THE DECORATION AND FURNISHING OF THE CITY

No. 5.—Fountains

Water is an essential attribute to every landscape or architectural composition. No park or garden is strictly complete which does not possess its cascade, fountain, basin, and canal, and no city which pretends to be artistically embellished is fully adorned without waterways, rond-points, drinking fountains, and jets d'eau. The city which may fitly display fountains must abound in pleasure places and be something more than a commercial town. It must have prospered and developed beyond this elementary stage.

The purpose of the fountain is non-utilitarian ; it transcends all mundane ideas. It is a work of art set up for art's sake alone. Water is animate, and a fountain is a living thing ; little wonder that poets and artists ever people them with gods, demi-gods, animals, and nymphs.

Schemes for the beautiful treatment of water have ever been created during the great artistic epochs of the world. Ancient Rome was a city running with water, but the fountains of Rome have long ago been obliterated and lost, though numerous remains of sculptured baths and basins, spouts and vases have been preserved. Probably the earliest of the fountains which are still running with water and which are of greatest importance to us as such to-day, are the Italian fountains of the 15th and 16th centuries, most of which are to be seen in the gardens of the villas around Florence and Rome.

From the highest terrace of these gardens water pours forth from a chateau d'eau, a grotto, an archway, or from the cleft in a rock ; it becomes a cascade and is artfully broken into a series of falls ; it pirouettes, tumbles, and empties itself into a deep pool, then, disappearing it reappears on the lowest terrace as a jet, or as a thousand jets throwing up glistening spray, and finally settles in a "bain des Dieux." Such is the treatment of water in the world's oldest gardens and parks ; particularly fine examples are to be seen in the gardens of the Villa Torlonia and in the Villa d'Este. But in modern practice but few parks are sufficiently fortunate to be possessed of water in such abundance or undulations in their scenery sufficiently picturesque to admit of such complete water schemes, and at most must be satisfied with a lake, a canal, and artificially-forced jets.

Space will not permit of further reference to water treatments in general in their application to the park ; for further reference the attention

of the reader is directed to "The Gardens of Italy," by Inigo Triggs; "Les Jardins de Versailles," by Pierre de Nahlac; to the designs prepared in the Beaux Arts, and to the works of Piranesi, of Geo. Francisco Venturini, and Gio Batista Falda. Here are to be seen an endless variety of water treatments and the details of great water schemes, chateaux d'eau, cascades, parterres d'eau, bains d'eau, chars de Neptune, &c., &c.

Perhaps at first sight few adornments of garden and city are more confused in idea or difficult to analyse than fountains. To fully appreciate their worth we must understand their essential purpose and association, must differentiate between what is fanciful and what is vulgar, between what is real refinement and what is merely insipid, and we must take account of the importance of good style. The fountain is essentially fanciful, and must be criticised and compared with things artificial, fanciful, and unseen. A baroque treatment, utterly inappropriate in a serious building, as a church, may be excusable, nay, even a befitting style of expression, in a fountain or in the treatment of a stream. The private gardens of Italy contain fountains and water treatments dating from about the end of the 14th century almost right up to modern times, and, the earlier the period, as a rule, the simpler the treatment and the more pure the design. The gardens of the Villas Borghese, Medici, and Torlonia at Rome, and Boboli at Florence, contain fine examples; later during the 17th century the beautiful sculpture and simple forms associated with this earlier period gave place to cheap plaster adornments, a craving for vulgar display and greater complexity, as at the Villa Gazoni. Unfortunately, most of the fountains actually erected in Rome belong to the worst period of 17th and 18th century Italian art. They have a fine scale and a certain directness of execution, but compared with examples erected about the same period at Versailles and in Paris, they are pretentious, vulgar, and baroque of the worst kind. This is still more apparent when the comparison is carried to a period still later—the Empire period in France, when perfection of detail and simplicity of mass were carried almost to an extreme.

But let us consider fountains under the following heads: (1) The source or fountain head; (2) The cascade or fall; (3) The isolated jet, basin, or vase with its accompanying pool.

A very romantic treatment of "the source," and one eminently suited to a landscape treatment, is to be seen in the Grotto des Bains d'Apollon at Versailles, where the most perfect of French sculptured nymphs, after figures from the antique, playfully attend Apollo in the shelter of a grotto from which issues a stream. The sincerity of a realistic treatment such as this has been seriously called into question, but situated outside the confines of formality, discovered only by penetrating the

VILLA D'ESTE
ITALY

VILLA BORGHESE
ITALY

Examples of treatment for the Source

FONTANA DI TREVI
ITALY

OBELISK SCHÖNBRUNN
AUSTRIA

Examples of treatment for the Source

mystic recesses of the surrounding rural scenery, surely it is pardonable to discover such a fairy-like scene. This particular composition was designed by Hubert Robert in 1775. Another artist, Hohenberg, working under French influence, designed similar fountain sources in the beautiful Schonbrunn Gardens at Vienna. In particular, an artificial ruined Roman archway, on the fallen stones of which are grouped figures directing the source of the stream. The other composition takes the form of a grotto, above and around which are disposed figures artfully arranged on the ledges of the rocks; and in order to, as it were, mark more evidently the source, an obelisk surmounts the whole. But such realistic rusticity ill suits the formal garden or the town.

More architectural treatment of "The Source" occurs in the Renaissance fountain at the Villa d'Este. Another scheme even still more architectural makes the source to flow from the centre of an architectural façade. Many examples of this treatment are to be seen in Rome, notably the Fontana di Trevi, erected by Clement XII. in 1735 from the designs of Noccio Salvi. Here the water is made to flow from an up-turned shell, a favourite device, and after splashing over artificial rocks ultimately settles in a pool. In the centre of the façade is a colossal figure of Neptune. The Fontana del Termini is a similar example. Fine engravings were made of these fountains by Piranesi, and they remain to this day almost in the state depicted by him. There are several similar examples in Paris which, though no doubt less grandiose, are infinitely more direct in idea and refined in execution; of these, perhaps, the best known example is the Medici fountain, in the Luxemburg Gardens, designed by Jaques De Brosse in the reign of Louis XIII.; other examples that may be quoted are the Fontaine de Grenelle, by Bouchardo, erected in 1739; a fountain in the Palais Royale designed by Robert Decotte in 1719; the Fontaine des Innocents in the Rue St. Denis, with sculpture by Jean Goujon, removed, altered, and placed in its present position by M. Six at the commencement of the 19th century; and the Fontaine de la Pointe St. Eustache, situated at the junction of the Rue Montmartre and the Rue Montorquell—it was designed in its present form by M. Bralle in 1806. These Paris fountains are hardly chateaux d'eau, as that term may be applied to the Fontana di Trevi in Rome, or to the ambitious monuments designed by French architects for erection in the parks; they are, in fact, merely well-heads or drinking fountains. In Italy there are still remaining numerous examples of these drinking fountains—relics of ancient Rome. The water generally empties into a beautiful marble bath from a lion's head.

A fountain at Munich, which we illustrate, and the fountain of Diana

at Versailles, by Van Clève, show suitable treatments for fountain heads to be placed at the sides of alley-ways or at the termination of a vistas.

Endless treatments have been devised as connecting links in water treatments which are variations of the cascade. Perhaps the most beautiful examples are again to be found in the steep gardens of Italy. That known as the Giant's Goblet, at the Villa Farnese, and that known as the Fountain of the River Gods, at the Villa Lante, probably designed by Vignola, afford typical examples.

Less characteristic perhaps, but of more frequent occurrence, is the sculptured group set against the rusticated lining of a pond, the water issuing from shells or from the mouths of fishes, reptiles, or beasts, the whole being usually surmounted by a figure of Neptune, Apollo, or Oceanus. Fine examples of this treatment occur on the sides of the basins of Latone and Neptune at Versailles.

In the next number the isolated fountains jet, with its accompanying sculpture, vase, basin or pool will be reviewed.

S. D. ADSHEAD.

THE GIANT'S GOBLET, VILLA FARNESE
ITALY

VILLA LANTE
ITALY

Examples of treatment of Falls.

BOSQUET DES BAINS D'APOLLON, VERSAILLES
FRANCE

ROMAN RUIN, SCHÖNBRUNN
AUSTRIA

Examples of treatment for the Source

WITTELSBACHER FOUNTAIN
MUNICH

FONTAINE DE DIANE, VERSAILLES
FRANCE

Examples of treatment of Fountain Heads

Map showing Second Century Geography and Line of Roman approach to Chester

CHESTER