

THE ARCHITECT

OF

COLOGNE CATHEDRAL.

The Archbishop Conrad de Hochsteden, wishing to erect a cathedral which should exceed all others in Germany and France, both in beauty and design, directed the most celebrated draftsman of Cologne to prepare a plan. The name of this architect remains unknown. Let this however not be attributed to what was the common lot of almost all architects who covered Europe with monuments in the middle ages; the reason was very different as will be seen presently. It was in 1248, that Conrad de Hochsteden issued this order, and in 1499, 250 years afterwards, the cathedral was still unfinished.

The architect to whom the Archbishop had applied, was sauntering one day along the Rhine, meditating upon his plan. Absorbed in thought he reached the Frank's gate, where at this day may be seen several mutilated statues. Here he seated himself. He had a small stick in his hand, with which he drew sketches upon the sand, then effaced them and then began others. He continued in this manner until the setting sun reflected its last rays upon the bosom of the Rhine. "Ah!" cried the artist, "how beautiful a cathedral would look, its towers soaring towards heaven, and catching the departing sun beams, while the Rhine and town would be involved in darkness; ah! this would be lovely!" And he continued drawing in the sand, perfectly satisfied with himself.

Not far from him was also seated an old man, who appeared to observe his movements with great attention. Indeed, when the artist, thinking he had attained what he sought, exclaimed aloud, "Yes, that's it." "Yes," murmured the old man, "that's it indeed, but it is the cathedral of Strasburg." He was right. The artist thought himself inspired, but his production was a mere effort of memory. This plan was therefore effaced and he commenced another. Every time that he was satisfied and had drawn a plan in accordance with his ideas, the old man chuckled and muttered: "Metz, Amiens," or some other city famous for its cathedral. "On my word, master," said the artist, tired of his jeers, "you seem to understand well how to blame the works of others, I should like to see

what you can do." The old man said nothing but continued his criticism until losing patience the artist exclaimed: "Come, come, try your hand!" And he held out the stick to him.

The old man looked at him in a peculiar manner, then taking the stick, he traced a few lines in the sand, but in such a masterly way, that the other called out immediately: "Oh! t'is plain you are an architect! Do you belong to Cologne?" "No," rejoined the old man drily, and he returned the stick to the artist.

"Why do you not proceed?" demanded the latter. "I entreat you to finish your design."

"No, you would copy it, and reap all the honour" replied the other.

"Listen, old Gentleman!" continued the architect, "we are alone!" And in fact, the shore at this moment was deserted, for the night was becoming darker and darker. "I'll give you ten golden crowns, if you will complete the sketch now before me."

"Ten golden crowns to me!" roared out the old man, and so saying he pulled from under his cloak an enormous purse, which he threw in the air—by the noise, it was evidently full of gold. The artist started back some paces, then returning, full of agitation and gloom, he caught hold of the old man's arm, and, drawing a dagger at the same time, cried out: "Finish it, or thou diest."

"Violence against me! Ah! ah! that will not serve you either—" said the stranger with a smile of

derision—then seizing his adversary he hurled him to the ground saying: “Well! well! now you know, that neither gold or violence can affect me, you may have the plan which I sketched before you, and the honour along with it, if you choose.”

“How so?” exclaimed the prostrate artist.

“Be mine, body and soul!” answered the stranger with a stern voice. At this the other uttered a loud cry, and made the sign of the cross, whereupon the devil, for he it was, suddenly disappeared.

On recovering his senses, the architect, who found himself lying upon the sands, arose and hastened home, where the old woman who waited on him, and who had been his nurse, asked why he returned so late. He did not attend to her, but hurried to his chamber and immediately retired to bed: where he dreamed of apparitions, and amongst others of the old man who presented himself to his imagination, tracing those admirable outlines upon the sand. “Ah!” exclaimed he upon waking the following day, “a plan of this cathedral that is to surpass all others, and has so long engrossed all my thoughts, does actually exist!” Whereupon he fell to work drawing towers, porches and arches, but nothing succeeded. The old man’s plan, the marvellous plan, was the only one that would do.

He therefore threw down his pencil and proceeded to the church of the Holy Apostles and tried to pray. Vain effort! This church is one of the smallest in Cologne. What it must have appeared in comparison with the

old man's drawing may well be imagined. In the evening he again found himself, how, he knew not, upon the borders of the Rhine. The same stillness, the same solitude, reigned there as upon the preceding night. Mechanically he reached the Frank's gate. There he perceived the old man, apparently drawing upon the wall. Every stroke was of fire. Although the burning lines crossed and interlaced each other in a thousand different ways, yet, in the midst of this apparent confusion, forms of spindrals, steeples and gothic fret-work might be distinctly traced, which, however, disappeared after sparkling an instant, although at times these brilliant lines seemed to combine and form a perfect plan. The artist now hoped he was about to behold the wondrous cathedral, but suddenly the whole became so confused that his bewildered eye entirely lost sight of the object.

“Well! will you have my plan?” said the old man to the artist. This latter sighed deeply. “Will you have it? Speak!” re-iterated the Demon, and as he uttered these words he drew the image of a portal in luminous tracery on the wall, and then as suddenly effaced it.

“I will do all you ask,” wildly answered the artist. “To morrow then at midnight!” replied the other and they then separated. Next day the architect arose full of life and joy. He had forgotten every thing, save that he was at last to possess the plan of that invisible cathedral, which he had so long sought for. He then approached the window. The

weather was beautiful. The Rhine, illuminated by the rays of the glorious sun, formed a sparkling crescent. The city of Cologne stretching along its bank, seemed to descend in a gentle slope from the hill to the shore, and from the shore into the golden waves, which bathed the foot of the ramparts. "Let's see," muttered the artist to himself, "where shall my cathedral stand?" And he looked around for a suitable place. While thus occupied with proud and happy speculations, he saw his old nurse quit the house: she was clothed in black. "Where are you going to, nurse?" exclaimed he, "what means that mourning dress?"

"I am going to the Holy Apostle's church, to hear a mass for the deliverance of a soul from purgatory," answered she.

"A mass of deliverance!" ejaculated the artist. Then closing the window and throwing himself upon his bed, he burst into tears: "A mass of deliverance," repeated he, "Alas! no masses or prayers can avail for me! I am damned, damned for ever! damned through my ambitious perverseness." It was in this state that his nurse found him, when she returned from church. She asked what grieved him, but as he made no answer, she entreated him so earnestly, that he was no longer able to resist, and communicated to her his engagement. The old woman was thunderstruck with this recital. "What! Sell your soul to the demon! Is it possible?" ejaculated the worthy woman crossing herself. Have you forgotten the promises made at your baptism, and all the

prayers which I formerly taught you? Go, go directly in God's name and confess!"

The artist sobbed bitterly. But at one moment the image of the marvellous cathedral sparkled before his eyes and fascinated his senses; then again the idea of eternal damnation arose so vividly and forcibly to his distracted thoughts, that he trembled like a leaf. The nurse being at a loss what to do, resolved to consult her confessor. Having told him the whole affair, the priest began to consider. "What," said the holy man after a pause. "A cathedral that would make Cologne the marvel of all Germany and France!" — "But, father" interposed the old Dame.—"A cathedral, to which pilgrims would resort from all parts of the world," continued he speaking to himself! Then after having well reflected and meditated, he exclaimed aloud; "Here, my good woman, here is a relic of the eleven thousand virgins, give it to your master, let him take it with him to the place of meeting. He must endeavour to obtain the plan of this wondrous church, from the devil, before he signs the agreement. As soon as he gets it into his hands, let him show this relic and trust in God for the rest."

It was half past eleven, when the artist quitted his dwelling, leaving his nurse on her knees; indeed, he himself had been praying the greater part of the evening. Having concealed the relic, which was to serve as his protection, under his cloak, he proceeded to the appointed place where he found the Demon, who had laid aside his disguise and appeared in all his hideousness.

“Don't be alarmed,” said he to the architect, who trembled from head to foot; “fear nothing, and approach.” The architect obeyed. Upon which the Devil exclaimed: “Here is the plan of your cathedral, and here is the contract which you must sign.”

The artist felt, that this was the moment upon which depended his salvation. Breathing a mental prayer to God for success, he seized the marvellous plan with one hand, held up the holy relic with the other and exclaimed: “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost! By virtue of this holy relic, I command thee, Satan, to begone. Begone I say!” and he repeated the signs of the cross.

The Devil was taken aback. “T'was some priest who put thee up to this,” said he in a fury; “none but a priest could have taught thee this trick.” He then remained a while considering whether he should take back his plan, or throw himself on the artist and kill him. But the latter who was on his guard, pressed the plan close to his breast, and employed the holy relic as a shield. Seeing this, the Fiend exclaimed: “I am outwitted, but I will be revenged, in despite of your relics and priests. Listen, foolish mortal! That church, the plan of which you have stolen from me, shall never be completed. And as for thee, I will blot out thy name from the memory of men. Thou shalt not be damned, O builder of Cologne cathedral, but thy name shall pass away, be forgotten and unknown for ever!” And so saying the Devil disappeared.

These last words. "*Forgotten and unknown for ever*" made a singular impression on the architect's mind, and he returned home in a melancholy mood, although he was master of the marvellous plan. The next day, however, he directed, that a mass of thanksgiving should be celebrated, and speedily commenced building the noble cathedral, which rose higher and higher from day to day, so that the artist trusted, that the Devil would be a false prophet. As for his name, he determined to have it engraved upon a brass plate, affixed to the portal. But the dissensions which took place between the Archbishop and citizens soon interrupted the progress of the building. The architect died suddenly and under such circumstances, as caused it to be believed that the devil had hastened his death*. Since that time divers fruitless attempts have been made at different intervals to finish the cathedral. Fruitless also have been the efforts of the learned of Germany to discover the name of the architect; and the work still remains imperfect and his name unknown.

* It is said that Satan came behind him and pushed him off the top of the unfinished tower.