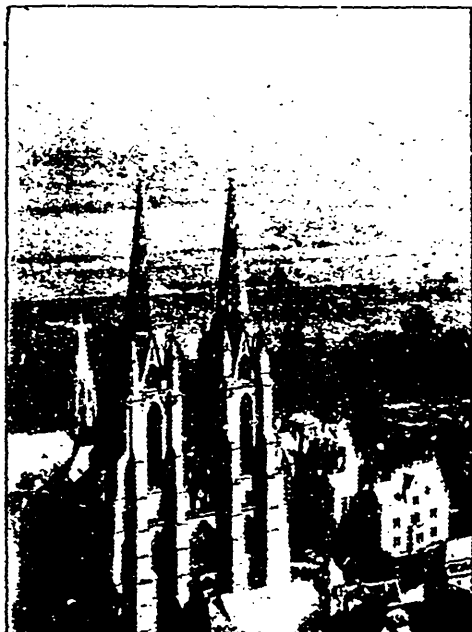


THE SAINT OF THE WARTBURG.

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CHURCH OF ST. ELIZABETH, MARBURG.

II.

The Landgrave Ludwig fully approved of his wife Elizabeth's vow of perpetual obedience to Conrad as her director, "saving her matrimonial vow." Even this exception did not prevent Conrad from exercising a most malign influence over his victim and asserting a most insolent domination even while her husband still lived. For instance—Elizabeth had been unexpectedly and most imperatively detained from a certain service to which he had bidden her. His rage was unbounded. And to break her spirit he withheld all pardon until she and her ladies humbled themselves so far as to

bare their shoulders to the brute and suffer him to beat them with a knotted scourge. May we not legitimately see in the malign influence of this "director" the wretched possibilities wrapped up in the principle of auricular confession?

In 1227 the Emperor Frederick II. embarked on the Sixth Crusade, and among the princes and nobles of Germany who followed him was Ludwig of Thuringia. On his departure Ludwig showed Elizabeth his signet ring and said, "If this ring should be brought you, it will be a token of my death."

Elizabeth henceforth counted herself a widow, arraying herself in widow's weeds, and seeking for consolation in constant vigils, prayers, penances, and kindly ministrations to the poor.

hoping against hope for the safe return of her beloved. But it was not to be. Without ever crossing sea to Palestine, gallant Ludwig succumbed to fever. His last thought was of his wife, and he sent to her the signet ring.

One day, some months after Ludwig's departure from home, as Elizabeth was busy in acts of mercy to the inmates of the Lazar-house at the foot of the Wartburg, she was summoned to the castle by the Dowager Sophia, who exhorted her to be brave and not disturbed by what had happened to her husband. Elizabeth rejoined, using still the fond name of "brother": "If my brother be