

## A Trip Through the Luther Country

### VI. The Birth-Place of the German Bible

F. E. MALOTT.

**I**T was a smiling morning in May when I set out for a tramp to the Wartburg. The day before I had come to Eisenach from Erfurt early in the afternoon. Eager to reach the castle of which I had heard so much, I hastily consulted my guide book, and then pushed through the quaint, medieval town, leaving its various minor places of interest resolutely behind.



ON THE WAY TO WARTBURG.

An hour's climb up a cool mountain path, above which tall, clean-bodied pines rose to majestic height, brought me to an open space on the mountain side, and there, at a distance of half a mile before me, on a neighboring summit, rose the famous old Thuringian fortress. But a deep valley lay between! I had taken the wrong road.

Consulting my guide book, I discovered, however, that I had reached the best point in the whole forest from which to see the Wartburg. After a long look from this point of vantage, my next impulse was to go down, as quickly as possible, through the intervening valley, and climb the opposite slope to the castle. Second thought proved best, however, and I discovered that there was a more excellent way. I learned, too, that there were other things to see besides castles in this famous old forest. Continuing to climb, I soon reached the summit of the middle mountain of the short range, and descending on the opposite side, I entered, in the valley below, a narrow defile, three feet wide and six hundred feet in length, known as the "Drachenschlucht" (Dragon-gorge). The trip to Eisenach would have been worth while even if only to see this far-famed defile.

Emerging from this, I climbed another slope, called by the Germans "Hohe Sonne" (High Sun), the highest of the three sister summits on the edge of the Thuringian Forest. From this peak I was rewarded with a magnificent view of the great wood that stretches for miles away to the south and west.

The sun was setting when I turned my steps toward. On beginning the climb I thought I was too tired to walk a mile, but I had already tramped a good half-dozen, and three more lay between me

and my evening meal at the White Swan Hotel.

A substantial supper refreshed me, and, in spite of foot-weariness, I set forth to see the town. A visit to the "Luther House," where the great reformer had received hospitality as a boy in the home of Frau Cotta, concluded the evening.

A good night's rest worked wonders. At six o'clock the next morning I was

on my way to the Wartburg. This time I did not miss the road. Passing the house where Bach, the musician, once lived, and, farther on, the villa of Reuter, the poet, I was soon well up the mountain side toward my destination. Never in my life have I enjoyed a morning walk more than that I took up the footpath to the Wartburg. At every turn in the road new beauties were disclosed. The morning sun was already high, but it had not dried the dew that lay on leaf and grass and flower. The air was sweet with the breath of pines, and the birds sang of love, just as birds had sung for centuries among the branches of the trees on this hillside. Early as it was, many tourists were afoot, and by the time we reached the drawbridge before the outer castle a score or more were ready for the official guide to conduct them through the mazes of this medieval building.

A word about the Wartburg may not be amiss. Tradition says that Lewis the Springer was hunting one day in these parts, in the year of grace 1067, when for the first time the hilltop on which the castle now stands came into view. His prophetic eye caught sight of the future fortress, and he is said to have exclaimed: "Wart, Berg, du sollst mir eine Burg werden" (Wart, mountain, thou shalt be a fortress for me). That very year the fortress was begun. Strong-backed Saxons carried heavy timbers and huge stones up the rugged heights (1,300 feet above sea level), and soon one of the most picturesque and impregnable of medieval fortresses crowned the summit of the Wartburg, and came to be called the Wartburg, or the "Wart-fortress." This old castle was built in Romanesque style, for the Gothic had not yet come into use.

Two things strike one forcibly—the immense strength and lasting quality of the great defensive walls, and the delicacy and lightness of the domestic architecture. This famous castle became, and continued for centuries, the residence of the Landgraves of Thuringia. Space

would fail, were I to try, to tell the tale of the ten centuries that have come and gone since this famous old castle was built. The building is a history in stone. A visit to the various rooms that have been recently restored to, as near as possible, their original form is worth days spent in poring over the pages of medieval manuscripts to the student of history.

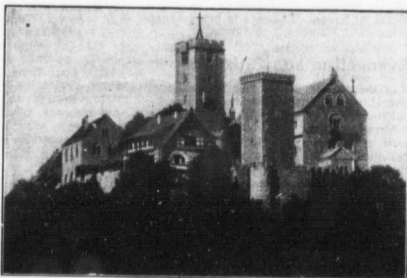
Three names from tradition and history must be mentioned. It was in this mountain stronghold that St. Elizabeth, the fair daughter of the musk-loving Landgrave, Hermann I., lived at the beginning of the thirteenth century. And it was to this period and in connection with the life of this beautiful woman that the famous Tannhauser legend belongs, which Wagner has immortalized for us.

But to us the name that brings the Wartburg nearest and makes it dearest is that of Martin Luther. It was here that he began his great work of translating the Bible for the German people. The history of this part of Luther's life is, in brief, as follows:

He had been summoned to appear before the first Diet held by Charles V. after his accession to the imperial throne. That Diet, held at Worms, was opened on January 22nd, 1521. Luther was summoned to appear on the 16th of April. Safe passage had been promised him, and yet his friends feared for his safety. And well they might, for although he was un molested while in the town and during the meeting of the Diet, there were plans afoot for his undoing. And these plans might have carried but for one man. Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony, had a warm place in his heart for the man who had done more than all others to make his recently founded university at Wittenberg famous, and he resolved to meet plot with counter-plot.

A band of his followers seized Luther at a quiet spot on the road he had taken for home, and hurried him away as if for fell purposes, but in reality for the reformer's safety. On the 4th of May, 1521, the young monk, who had set all Europe talking and who had already caused the Pope of Rome to tremble, was taken by night to the Wartburg, and there, while thousands were mourning him as dead, he was kept in safety for nearly a year.

The leisure afforded Luther at this time was not spent in idleness. He at once began what proved to be his great-



WARTBURG CASTLE.

est work, the translation of the Bible into the German tongue. A room was fitted up for him in the house of the warden of the castle, and here, in his lofty retreat, from the windows of which he could see the mighty trees that reared their heads so high in the forest