally, a guard took him in tow, and after navigating a while brought him to our door; but the gentleman recoiled, said something in German, and passed on. Again they made the whole circuit of the train, and then we saw the guard coming, with rather a fierce, determined air, straight to our door. He opened it very decidedly, and ordered the gentleman to enter. He entered, cigar and all. His friend followed.

"Well," said H., in English, "I suppose he must either smoke or die."

"Ah, yes," I replied, "for the sake of saving his life we will even let him smoke."

"Hope the tobacco is good," added H.; and we went on reading our "Villette," which was very amusing just then. The gentleman had his match already lighted, and was just in the act of puffing

preliminarily when H. first spoke. I thought I saw a peculiar expression on his friend's face. He dropped a word or two in German, as if quite incidentally, and I soon observed that the smoking made small progress. Pie kept the cigar in his mouth, it is true, for a while, just to show he would smoke if he chose; but his whiffs were fewer and fainter every minute; and after reading several chapters, happening to cast my eye that way, the cigar had disappeared. Not long after the friend, sitting opposite me, addressed W. in good English, and they were soon well agoing in a friendly discussion of our route. The winged word had hit the mark that time.

We passed the night in an agreeable hotel, Roi de Prusse, at Cassel. By the way, it occurred to us that this was where the Hessians came from in the old revolutionary times.

Tuesday, August 16. A long, dull ride from Cassel to Dusseldorf.

Wednesday, August 17. Whittridge came at breakfast. The same mellow, friendly, good-humored voice, and genial soul, I had loved years ago in the heart of Indiana. We had a brief festival of talk about old times, art, artists, and friends, and the tide of time rolled in and swept us asunder. Success to his pencil in the enchanted glades of Germany! America will yet be proud of his landscapes, as Italy of Claude, or England of Turner.

Ho for Anvers! (Antwerp.) Through Aix-la-Chapelle, Liège, Malines,

till nine at night.

Thursday, August 18. What gnome's cave is this Antwerp, where I have been hearing such strange harmonies in the air all night? We drive to the cathedral, whose tower reminded Napoleon of Mechlin lace. What a shower of sprinkling music drops comes from the sky above us! We must go up and see about this. We spiralize through a tubular stairway to an immense height--a tube of stone, like a Titanic organ pipe, filled with waves of sound pouring down like a deluge. Undulations tremendous, yet not intolerable: we soon learned their origin. Reaching a small door, I turned aside, and came where the great bell was hung, which twenty men were engaged in ringing. It was a fête day. I crept inside the frame, and stood actually under the colossal mass, as it swung like a world in its spheric chime. A new sense was developed, such as I had heard of the deaf possessing. I seemed existing in a new medium. I felt the sound in my lungs, in my bones, on all my nerves to the minutest fibre, and yet it did not stupefy nor stun me with a harsh clangor. It was deep, DEEP. It was an abyss, gorgeously illuminated of velvet softness, in which I floated. The sound was fluid like water about me. I closed my eyes. Where was I? Had some prodigious monster swallowed me, and, like another Jonah, had I "gone down beneath the bottoms of the mountains"? I escaped from that perilous womb of sound, and ascended still higher. There was the mystery of that nocturnal minstrelsy. Seventy-three bells in chromatic diapason--with their tinkling, ringing, tolling, knolling peal! Was not that a chime? a chime of chimes? And all these

goblin hammers, like hands and feet of sprites, rising and falling, by magic, by hidden mechanism.

Of all German cactus blossoms this is the most ethereal. What head conceived those harmonies, so ghostlike? Every ten minutes, if you lie wakeful, they wind you up in a net of silver wirework, and swing you in the clouds; and the next time they swing you higher, and the next higher, and when the round hour is full the giant bell strikes at the gate of heaven to bring you home!

But this is dreaming. Fie, fie! Let us come down to pictures, masses, and common sense. We came down. We entered the room, and sat before the Descent from the Cross, where the dead body of Jesus seems an actual reality before you. The waves of the high mass came rolling in, muffled by intervening walls, columns, corridors, in a low, mysterious murmur. Then organ, orchestra, and choir, with rising voices urged the mighty acclaim, till the waves seemed beating down the barriers upon us. The combined excitement of the chimes, the painting, the music, was too much. I seemed to breathe ether. Treading on clouds, as it were, I entered the cathedral, and the illusion vanished.

Friday, August 19. Antwerp to Paris.

Saturday, August 20. H. and I take up our abode at the house of M. Belloc, where we find every thing so pleasant, that we sigh to think how soon we must leave these dear friends. The rest of our party are

at the Hotel Bedford.