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## THE WORK OF THE MINNESINGERS.

THERE are certain places which seem destined to become again and again the scene of movements materially affecting the life of a nation and its future development. Germany can boast of, at any rate, one such spot. To the valleys of Thuringia belongs the honour of being the cradle of her early poetic literature, of her religious liberty, and of her later magnificent literary development. We are accustomed to connect the name of Luther with the Wartburg, and of Goethe with Weimar, but it is often forgotten that centuries before their names became famous, the foundation of their work had been laid by the band of knights and poets, whose story we are about to consider.

Two monuments of this time remain to us of special interest. In Weimar the famous Minstrel Hall is still standing, now restored to something of its former splendour, and not many miles away, in the palace of the Wartburg, the ancient residence of the Landgraves of Thuringia, visitors are still shewn the Banqueting Hall of the Minnesingers, the scene of many poetic contests, and especially of the famous Wartburg Krieg, where under Landgrave Hermann, hundreds of poets assembled to challenge each other in a poetic tournament. These two buildings stand as mementoes of a movement which had its rise in Thuringia, and which quickly spread through Suabia, Bavaria and Austria, on the banks of the Rhine and the Danube, changing to a great extent the face of German civilization and introducing a new era into its literature. The twelfth century was full of such changes.