

The old castle of Heidelberg, commanding a magnificent view of the valley of Neckar, is one of the noblest ruins of Europe—majestic even in decay, fraught with memories of pomp and power and pageantry, of battle, siege and sortie, that still stir the blood. A short ride brought us to the old imperial city of Frankfort-on-the-Main, where is still seen the hall in which for well-nigh a thousand years the emperors of Germany were elected, and the square where neither “Jews nor swine” were permitted to enter. Yet the Jews became here one of the dominant forces of Europe, without the aid of whose money-bags no war could be waged.

Most tourists make the descent of the Rhine in a single day. We took it leisurely in two, enjoying to the full the panorama of its vine-clad slopes and many-castled hills, and stopping over-night at quaint Coblenz, where the Emperor Drusus bridged the swift-flowing Moselle, and in whose old church Charlemagne partitioned his empire.

The stately minster of Cologne more completely than any other fulfilled the ideal of Gothic architecture; but while a magnificent national monument, it is degraded by puerile legends of the “Three Wise Men,” or Gipsy Kings, of Bible story, and by many apocryphal relics. More absurd still is the story of St. Ursula and the eleven thousand virgin martyrs whose relics are shown to the devout or curious, the skulls on shelves wearing embroidered caps, the other bones arranged in fantastic devices. As of special sanctity are shown the right hand and left foot of Saint Ursula, a spine of the crown of thorns, an alabaster vessel, one of the water-pots containing the water made wine at Cana in Galilee—though it could never have held two or three firkins as described in the sacred narratives. I “posed” for a moment the garrulous custodian of these relics by asking how he was sure of the identity of the saints which he so confidently asserted to be those of St. Ursula, and the rest. After an impatient shrug of the shoulders he went on as fluently

as ever. I wonder how he could keep his gravity while recounting such palpable fables.

The splendid architecture of the new streets of Cologne was the most progressive-looking thing we saw in Germany.

A long ride across the undulating plains of Eastern Belgium, cultivated like a garden, and studded with busy manufacturing towns—Namur, Liège, Louvain, and many another—brings us to the gay capital, Brussels—a lesser Paris, with stately streets and noble architecture. The new Palais de Justice, it is claimed, is the largest building in Europe—a colossal pile, rivalling in massive majesty the structures of Babylon and Nineveh. A visit to the picture gallery of the mad painter, Wiertz, was like a nightmare vision—a most extraordinary blending of the grotesque and horrible. He was an ardent hater of war and war-makers, and two never-to-be-forgotten pictures are his “Last Cannon,” in which a mighty angel wrenches in pieces the deadly enginery of war, while attendant angels proclaim over a war-scarred world the mild triumphs of peace, and his “Napoleon in Hell,” in which the victims of the arch-despot’s cruelty invoke the wrath of heaven upon his head.

A couple of hours’ ride brings us to Antwerp, our last city on the Continent. It was the festival of the Assumption of the Virgin, and the great cathedral was profusely decorated. A large doll-like figure of great age and sanctity was arrayed in a richly-embroidered mantle bedizened with jewellery and costly gems. Even Rubens’ famous pictures and the solemnity of the great cathedral—the only one in the world having a nave and six aisles—seemed vulgarized by the tawdry spectacle. Not so the beauty of the noble spire, whose tracery seemed as delicate as Mechlin lace—fit, said Napoleon, to be put in a glass-case—as seen from the square without, with its

“Beautiful wild chimes,
Low at times and loud at times.
And blending like a poet’s rhymes.”

A fitting conclusion of the jour-