



Strange Survivals: Some Chapters in the History of Man

Sabine Baring-Gould

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All over the north of Europe the greatest aversion is felt to be the first to enter a new building, or to go over a newly erected bridge. If to do this is not everywhere and in all cases thought to entail death, it is considered supremely unlucky. Several German legends are connected with this superstition. The reader, if he has been to Aix-la-Chapelle, has doubtless had the rift in the great door pointed out to him, and has been told how it came there. The devil and the architect made a compact that the first should draw the plans, and the second gain the Kudos; and the devil's wage was to be that he should receive the first who crossed the threshold of the church when completed. When the building was finished, the architect's conscience smote him, and he confessed the compact to the bishop. "We'll do him," said the prelate; that is to say, he said something to this effect in terms more appropriate to the century in which he lived, and to his high ecclesiastical office.

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