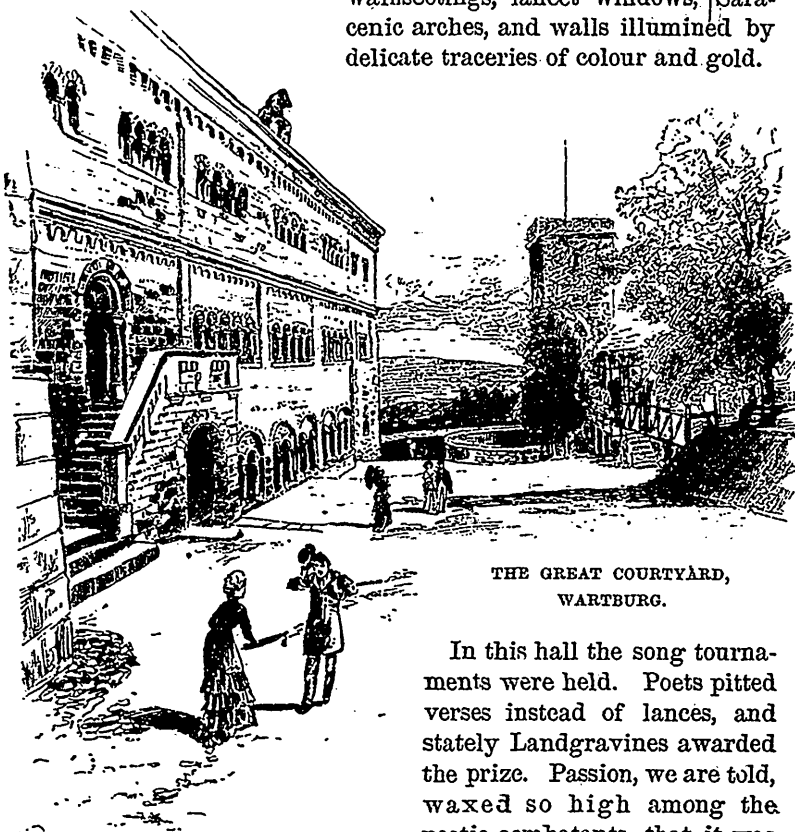


In these brilliant apartments, Hermann of Thuringia, surrounded by all the luxury of the East, held a kind of semi-regal state, and gathered about him the many elements that made the Middle Age life of Germany unique and picturesque. How charming! one involuntarily exclaims, at the first sight of the old minstrels' hall—a spacious apartment with dark wainscotings, lancet windows, Saracenic arches, and walls illumined by delicate traceries of colour and gold.



THE GREAT COURTYARD,
WARTBURG.

In this hall the song tournaments were held. Poets pitted verses instead of lances, and stately Landgravines awarded the prize. Passion, we are told, waxed so high among the poetic combatants, that it was decided that the least skilful

should die. Walter von der Vogelwied was in the end the victor, but although measures were taken to erect a scaffold in the castle, the most unfortunate of the minstrels, Heinrich von Ofterdingen, through the intercession of the Landgravine, was spared his life.

Long years after, at the revival of music and poetry in Germany, the same hall became a gathering-place for musicians; and as far down as the end of the seventeenth century the family of Bachs, one hundred and twenty in number, driven from Hungary,