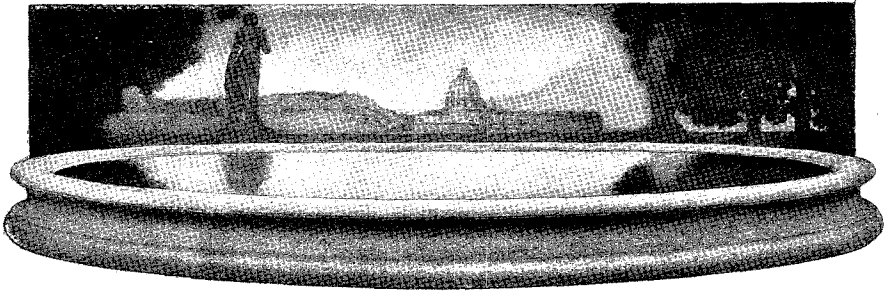


ROMAN VILLAS



BY EDITH WHARTON

WITH PICTURES BY MAXFIELD PARRISH

IN studying the villas near the smaller Italian towns, it is difficult to learn much of their history. Now and then some information may be gleaned from a local guide-book, but the facts are usually meager or inaccurate, and the name of the architect, the date of the building, the original plan of the garden, have often alike been forgotten.

With regard to the villas in and about Rome the case is different. Here the student is overwhelmed by a profusion of documents. Illustrious architects dispute the honor of having built the famous pleasure-houses on the seven hills, and historians of art, from Vasari downward, have recorded their annals. Falda engraved them in the seventeenth century, and Percier and Fontaine at the beginning of the nineteenth; and they have been visited and described, at various periods, by countless travelers from different countries.

One of the earliest Roman gardens of which a description has been preserved is that which Bramante laid out within the Vatican in the last years of the fifteenth century. This terraced garden, with its monumental double flight of steps leading up by three levels to the Giardino della Pigna, was described in 1523 by the Venetian ambassador to Rome, who speaks of its grass parterres and fountains, its hedges of laurel and cypress, its plantations of mulberries and roses. One half of the garden (the court of the Belvedere) had brick-paved walks between rows of orange-trees; in its center were statues of the Nile

and the Tiber above a fountain; while the Apollo, the Laocoon, and the Venus of the Vatican were placed about it in niches. This garden was long since sacrificed to the building of the Braccio Nuovo and the Vatican Library; but it is worth mentioning that Burckhardt, whose least word on Italian gardens is more illuminating than the treatises of other writers, thought that Bramante's terraced stairway first set the example of that architectural magnificence which marks the great Roman gardens of the Renaissance.

Next in date comes the Villa Madama, Raphael's unfinished masterpiece on the slope of Monte Mario. This splendid pleasure-house, which was begun in 1516 for Cardinal Giuliano de' Medici, afterward Pope Clement VII, was intended to be the model of the great *villa suburbana*, and no subsequent building of the sort is comparable to what it would have been had the original plans been carried out. But the villa was built under an evil star. Raphael died before the work was finished, and it was carried on with some alterations by Giulio Romano and Antonio da Sangallo. In 1527 the troops of Cardinal Colonna nearly destroyed it by fire; and, without ever being completed, it passed successively into the possession of the Chapter of St. Eustace, of the Duchess of Parma (whence its name of Madama), and of the King of Naples, who suffered it to fall into complete neglect.

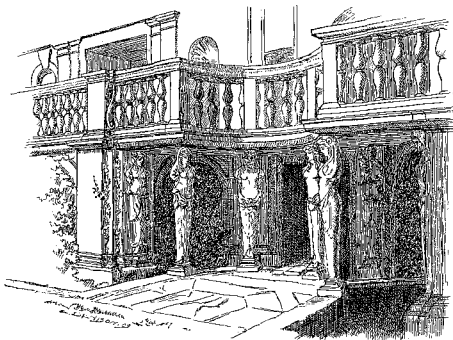
The unfinished building, with its mighty loggia stuccoed by Giovanni da Udine,

and the semicircular arcade at the back, is too familiar to need detailed description; and the gardens are so dilapidated that they are of interest only to an eye experienced enough to reconstruct them from their skeleton. They consist of two long terraces, one above the other, cut in the side of the wooded slope overhanging the villa. The upper terrace is on a level with Raphael's splendid loggia, and seems but a roofless continuation of that airy hall. Against the hillside and at the end it is bounded by a retaining-wall once surmounted by a marble balustrade and set with niches for statuary, while on the other side it looks forth over the Tiber and the Campagna. Below this terrace is another of the same proportions, its retaining-wall broken at each end by a stairway descending from the upper level, and the greater part of its surface taken up by a large rectangular tank, into which water gushes from the niches in the lateral wall. It is evident from the breadth of treatment of these terraces that they are but a fragment of the projected whole. Percier and Fontaine, in their "*Maisons de Plaisance de Rome*" (1809), published an interesting "reconstitution" of the Villa Madama and its gardens, as they conceived it might have been carried to completion; but their plan is merely the brilliant conjecture of two artists penetrated with the spirit of the Renaissance, for they had no documents to go by. The existing fragment is, however, well worthy of study, for the purity of its architecture and the broad simplicity of its plan are in marked contrast to the complicated design and overcharged details of some of the later Roman gardens.

Third in date among the early Renaissance gardens comes another, of which few traces are left: that of the Vigna del Papa, or Villa di Papa Giulio, just beyond the Porta del Popolo. Here, however, the building itself, and the architectural composition which once united the house and grounds, are fortunately well preserved, and so exceptionally interesting

that they deserve a careful description. The Villa di Papa Giulio was built by Pope Julius III, whose pontificate extends from 1550 to 1555. The villa therefore dates from the middle of the sixteenth century; but so many architects were associated with it, and so much confusion exists as to their respective contributions, that it can only be said that the Pope himself, Michelangelo, Vignola, Vasari, and Amanati appear all to have had a hand in the work. The exterior elevation, though it has been criticized, is not as inharmonious as might have been expected, and on the garden side both plan and elevation have a charm and picturesqueness which disarm criticism. Above all, it is felt at once that the arrangement is perfectly suited to a warm climate. The villa forms a semicircle at the back, inclosing a paved court. The ground floor is an open vaulted arcade, adorned with Zuccherò's celebrated frescos of *putti* peeping through vine-wreathed trellises; and the sides of the court, beyond this arcade, are bounded by two-storied lateral wings, with blind arcades, and niches adorned with statues. Facing the villa, a colonnaded loggia terminates the court; and thence one looks down into the beautiful lower court of the bath, which appears to have been designed by Vasari. From the loggia, steps descend to a semicircular court inclosed in walls, with a balustraded opening in its center; and this balustrade rests on a row of caryatids which encircle the lowest court and form a screen before the grotto-like bath under the arches of the upper terrace. The plan is too complicated, and the architectural motives are too varied, to admit of clear description; both must be seen to give an idea of the full beauty of the composition. Returning

to the upper loggia above the bath, one looks across the latter to a corresponding loggia of three arches on the opposite side, on the axis of which is a gateway leading to the actual gardens—gardens which, alas! no longer exist. It will thus be seen that the flagged court, the two open log-



Drawn by E. Denison from a photograph
GROTTO, VILLA DI PAPA GIULIO

gias, and the bath are so many skilfully graduated steps in what Percier and Fontaine call the "artistic progression" linking the gardens to the house, while the whole is so planned that from the central hall of the villa (and in fact from its entrance-door) one may look across the court and down the long vista of columns, into what were once the shady depths of the garden.

In all Italian garden-architecture there is nothing quite comparable for charm and delicately reminiscent classicalism with this grotto-bath of Pope Julius's villa. Here we find the tradition of the old Roman villa-architecture, as it had been lovingly studied in the letters of Pliny, transposed into Renaissance forms, with the sense of its continued fitness to unchanged conditions of climate and a conscious return to the splendor of the old patrician life. It is instructive to compare this natural reflowering of a national art with the frigid archaeological classicalism of Winckelmann and Canova. Here there is no literal transcription of uncomprehended detail: the spirit is preserved, because it is still living, but it finds expression in subtly altered forms. Above all, the artist has drawn his inspiration from Roman art, the true source of modern architecture, and not from that of Greece, which, for all its beauty and far-reaching esthetic influences, was *not* the direct source of modern artistic inspiration, for the plain historical reason that it was utterly forgotten and unknown when the medieval world began to wake from its lethargy and gather up its scattered heritage of artistic traditions.

When John Evelyn came to Rome in 1644 and alighted "at Monsieur Petit's in the Piazza Spagnola," many of the great Roman villas were still in the first freshness of their splendor, and the taste which called them forth had not yet wearied of them. Later travelers, with altered ideals, were not sufficiently interested to examine in detail what already seemed antiquated and out of fashion; but to Evelyn, a passionate lover of architecture and garden-craft, the Italian villas were patterns of excellence, to be carefully studied and minutely described for the benefit of those who sought to imitate them in England. It is doubtful if later generations will ever be diverted by the aquatic "surprises" and mechanical toys in which Evelyn took such

simple pleasure; but the real beauties he discerned are once more receiving intelligent recognition after two centuries of contempt and indifference. It is worth noting in this connection that, at the very height of the reaction against Italian gardens, they were lovingly studied and truly understood by two men great enough to rise above the prejudices of their age: the French architects Percier and Fontaine, whose volume contains some of the most suggestive analyses ever written of the purpose and meaning of Renaissance garden-architecture.

Probably one of the least changed among the villas visited by Evelyn is "the house of the Duke of Florence upon the brow of Mons Pincius." The Villa Medici, on being sold by that family in 1801, had the good fortune to pass into the hands of the French government, and its "facciata incrusted with antique and rare basso-relievos and statues" still looks out over the statued arcade, the terrace "balustraded with white marble" and planted with "perennial greens," and the "mount planted with cypresses," which Evelyn so justly admired.

The villa, built in the middle of the sixteenth century by Annibale Lippi, was begun for one cardinal and completed for another. It stands in true Italian fashion against the hillside above the Spanish Steps, its airy upper stories planted on one of the mighty bastion-like basements so characteristic of the Roman villa. A villa above, a fortress below, it shows that, even in the polished cinque-cento, life in the Papal States needed the protection of stout walls and heavily barred windows. The garden-façade, raised a story above the entrance, has all the smiling openness of the Renaissance pleasure-house, and is interesting as being probably the earliest example of the systematic use of fragments of antique sculpture in an architectural elevation. But this façade, with its charming central loggia, is sufficiently well known to make a detailed description superfluous, and it need be studied here only in relation to its surroundings.

Falda's plan of the grounds, and that of Percier and Fontaine, made over a hundred and fifty years later, show how little succeeding fashions have been allowed to disturb the original design. The gardens are still approached by a long shady alley which ascends from the piazza before the



entrance; and they are still divided into a symmetrically planted grove, a flower-garden before the house, and an upper wild-wood, with a straight path leading to the "mount planted with cypresses."

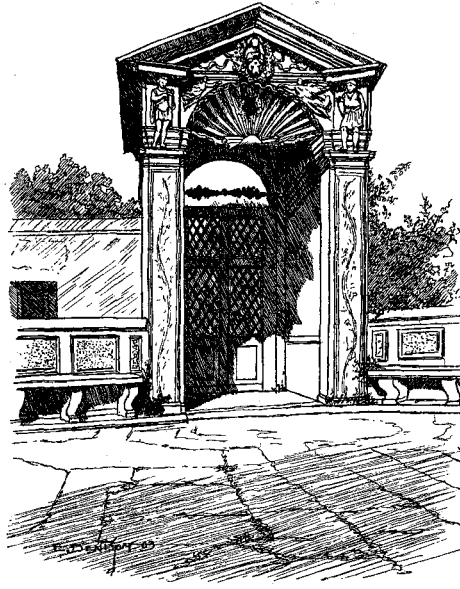
It is safe to say that no one enters the grounds of the Villa Medici without being soothed and charmed by that garden-magic which is the peculiar quality of some of the old Italian pleasantries. It is not necessary to be a student of garden-architecture to feel the spell of quiet and serenity which falls on one at the very gateway; but it is worth the student's while to try to analyze the elements of which the sensation is composed. Perhaps they will be found to resolve themselves into diversity, simplicity, and fitness. The plan of the garden is simple, but its different parts are so contrasted as to produce, by the fewest means, a pleasant sense of diversity without sacrifice of repose. The ilex-grove into which one first enters is traversed by hedged alleys which lead to *rond-points* with stone seats and marble Terms. At one

point the inclosing wall of ilex is broken to admit a charming open loggia, whence one looks into the depths of green below. Emerging from the straight shady walks, with their effect of uniformity and repose, one comes on the flower-garden before the house, spreading to the sunshine its box-edged parterres adorned with fountains and statues. Here garden and house-front are harmonized by a strong predominance of architectural lines, and by the beautiful lateral loggia, with niches for statues, above which the upper ilex-wood rises. Tall hedges and trees there are none, for from the villa one looks across the garden at the wide sweep of the Campagna and the mountains; indeed, this is probably one of the first of the gardens which Gurlitt defines as "gardens to look out from," in

contradistinction to the earlier sort, the "gardens to look into." Mounting to the terrace, one comes to the third division of the garden, the wild-wood with its irregular levels, through which a path leads to the mount, with a little temple on its summit. This is a rare feature in Italian grounds: in hilly Italy there was small need of creating the artificial hillocks so much esteemed in the old English gardens. In this case, however, the mount justifies its existence, for it affords a wonderful view over the other side of Rome and the Campagna.

Finally, the general impression of the

Medici garden resolves itself into a sense of fitness, of perfect harmony between the material at hand and the use made of it. The architect has used his opportunities to the utmost; but he has adapted nature without distorting it. In some of the great French gardens, at Vaux and Versailles for example, one is conscious, under all the beauty, of the immense effort expended, of the vast upheavals of earth, the forced creating of effects; but it was the great gift of the

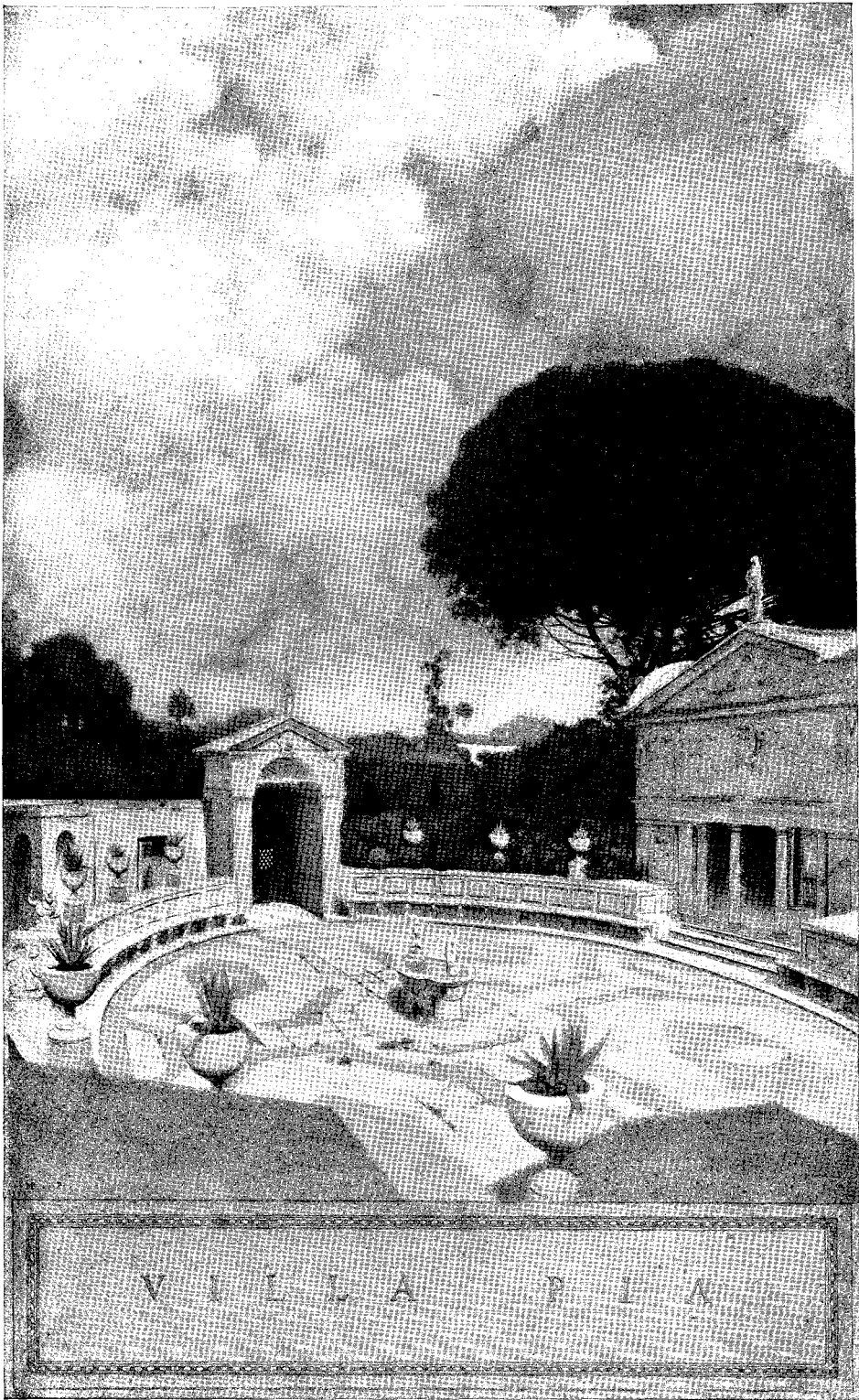


COURTYARD GATE OF THE VILLA PIA

Italian gardener to see the natural advantages of his incomparable landscape, and to fit them into his scheme with an art which concealed itself.

While Annibale Lippi, an architect known by only two buildings, was laying out the Medici garden, the Palatine Hill was being clothed with monumental terraces by a master to whom the Italian Renaissance owed much of its stateliest architecture. Vignola, who transformed the slopes of the Palatine into the sumptuous Farnese gardens, was the architect of the mighty fortress-villa of Caprarola, and of the garden-portico of Mondragone; and tradition ascribes to him also the incomparable Lante gardens at Bagnaia.

In the Farnese gardens he found full play for his gift of grouping masses and



Drawn by Maxfield Parrish. Half-tone plate engraved by H. Davidson

IN THE GARDENS OF THE VATICAN

for the scenic sense which enabled him to create such grandiose backgrounds for the magnificence of the great Roman prelates. The Palatine gardens have been gradually sacrificed to the excavations of the Palace of the Cæsars, but their almost theatrical magnificence is shown in the prints of Falda and of Percier and Fontaine. In this prodigal development of terraces, niches, porticos, and ramps, one perceives the outcome of Bramante's double staircase in the inner gardens of the Vatican, and Burckhardt remarks that in the Farnese gardens "the period of unity of composition and effective grouping of masses" finally triumphs over the earlier style.

No villa was ever built on this site, and there is consequently an air of heaviness and over-importance about the stately ascent which leads merely to two domed pavilions; but the composition would have regained its true value had it been crowned by such a palace as the Roman cardinals were beginning to build for themselves. It is especially interesting to note the contrast in style and plan between this garden and that of the contemporaneous Villa Medici. One was designed for display, the other for privacy, and the success with which the purpose of each is fulfilled shows the originality and independence of their creators. It is a common error to think of the Italian gardens of the Renaissance as repeating endlessly the same architectural effects: their peculiar charm lies chiefly in the versatility with which their designers adapted them to different sites and different requirements.

As an example of this independence of meaningless conventions, let the student turn from the Villa Medici and the Orti Farnesiani to a third type of villa created at the same time—the Casino of Pope Pius IV in the Vatican gardens, built in 1560 by the Neapolitan architect Pirro Ligorio.

This exquisite little garden-house lies in a hollow of the outer Vatican gardens near the Via de' Fondamenti. A hillside once clothed with a bosco rises abruptly behind it, and in this hillside a deep oblong cut has been made and faced with a retaining-wall. In the space thus cleared the villa is built, some ten or fifteen feet away from the wall, so that its ground floor is cool and shaded without being damp. The building, which is long and narrow, runs lengthwise into the cut, its long façades

being treated as sides, while it presents a narrow end as its front elevation. The propriety of this plan will be seen when the restricted surroundings are noted. In such a small space a larger structure would have been disproportionate; and Ligorio hit on the only means of giving to a house of considerable size the appearance of a mere garden-pavilion.

Percier and Fontaine say that Ligorio built the Villa Pia "after the manner of the ancient houses, of which he had made a special study." The influence of the Roman fresco-architecture is in fact visible in this delicious little building, but so freely modified by the personal taste of the architect that it has none of the rigidity of the "reconstitution," but seems rather the day-dream of an artist who has saturated his mind with the past.

The façade is a mere pretext for the display of the most exquisite and varied stucco ornamentation, in which motives borrowed from the Roman *stucchi* are harmonized with endless versatility. In spite of the wealth of detail, it is saved from heaviness and confusion by its delicacy of treatment and by a certain naïveté which makes it more akin (fantastic as the comparison may seem) with the stuccoed façade of San Bernardino at Perugia than with similar compositions of its own period. The angels or genii in the oblong panels are curiously suggestive of Agostino da Duccio, and the pale-yellow tarnished surface of the stucco recalls the delicate hues of the Perugian chapel.

The ground floor consists of an open loggia of three arches on columns, forming a kind of atrium curiously faced with an elaborate mosaic-work of tiny round pebbles, stained in various colors, and set in arabesques and other antique patterns. The coigns of the façade are formed of this same mosaic—a last touch of fancifulness where all is fantastic. The barrel-vault of the atrium is a marvel of delicate *stuccature*, evidently inspired by the work of Giovanni da Udine at the Villa Madama; and at each end stands a splendid marble basin resting on winged griffins. The fragile decorations of this exquisite loggia are open on three sides to the weather, and many windows of the upper rooms (which are decorated in the same style) are unshuttered and have broken panes, so that this unique example of

cinque-cento decoration is gradually falling into ruin from mere exposure. The steps of the atrium, flanked by marble Cupids on dolphins, lead to an oval paved court with a central fountain in which the Cupid-motive is repeated. This court is inclosed by a low wall with a seat running around it and surmounted by marble vases of a beautiful tazza-like shape. Facing the loggia, the wall is broken (as at the Villa di Papa Giulio) by a small pavilion resting on an open arcade, with an attic adorned with stucco panels; while at the sides, equidistant between the villa and the pavilion, are two vaulted porticos, with façades like arches of triumph, by means of which access is obtained to curving ramps that lead to the lower level of the gardens. These porticos are also richly adorned with stucco panels, and lined within with a mosaic-work of pebbles, forming niches for a row of busts.

From the central pavilion one looks down on a tank at its base (the pavilion being a story lower on its outer or garden side). This tank is surmounted by a statue of Thetis on a rock-work throne, in a niche formed in the basement of the pavilion. The tank incloses the pavilion on three sides, like a moat, and the water, gushing from three niches, overflows the low stone curb and drips on a paved walk slightly hollowed to receive it—a device producing a wonderful effect of coolness and superabundance of water.

The old gardens of the villa were on a level with the tank, and Falda's print shows the ingenuity of their planning. These gardens have now been almost entirely destroyed, and the bosco above the villa has been cut down and replaced by bare grass-banks dotted with shrubs.

The Villa Pia has been thus minutely described, first, because it is seldom accessible, and consequently little known; but chiefly because it is virtually not a dwelling-house, but a garden-house, and thus forms a part of the actual composition of

the garden. As such it stands alone in Italian architecture, and Burckhardt, who notes how well its lavish ornament is suited to a little pleasure-pavilion in a garden, is right in describing it as the "most perfect retreat imaginable for a midsummer afternoon."

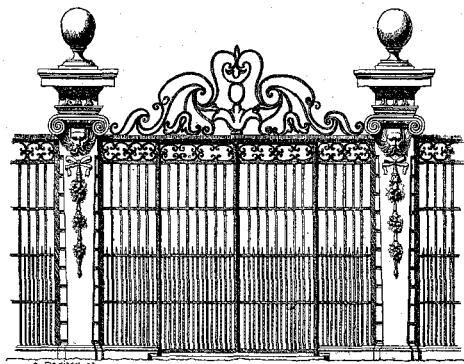
The outer gardens of the Vatican, in a corner of which the Villa Pia lies, were probably laid out by Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, who died in 1546; and though much disfigured, they still show traces of their original plan. The sunny sheltered terrace, espaliered with lemons, is a good example of the "walk for the cold season" for which Italian garden-architects always provided; and the large sunken flower-garden surrounded by hanging woods is

one of the earliest instances of this effective treatment of the *giardino segreto*. In fact, the Vatican may have suggested many features of the later Renaissance garden, with its widespread plan which gradually came to include the park.

The seventeenth century saw the development of this extended plan, but saw also the decline of the architectural

restraint and purity of detail which mark the generation of Vignola and Sangallo. The Villa Borghese, built in 1618 by the Flemish architect Giovanni Vasanzia (John of Xanten), shows a complete departure from the old tradition. Its elevation may indeed be traced to the influence of the garden-front of the Villa Medici, which was probably the prototype of the gay pleasure-house in which ornamental detail superseded architectural composition; but the garden-architecture of the Villa Borghese, and the treatment of its extensive grounds, show the complete triumph of the baroque.

The grounds of the Villa Borghese, which include a park of several hundred acres, were laid out by Domenico Savino and Girolamo Rainaldi, while its water-works are due to Giovanni Fontana, whose name is associated with the great *jeux*



GATEWAY OF THE VILLA BORGHESI

d'eaux of the villas at Frascati. Falda's plan shows that the grounds about the house have been little changed. At each end of the villa is the oblong secret garden, not sunken, but walled; in front an entrance-court, at the back an open space inclosed in a wall of clipped ilexes against which statues were set, and containing a central fountain. Beyond the left-hand walled garden are various dependencies, including an aviary. These little buildings, boldly baroque in style, surcharged with stucco ornament, and not without a certain Flemish heaviness of touch, have yet that gaiety, that *imprévu*, which was becoming the distinguishing note of Roman garden-architecture. On a larger scale they would be oppressive; but as mere garden-houses, with their leafy background, and the picturesque adjuncts of high walls, wrought-iron gates, vases, and statues, they have an undeniable charm.

The plan of the Borghese park has been the subject of much discussion. Falda's print shows only the vicinity of the villa, and it has never been decided when the outlying grounds were laid out and how much they have been modified. At present the park, with its romantic groves of umbrella-pine, its ilex avenues, lake, and amphitheater, its sham ruins and little buildings scattered on irregular grassy knolls, has the appearance of a *jardin anglais* laid out at the end of the eighteenth century. Herr Tuckermann, persuaded that this park is the work of Giovanni Fontana, sees in him the originator of the "sentimental" English and German landscape-gardens, with their hermitages, mausoleums, and temples of Friendship; but Percier and Fontaine, from whose plan of the park his inference is avowedly drawn, state that the grounds were much modified in 1789 by one Moore, an English landscape-gardener, and by Pietro Camporesi of Rome. Herr Gurlitt, who seems to have overlooked this statement, declares himself unable to pronounce on the date of this "creation already touched with the feeling of sentimentality"; but Burckhardt, who is always accurate, says that the hippodrome and the temple of Æsculapius are of late date, and that the park was remodeled in the style of Pousin's landscapes in 1849.

About thirty years later than the Villa Borghese was built its rival among the

great Roman country-seats, the Villa Belrespiro or Pamphily, on the Janiculan. The Villa Pamphily, designed by Alessandro Algardi of Bologna, is probably the best known and most admired of Roman *maisons de plaisance*, and its incomparable ilex avenues and pine-woods, its rolling meadows and wide views over the Campagna, have enchanted many to whom its architectural beauties would not appeal.

The house, with its incrustations of antique bas-reliefs, cleverly adapted in the style of the Villa Medici, but with far greater richness and license of ornament, is a perfect example of the seventeenth-century villa, or rather casino; for it was really intended, not for a residence, but for a suburban lodge. It is flanked by lateral terraces, and the garden-front is a story lower than the other, so that the balcony of the first floor looks down on a great sunken garden, inclosed in the retaining-walls of the terraces, and richly adorned with statues in niches, fountains, and *parterres de broderie*. Thence a double stairway descends to what was once the central portion of the gardens, a great amphitheater inclosed in ilex-groves, with a *théâtre d'eaux*, and stately flights of steps leading up to terraced ilex-groves; but all this lower garden was turned into an English park in the first half of the nineteenth century. One of the finest of Roman gardens fell a sacrifice to this senseless change; for in beauty of site, in grandeur of scale, and in the wealth of its Roman sculpture, the Villa Pamphily was unmatched. Even now it is full of interesting fragments; but the juxtaposition of an undulating lawn and dotty shrubberies to the stately garden-architecture about the villa has utterly destroyed the unity of the composition.

There is a legend to the effect that Le Nôtre laid out the park of the Villa Pamphily when he came to Rome in 1678; but Percier and Fontaine, who declare that there is nothing to corroborate the story, point out that the Villa Pamphily was begun over thirty years before Le Nôtre's visit. Absence of proof means, however, little to the average French author, eager to vindicate Le Nôtre's claim to being the father not only of French, but of Italian landscape-architecture; and M. Riat, in "*L'Art des Jardins*," repeats the legend of the Villa Pamphily, while Dussieux, in his "*Artistes Français à l'Etranger*," anxious to

heap further honors on his compatriot, actually ascribes to him the plan of the Villa Albani, which was laid out by Pietro Nolli nearly two hundred years after Le Nôtre's visit to Rome! Apparently the whole story of Le Nôtre's laying out of Italian gardens is based on the fact that he remodeled some details of the Villa Ludovisi; but one need only compare the dates of his gardens with those of the principal Roman villas to see that he was the pupil and not the master of the great Italian garden-architects.

The last great country house built for a Roman cardinal is the villa outside the Porta Salaria which Carlo Marchionne built in 1746 for Cardinal Albani. In spite of its late date, the house still conforms to the type of Roman *villa suburbana* which originated with the Villa Medici; and it is interesting to observe that the Roman architects, having hit on so appropriate and original a style, did not fear to continue it in spite of the growing tendency toward a lifeless classicalism.

Cardinal Albani was a passionate collector of antique sculpture, and the villa, having been built to display his treasures, is appropriately planned with an open arcade between rusticated pilasters, which runs the whole length of the façade on the ground floor, and is continued by a long portico at each end. The grounds, laid out by Antonio Nolli, have been much extolled. Burckhardt sees in them traces of the reaction of French eighteenth-century gardening on the Italian school; but may it not rather be that, the Villa Albani being by a rare exception built on level ground, the site inevitably suggested a treatment similar to the French? It is hard to find anything specifically French, any motive which has not been seen again and again in Italy, in the plan of the Albani gardens; and their most charming feature, the long ilex-walk connecting the villa with the bosco, exemplifies the Italian rule of providing shady access from the house to the wood. Dussieux, at any rate, paid Le Nôtre no compliment in attributing to him the plan of the Villa Albani; for the great French artist contrived to put more poetry into the flat horizons of Vaux and Versailles than Nolli has won from the famous view of the Campagna which is said to have governed the planning of the Villa Albani.

The grounds are laid out in formal quincunxes of clipped ilex, but before the house lies a vast sunken garden inclosed in terraces. The farther end of the garden is terminated by a semicircular portico called the *Caffè*, built later than the house, under the direction of Winckelmann; and in this structure and in the architecture of the terraces one sees the heavy touch of that neo-Grecianism which was to crush the life out of eighteenth-century art. The gardens of the Villa Albani seem to have been decorated by an archaeologist rather than an artist. It is interesting to note that antique sculpture, when boldly combined with a living art, is one of the most valuable adjuncts of the Italian garden; whereas, set in an artificial evocation of its own past, it loses all its vitality and becomes as lifeless as its background.

One of the most charming of the smaller Roman villas lies outside the Porta Salaria, a mile or two beyond the Villa Albani. This is the country-seat of Prince Don Lodovico Chigi. In many respects it recalls the Sienese type of villa. At the entrance the highroad is enlarged into a semicircle, backed by a wall with busts; and on the axis of the iron gates one sees first a court flanked by box-gardens, then an open archway running through the center of the house, and beyond that, the vista of a long walk inclosed in high box-hedges and terminating in another semicircle with statues, backed by an ilex-planted mount. The plan has all the compactness and charm of the Tuscan and Umbrian villas. The level ground about the house is subdivided into eight square box-hedged gardens, four on a side, inclosing symmetrical box-bordered plots. Beyond these are two little groves with statues and benches. The ground falls away in farmland below this level, leaving only the long central alley which appears to lead to other gardens, but which really ends in the afore-mentioned semicircle, behind which is a similar alley, running at right angles, and leading directly to the fields.

At the other end of Rome lies the only small Roman garden comparable in charm with Prince Chigi's. This is the Priorato, or Villa of the Knights of Malta, near Santa Sabina, on the Aventine. Piranesi, in 1765, remodeled and decorated the old chapel adjoining the house; and it is said that he also laid out the garden. If he did so, it

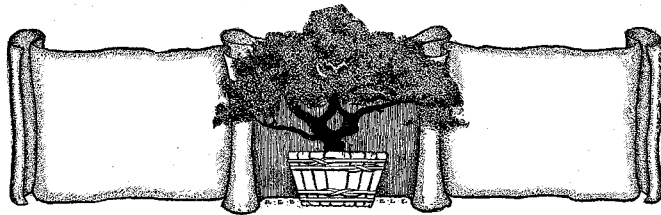
shows how late the tradition of the Renaissance garden lingered in Italy; for there is no trace of romantic influences in the Priorato. The grounds are small, for the house stands on a steep ledge overlooking the Tiber, whence there is a glorious view of St. Peter's and the Janiculan. The designer of the garden evidently felt that it must be a mere setting to this view; and accordingly he laid out a straight walk, walled with box and laurel and running from the gate to the terrace above the river. The prospect framed in this green tunnel is one of the sights of Rome; and, by a touch peculiarly Italian, the keyhole of the gate has been so placed as to take it in. To the left of the pleached walk lies a small flower-garden, planted with square-cut box-trees, and inclosed in a high wall with niches containing statues: a real "secret garden," full of sunny cloistered stillness, in restful contrast to the wide prospect below the terrace.

The grounds behind the Palazzo Colonna belong to another type, and are an interesting example of the treatment of a city garden, especially valuable now that so many of the great gardens within the walls of Rome have been destroyed.

The Colonna palace stands at the foot of the Quirinal Hill, and the gardens are built on the steep slope behind it, being entered by a stately gateway from the Via Quirinale. On this upper level there is a charming rectangular box-garden, with flower-plots about a central basin. Thence one descends to two narrow terraces, one beneath the other, planted with box and ilex, and adorned with ancient marbles. Down the center, starting from the upper garden, there is an elaborate *château d'eau* of baroque design, with mossy urns and

sea-gods, terminating in a basin fringed with ferns; and beneath this central composition the garden ends in a third wide terrace, planted with square-clipped ilexes, which look from above like a level floor of verdure. Graceful stone bridges connect this lowest terrace with the first-floor windows of the palace, which is divided from its garden by a narrow lane; and the whole plan is an interesting example of the beauty and variety of effect which may be produced on a small steep piece of ground.

Of the other numerous gardens which once crowned the hills of Rome, but few fragments remain. The Villa Celimontana, or Mattei, on the Cælian, still exists, but its grounds have been so Anglicized that it is interesting chiefly from its site and from its associations with St. Philip Neri, whose seat beneath the giant ilexes is still preserved. The magnificent Villa Ludovisi has vanished, leaving only, amid a network of new streets, the Casino of the Aurora and a few beautiful fragments of architecture incorporated in the courtyard of the ugly Palazzo Margherita; and the equally famous Villa Negroni was swept away to make room for the Piazza delle Terme and the Grand Hotel. The Villa Sacchetti, on the slope of Monte Mario, is in ruins; in ruins the old hunting-lodge of Cecchignola, in the Campagna, on the way to the Divino Amore. These and many others are gone or going; but at every turn the watchful eye still lights on some lingering fragment of old garden-art—some pillared gateway or fluted *vasca* or broken statue cowering in its niche—all testifying to what Rome's crown of gardens must have been, and still full of suggestion to the student of her past.



MRS. M'LERIE'S STUFFED BIRDS¹

BY J. J. BELL

Author of "Wee Macgreegor," "Ethel," etc.



It was Friday afternoon, and on Friday afternoons Mrs. M'Lerie always cleaned the glass case containing her stuffed birds—that is, cleaned it inside as well as out, for, of course, it received an outward dusting daily along with the other contents of the parlor.

With the utmost care she lifted off the cover,—preparatory to conveying it to the kitchen, where it would be washed and polished till it shone as brightly as glass could shine,—and laying it on the table, she took up a small soft brush, such as barbers use in removing shorn locks from one's poll and neck, and dusted the gay plumages of her birds in a fashion affectionate and proud. Seeing that the case was virtually air-tight, this part of her weekly task was more a labor of love than of necessity; but it afforded Mrs. M'Lerie the highest gratification, and she really looked as if she felt she was giving the birds pleasure also. The live canary which she had once possessed had never satisfied her as the inanimates before her, though she had wept when it died from over-attention, and blamed herself for neglecting it.

She was engaged in gently brushing the gaudiest inmate of the case, smiling happily as she did so, when a tapping at the outer door startled her.

"Wha can that be?" she asked herself, laying down the brush. "Whit wey dae they no' ring the bell? There's naebody chaps at the door but Mistress Munro, an' she never comes on Fridays. An' ferby it wisna like her chappin'."

The tapping was repeated.

"Na; it's no' Mistress Munro. I wunner wha it is. But I suppose I best gang

an' see," she muttered a little impatiently, as she left the room with a regretful glance at her birds.

Opening the door, she beheld a small boy, who might have been seven or eight years old, neatly, if economically, dressed, and the possessor of a plump countenance bearing a charmingly innocent expression. Slight brownish stains at the corners of his mouth might have been excused, so cleanly was his appearance otherwise.

"Wis it ye that wis chappin', laddie?" asked Mrs. M'Lerie, her irritation vanishing.

"Aye."

"An' whit micht ye be wantin'?"

"I 'm wantin' ma auntie."

"But I 'm no' yer auntie," she said, smiling kindly.

"I ken ye 're no' ma auntie."

"An' there's nae auntie o' yours bides here."

"I ken. Ma auntie bides up the stair, an'—"

"Aw, are ye yin o' the wee Blaikies?" Mrs. M'Lerie inquired, thinking of a neighbor who had nephews of that name.

"Naw, I 'm no'! I w'u'dna like to be a Blaikie! Ma auntie bides up the stair, an' I cam' to see her, an'—"

"Whit's yer auntie's name, dearie?"

"Auntie Mery."

"Aye; but whit's her ither name?"

"I dinna ken. I gaed up til her hoose, an' there wis naebody there, an' an auld wife said she wis awa', an' I wis to come an' speir if you kent onythin' aboot her, an'—"

"Oh, it's Miss Colquhoun that's yer auntie. Fine I ken her—a rale dacent wumman. But did ye no' ken she gaed awa' on Wednesday to bide fer twa-three

¹ "Mrs. M'Lerie," copyright, 1903, by The Century Co.