

AMERICAN SONG in GERMAN CASTLE

ARION SOCIETY ACCORDED DISTINGUISHING HONORS.



THE WARTBURG CASTLE, AT EISENBACH, GERMANY 28

New world musicians to the number of 230 have invaded the old world and have sung in one of the historic castles of Germany and are continuing their tour through various cities of the fatherland, such as Bremen, Berlin and other cities. This unique pilgrimage of American singers, which started from New York the latter part of June, is under the direction of the Arion Singing society of Brooklyn, and the distinction of singing in the Wartburg castle at Eisenach, Germany, is one which no other American musical organization has ever enjoyed, and one which all might well covet, for this ancient building is famous in history for the singing contests which were held in the twelfth century under the patronage of the Landgrave Hermann I.

The Wartburg is regarded by architects who know as one of the finest secular structures in Germany. It is also distinguished as the refuge of Luther in the turbulent times of the reformation, for he lived there under the name of "Junker Georg" from May 4, 1521, to March 6, 1522, engaged in the translation of the Bible.

The courtesy and distinguishing honor to sing in this historic old building was granted to the Arion society by Grand Duke Wilhelm Ernst of Saxe-Weimar, the present owner of the Wartburg, who occasionally makes his residence there for short periods. The group of buildings forming the castle is situated on the top of a hill, 600 feet above the thrifty city of Eisenach. Here begins the beautiful Thuringian forest, which stretches away to the south and east for more than 90 miles. This is one of the most lovely and attractive parts of all Europe. No wonder the picturesque spot was chosen as the site of the grand old castle, which was crumbling into ruins long before America was discovered and has only recently been restored.

The surrounding hills are covered with pine and birch trees, fertile valleys stretch away as far as the eye can reach, and frequent villages, with their quaint gables and tiled roofs, mark the well built highways. In every direction are fine vistas, with a variety of color at various times of the year. Steep slopes lead up to the castle on each side, and the stronghold was well situated to resist a besieging army in medieval times. But the days when trumpets called to arms while a mailed foe camped at its gates are long gone by, and the grim buildings are given over to the thousands of tourists who come each year to see how the landgraves lived and to examine with curious interest the room of the great reformer.

Emperor Wilhelm is said to have a special fondness for the Wartburg. He makes occasional visits to the castle and occupies apartments which are plain and simple in the extreme.

The original Wartburg was built by Ludwig the Springer in 1067-'70 and was the residence of the landgraves of Thuringia until the family ceased to exist in 1247, when it passed to other hands. Ludwig discovered the hill while on a hunting expedition. Attracted by the beauty of the scenery and by the isolated position which offered natural defenses, he exclaimed: "Wart, Burg, du sollst mir eine Burg werden" ("Wait, hill, you shall be a citadel"). From this saying the name Wartburg is derived. It is said that his proprietorship was disputed by Herr von Frankenstein, who claimed title to the property. Ludwig must swear that he was erecting the building on ground owned by his father, and this he was able to do by having workmen carry earth from his own possessions beyond dispute and scatter it on the site of the castle. History does not tell if his conscience ever troubled him, but the "still, small voice" did not call loudly in those stormy days of feudal lords and robber barons when "might was right." A famine

prevailed in the land, so that many men were available for the construction of the castle, and it was completed in three years. It consisted of two parts, the Voburg and the Haupt, or Hofburg. In the former is the so-called Ritterhaus, for the use of visiting knights and the main watch. The entrance is across a drawbridge over a deep moat and through a massive gateway, which was closed by two sets of heavy gates. To the right of the entrance are the quarters of the Schlosskommandant, which are fitted up in fifteenth century style.

On the second floor of the Ritterhaus are Luther's room and the "Perkheimer Stubchen," the latter being sent from Nuremberg by Grand Duchess Sophie in 1872. The furniture of the reformer is as he left it—the heavy writing table, the stone footstool, the big green stove and the great bed, with its high posts. Against the wall is where the inkwell struck when he hurled it at the head of Satan. A great hole has been made in the plaster by relic hunters who have carried away souvenirs of Luther's anger at the devil. At the present rate of disappearance it will not be long before the entire wall succumbs to the onslaught. The stones could resist longer the crossbows and rams of olden times than the hordes of annual visitors, who number between 30,000 and 40,000.

The room is lighted by two little windows. Through these Luther could look out upon a landscape which presented a wealth of attractive features. He did not, however, enjoy his enforced stay at the castle and was glad to hasten away to Wittenberg.

Near by is the little, narrow, cupboardlike "Stubchen," which was occupied by the reformer's friend, Willibald Pirckheimer of Nuremberg. A long, narrow hallway, ornamented with many adages from the old German, leads to the "Reformation" room, the walls of which are adorned with 18 pictures painted by Paufels, Thumann, Linnig and Struys. They represent scenes in the youth of the great reformer, his arrival at the castle, escorted by mailed knights; his departure as "Junker Georg," with a winter's growth of beard to conceal his identity; his trial before the court at Wittenberg, and others of equal interest in his strenuous life. This room is shown to visitors only by special permission of the commandant.

Interest in the Wartburg must ever center about the picturesque building known as the "Landgrafenhau." It is three stories high, and occupies a commanding part of the castle's site on top of the hill. The third floor is given over to the large festival hall, where the Arion society sang. It is a beautifully decorated room, with rafted ceilings and walls covered with symbolic pictures. Huge carved benches are ranged along the sides, and tapestries are numerous. This hall is used only on especially festive occasions. Its appearance is entirely modern, although one of the benches is an original from the early days of the castle. The old building is not without its touch of humor. On the wall of the gallery leading to the festival hall are 20 pictures, representing the decades of life for 100 years. They are:

Man's history: At ten years, a calf; at 20, a buck; at 30, a steer; at 40, a lion; at 50, a fox; at 60, a wolf; at 70, a dog; at 80, a tomcat; at 90, a donkey; at 100, an ox's death's head.

Woman's history: At ten years, a chickling; at 20, a dove; at 30, a magpie; at 40, a peacock; at 50, a hen; at 60, a goose; at 70, a vulture; at 80, an owl; at 90, a bat; at 100, a death's head with a beak.

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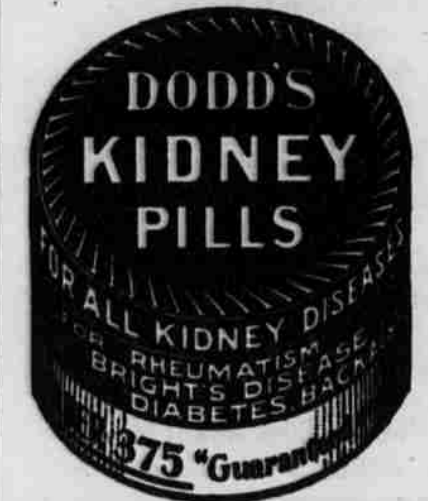
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