

Sweeping down the Rhine Valley, studded with grey old castles, and crossing the river on a magnificent iron bridge, I beheld, glowing in the rosy light of sunset, the mighty minster of Strassburg. Nowhere has Gothic architecture reached a grander development than in these old Rhine cities; and the two finest minsters in the world are, I think, those of Strassburg and Cologne. To the great cathedral, therefore, I first of all betook me in the morning. Beautiful without and within—it is a glorious poem, a grand epic, a sublime anthem in stone. Even the grandeur of St. Peter's wanes before the solemn awe which comes over the soul beneath those vast and shadowy vaults. The solemn gloom irradiated by glimpses of glory through the many-coloured robes of apostle and prophet, saint and angel, in the painted windows—so like the earthly shadows and the heavenly light of human life and history—these wake deep echoes in the soul, as no classic or renaissance architecture ever can.

From the time of Clovis, in the 6th century, a church has stood upon this spot, but the present structure was begun in 1179. The western façade, with its great rose window, forty-two feet across, its "stone lace-work" and canopied niches, is the work of a famous architect, Erwin von Steinbach. Among the statues is an impressive group of the Seven Virtues trampling under their feet the Seven Vices. Two huge towers flank the façade. Between them is a large stone platform, two hundred and sixteen feet from the ground, from which is obtained a magnificent view of the town at our feet, with its storks' nests on the roofs, its walls and ramparts, and in the distance the Vosges Mountains, the Black Forest and Jura range. The stork seems a sacred bird. The townsfolk put up false chimneys for it to build on, and I saw one huge nest transfixed on a spire. From the platform rises the open stone spire, to a height of four hundred and sixty-nine feet. The scars and grooves made by the Prussian cannon balls, fired during the ten weeks' siege, are plainly seen on the stone. The massive cross on the top is that which Longfellow in his *Golden Legend* represents the Powers of the Air as striving, in a midnight tempest, to tear down. The pillars that support the tower and spire are enormous. I walked around one and found it thirty-two paces in circuit.

No memories of the German Rhine Valley are more potent than those of the Great Reformer, Martin Luther. With no