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'PRENTICE PILLARS: THE ARCHITECT AND HIS PUPIL.

BY W. CROOKE.

IN many parts of the world a tale is current which usually assumes two forms. In the first class come the stories of a builder or architect and his pupil. The latter executes some work which surpasses that of his master, who in mortification commits suicide, or through jealousy kills the pupil. In the second group the builder or architect executes a work, and his employer, a King or Rāja, orders him to be killed or mutilated in order that he may not bring glory to another employer by executing a work as great or greater than that which he has completed.

Of the first group I have found the following instances :

One of the circular windows in the transept of Lincoln Cathedral is said to have been designed by an apprentice. According to one story, the master, in mortification at the superiority of his pupil's work, committed suicide: by another account, in his rage he killed his pupil. Marks of human blood, which can never be washed out, are said to be visible; similar tales are told of the 'Prentice Pillar at Roslin Abbey, of the 'Prentice Window at Melrose, and of two rare windows in Rouen Cathedral, in all of which cases the master is said to have killed his apprentice.¹ The classical prototype of these stories is the tale of Talos or Perdix, nephew of Daedalus, who invented the saw, an

¹ *Notes and Queries*, v. (1852), pp. 395-498; 5, i. (1874), p. 346; vii. (1877), p. 374.

idea suggested to him by the backbone of a fish or the teeth of a serpent ; the chisel ; the compasses ; the potter's wheel. His skill aroused the envy of Daedalus, who flung him headlong from the summit of the temple of Athena on the Acropolis at Athens ; but the goddess caught him as he fell, and changed him into a partridge (*perdix*).¹ This legend has been fully discussed by Sir James Frazer, who considers the suggestion that, through the Cretan story of Talos, the Attic legend is connected with the Phœnician cult of Baal-Moloch ; he dismisses as fanciful the theory of Bachofen that the murder of Talos by his maternal uncle embodies a reminiscence of an attempt to renounce and abolish the ancient matriarchal system in favour of the patriarchal type.²

Tales of the second group, in which the successful builder or architect falls a victim to the jealousy of his master, who fears that he may lose reputation if a like or better building is erected for a rival prince, seem to be more common. The following are some examples :

"Nemedius built two royal seats in the island [Ireland], which were called Cinneich, at Joubhniallain, and Raith Ciombhaoith, in Seimhne. These places were erected by the four sons of Madain Muinreamhair, who were called Fomhoraice ; their names were Bog, Robhog, Rodin, and Ruibhne. These master builders and their countrymen were distinguished by the name Fomhoraice, because they were a sort of pirates or sea-robbers, that came originally from Africa, and settled from that time in the north of Ireland. The next morning after these palaces were finished, Nemedius commanded the four builders to be slain, out of jealousy, lest they should afterwards erect other structures that should exceed his in state and magnificence. These brothers were killed at a place called

¹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, viii. 247 et seq.

² Pausanias, ii. 232 ff. ; *The Golden Bough*, 3rd edition, "The Dying God," 74 f.

Doire Lighe, and there they were buried." ¹ "Master Hans Brüggemann, born in Husum, was a skilful artisan and able man. It was he who made the beautiful altar-piece for the monks of Bordesholm, which in the year 1666 was removed to the Cathedral of Sleswig, on which it is said that he and his men laboured for seven years, and of which every figure was steeped in oil to prevent injury from worms. When his work was finished King Christian II. and his queen Elizabeth came to see it, on which occasion Brüggemann, availing himself of his opportunity, carved likenesses of them both in wood, which he placed on two pillars on each side of the altar. When the Lübeckers saw this work they wished Hans Brüggemann to execute an altar-piece for them equally beautiful. This he not only engaged to do, but also to make one still more wonderful. Hereat the monks of Bordesholm were stung with jealousy, and gave him something which caused a fluxion and weakness of his eyes, so that he could no longer work. He died in the town of Eiderstädt, near Bordesholm." ² Mr. Thorpe adds: "Of the altar-piece of the Church of Nörre-Broby, in Fyen, it is also said that when the artist had completed it he was asked whether he could execute another better, or equally good, and on his answering in the affirmative, they put out his eyes." .

A tale of the same kind comes from Arabia. Nu'mān I. (*circa* 400 A.D.) "is renowned in legend as the builder of Khawarnaq, a famous castle near Hira. It was built at the instance of the Sāsānian king, Yazdigird I., who desired a salubrious residence for his son, Prince Bahrām Gor. On its completion, Nu'mān ordered the architect, a 'Roman' (*i.e.* Byzantine subject) named Sinimmār,

¹ Jeoffrey Keating, *General History of Ireland*, trans. Dermot O'Connor, ed. 1854, p. 76 *et seq.*

² B. Thorpe, *Northern Mythology*, ii. 255, quoted in 7, *Notes and Queries*, iv. 304 f.

to be cast headlong from the battlements, either on account of his boast that he could have constructed a yet more wonderful edifice 'which should turn round with the Sun,' or for fear that he might reveal the position of a certain stone, the removal of which would cause the whole building to collapse."¹ According to another Arabian story, quoted by Mr. W. A. Clouston,² 'Antar, the Bedouin poet-hero, acquired the sword Dham, forged out of a thunderbolt which had killed one of the Chief's camels. When the smith delivered the sword to his patron he said, "This sword is sharp, O Chief of the tribe of Ghaylib—sharp indeed, but where is the smiter for this sword?" Quoth the Chief, "As for the smiter, I am he," and he instantly struck off the smith's head, so that there should never be another sword Dham.

Tales of this kind are very common in India: in most of them the successful artist is mutilated or tortured. In one case, that of Tirumala Nāik of Madura (A.D. 1623-59), the king is said to have immured in a dungeon and starved to death the builders of his famous palace, so that another building like it should never be erected. He had a bas-relief of the artists made and fixed on the palace walls. Another tale of the same kind is current in Baroda. When the Diamond Gate at Dabhoi was built it was named after the architect who designed it. The Rāja was jealous lest the architect might go elsewhere and design a building as good or better. So on the completion of the gate he caused the architect to be buried under the adjoining Kālīka Māta temple. His wife, however, managed to keep him alive by passing to him milk and other liquid food through the interstices of the stones. Six years

¹ R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, 1907, p. 40. Another version of the story from the *Heft Menner*, or "Seven Faces," of the Persian Abdallah Hatifi, who died A.D. 1520, is quoted by Mr. W. A. Clouston, 7, *Notes and Queries*, iv. (1887), p. 141.

² 7, *Notes and Queries*, iv. p. 141.

later the Rāja had reason to deplore the loss of his architect, whereupon the latter was brought out, a little worn, but ready to turn his hand to the next job.¹

The ancient town of Punvarānagad in Cutch was built by Punvar, Chief of Kera. He was noted for his cruelty, and, quarrelling with his family, he resolved to found a city and call it after his own name. When the city was finished, the architect was rewarded by having both his hands chopped off, so that he might not do work like it for any one else.²

Two versions from the Panjāb are remarkable for the ingenious explanation of the story suggested by Mr. H. A. Rose.

Gugga, the workman who built the temples at Brahmaur in Chamba, was rewarded by having his right hand cut off by the Rāna, whose house he had built, and was then accidentally killed by a fall from the temple porch after he had completed the building.³

At Bhalāwag the Rāja built many tanks. "After making all the tanks, the Rāja sent for the builder, and, being much pleased with his work, gave him as a reward all he asked for. But people then became envious of the kindness shown to him by the Rāja, fearing that he would be elevated to the rank of Musāhib or courtier, and so they told the Rāja that if the builder did the same kind of work anywhere else, the Rāja's memory would not be perpetuated, and that steps should be taken to prevent this. The Rāja said that this was good advice, and that, of course, he had already thought of it. So the builder was sent for, and although he tried to satisfy the Rāja that he would never make the same kind of tank at any other place,

¹ *Bombay Gazetteer*, vii. p. 548.

² *Ibid.* v. p. 235.

³ H. A. Rose, *Glossary Tribes and Castes of the Panjab and North-West Frontier Provinces*, i. [still unpublished], p. 207, quoting *Chamba Gazetteer*, p. 298.

the Rāja paid no heed to his entreaties, and had his right hand amputated. Thus disabled, the man remained helpless for some time, but having recovered, it struck him that with his skill he could do some work with his left hand, and he, accordingly, built two temples, one at Jāthia Devi, and the other at Sada, both places now in Patiāla territory." ¹

Speaking of people being buried as "guardians of the gate," because it was believed that the spirit would survive and do watch and ward over the city wall or the entrance through it, Mr. Rose observes : " This idea of the guardian spirit may explain many folk-tales in which the artificer is rewarded by being sacrificed by his patron, ostensibly to prevent his skill being employed by a rival. . . . This may be a variant of the superstition that the new structure must be guarded by a spirit as its custodian. Once granted that necessity, what spirit could be more suitable than that of the architect himself ? " This theory, linking together two chapters in folk-belief, is decidedly attractive. But it may be remarked that, in the Indian form of the tale, the architect is generally mutilated or tortured, not killed ; and it is not easy to connect the tales which I have quoted with the numerous examples collected by Dr. E. Sidney Hartland.²

It is needless to speculate how far these stories are historically true. It is quite possible that a master-builder, mortified at his failure, may commit suicide, or that, in a fit of jealousy, he may kill his successful rival, particularly if he was his own pupil. It is equally possible that an Eastern despot, believing that his reputation depended on the completion of some unique building, may slay or mutilate the unfortunate architect, in order to prevent him from doing similar work elsewhere. It is also not

¹ *Ibid.* i. p. 364.

² Article " Foundation," J. Hastings, *Encyclopaedia Religion and Ethics*, vi. p. 109 *et seq.* Cf. article, " Bridge," *ibid.* ii. p. 850 *et seq.*

improbable that the beauty of some window, pillar, or building may have originated the tale of the fate of the unfortunate apprentices.

It may be hoped that this slight discussion of the tales of this type may lead to further investigation and the collection of additional instances.

W. CROOKE.