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THE OLD GARDENS  
OF ITALY



THE RAM GATES, BOBOLI GARDENS.

THE OLD GARDENS  
OF ITALY

HOW TO VISIT THEM

BY

MRS. AUBREY LE BLOND

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM HER  
PHOTOGRAPHS

LONDON

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" It is the glory of the Italian garden architects that neglect and disintegration cannot wholly mar the effect they were skilled in creating—effects due to such a fine sense of proportion, to so exquisite a perception of the relation between architecture and landscape, between verdure and marble, that while a trace of their plan remains one feels the spell of the whole."

*Italian Villas and-their Garden's.*



## INTRODUCTION.

THIS little book only aims at guiding the traveller to most of the old gardens of Italy and leaves it to the larger works to furnish him with fuller information and more numerous plans. The author, when illustrating "The Art or Garden Design in Italy," by H. Inigo Triggs, was struck by the difficulty experienced in finding the various gardens and learning from whom permission to view them was obtainable. It seemed to her that a small volume including as many gardens as she could hear of, and condensed within reasonable limits, might find a place between the big books giving technical information, and those, such as Elgood's beautiful "Italian Gardens," that aim more especially at the pictorial representation of a subject intensely fascinating from whatever standpoint it is viewed.

The list of books relating to the gardens, of Italy will, it is hoped, be found useful to the amateur. Many can be consulted at the library of the British Museum, and others at the Ambrosiana Library at Milan, the Uffizzi and Marucelliana Libraries at Florence, and other libraries elsewhere. Mrs. Wharton's delightful book on

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" Italian Villas and their Gardens" has proved more helpful and inspiring to the writer than any other.

Italian gardens, not unlike those we still find, were known even in Pliny's time. In " The Letters of Pliny the Consul" (the quotation is taken from Dodsley's translation of 1747), he describes a terrace perfumed with violets at his villa at Laurentum (near Ostia), and he goes on to say that it is " encompassed with a box-tree hedge," and that there are walks suitable for hot or cold weather. But it is of his villa in Tuscany, where he usually spent the summer, that he gives the minutest word picture. (Book V., Letter VI. This is the letter with the famous allusion to " liquid acanthus.") The \*topiary work was, according to our ideas, over elaborate, yet the whole garden and house must have been of great dignity and beauty. It was at this villa that Pliny had his dinner on a marble bench overhanging a basin on whose surface floated the smaller dishes " in the form of little vessels and water fowl."<sup>55</sup>

During the dark ages that succeeded it is unlikely that anyone maintained or laid out villas, and even in the sixteenth century, that golden time of art, we meet with no gardens south of Rome,

\* The "topianus" was the slave entrusted with the difficult and responsible task of clipping the hedges and designing and keeping in shape the various animals represented in box and other shrubs and the clipped inscriptions. These were very elaborate, but happily the custom was so modified in the best XVIth century gardens that except in three cases where the name of the villa is cut in box, the writer has never seen any topiary work in Italy that could be objected to.

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and none except in the neighbourhood of towns. It was not till the seventeenth century that villas and palace gardens were constructed near Naples and Palermo. The disturbed state of the country rendered it unsafe to live elsewhere than in a city or a castle. One exception there was, but it combined the charm of the country villa with the security of a fortress. This is the Farnese Palace at Caprarola, which is in a wild district a considerable distance from Rome.

The old gardens of Italy owe much of their charm to their entire suitability to the house, its occupants, and the climate. To transport their schemes bodily to America or England must always be a mistake, for it is not the garden itself, but the lessons that its designers have taught for all time, that one should carry home. At the best period of Italian garden architecture, that of Vignola, we see how carefully the plan was thought out in all its details, and how house and garden were treated as one. The term "villa" in Italy always means the whole property, the "casino" being the house. The symmetrical lines of the clipped hedges and the straight paths near the dwelling carried on the idea of walls, and when the distance from the house was sufficiently great the formal gave place to the wild, and a shady wood or *bosco* filled in the allotted space till the boundary was reached. The scenery or the district was worked into the scheme by means of high terraces commanding beautiful views, or openings in the walls of verdure. An old garden was often by no means large, but it

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was so varied that it appeared much larger than it was. One of the best examples in the whole of Italy of the successful treatment of a small space is the Villa Gamberaia, near Florence. The grounds cover only about three acres, yet they have a breadth and airiness and variety that could be equalled by no ground laid out in the landscape style. There is an exquisite water garden, a long bowling alley of green turf, a sunk rock garden, a sunny lemon garden, a dark, cool *bosco*, and a terrace overlooking the valley of the Arno.

Grass does not grow well in Italy, with its fierce summer sun, so turf is not largely used. Still, we find here and there a charming *tapis vert*, and whenever it is brought into the scheme it is in just the right place. The heat also prevents most flowers from flourishing in summer, and therefore, in the most southern parts, with the exception of roses, we find few flowers in Italian gardens. Their designers were thus restricted to the use of such materials as were available, and perhaps this very limitation led them to turn to the best account what they had. Box, cypress, and ilex were their principal evergreens, and lent themselves to many charming effects. The fragrant box borders with their exquisite shades of colour, the dignity of the tall cypress in long lines forming an avenue, or pointing to the deep blue sky from a terrace, the dense shade and gnarled trunks of the ilex, were all beautiful in their several ways. Had Pope lived in the sixteenth century he would hardly have written that " half the garden just reflects "

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**the other."** True, there was always symmetry and balance, but it was not till the style was rendered absurd 'by exaggeration and foolish conceits that it aroused the scorn of those who had never troubled to study examples of its best period.

A garden in those days was essentially a place to live in. It had sunny walks for cold days and cool, shady woods and dripping grottos—the "splendid improprieties" of Horace Walpole—for hot weather. Stairways and ramps led from terrace to terrace when the garden was on a hill side, and the abundance of water usually available supplied many fountains. In the designing of these schemes most of the greatest sculptors and architects of the day took part, yet even when the simplest means were used the pools and fountains are always delightful, each with its own especial loveliness. Whether one stands by the great central fountain and water spaces at Lante, or by the plain rectangular pond with its tall cypresses at Falconieri, the supreme suitability of each to its surroundings is borne in upon one.

Those who declare that they like what they call "natural" gardens perhaps hardly realise what they mean. Surely it is quite as unnatural to slavishly copy nature as to frankly follow a certain artistic design. Early in the last century "Capability Brown" was busy designing feigned steeples for non-existent churches in order that the view might become more attractive. A cascade was considered so "unnatural" that whenever a "meandering stream" changed its level the pretty

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**fall was masked** by a clump of trees, and fountains were banished because they were "artificial."

If we must always be surrounded by copies of nature, why did not architects go a step further, and let the dwelling represent a cave? A building of any sort, frankly obvious as such, is totally "unnatural."

The whole aim of the landscape gardener was to "improve nature," rather than to design a garden which should be a garden and nothing else.

The writer has included no gardens that she has not herself visited. She has very briefly described a few that no longer bear any but the faintest traces of their original design. During her garden pilgrimages she has sometimes been doubtful whether a certain villa was worth a visit or not. She would have been saved much time had a reliable authority told her positively that it was too much "landscaped" to be of interest. She thinks it may be of use to the traveller to know not only what to see but also what to avoid.

Doubtless there are other gardens in Italy which should be included in this guide but which are unknown to the writer. She would therefore be extremely grateful if her readers would tell her of any they have seen that she has missed. An address that will always find her is 8, Nevill Park, Tunbridge Wells.

She desires to convey her heartiest thanks for much help in compiling this book to Miss Helen Zimmern, Miss March Phillips, Sir George Sitwell, Count Cicogna, Professor Spinazzola, of

## Introduction

the Museo di San Martino, Naples, Commendatore Guido Biagi, Director of the Laurenziana Library, Florence, Cavalliero Arturo Bruno, Cavalliero Camillo Bondi, and many others. The courtesy that she has invariably received from the owners of the gardens visited and from their representatives and *employes* has rendered her work most pleasurable.





PALACE OF STUPENIGI, FROM AN OLD FAINTING IN THE PALACE.

# Old Gardens of Italy.

## PALACE OF STUPENIGI, NEAR TURIN.

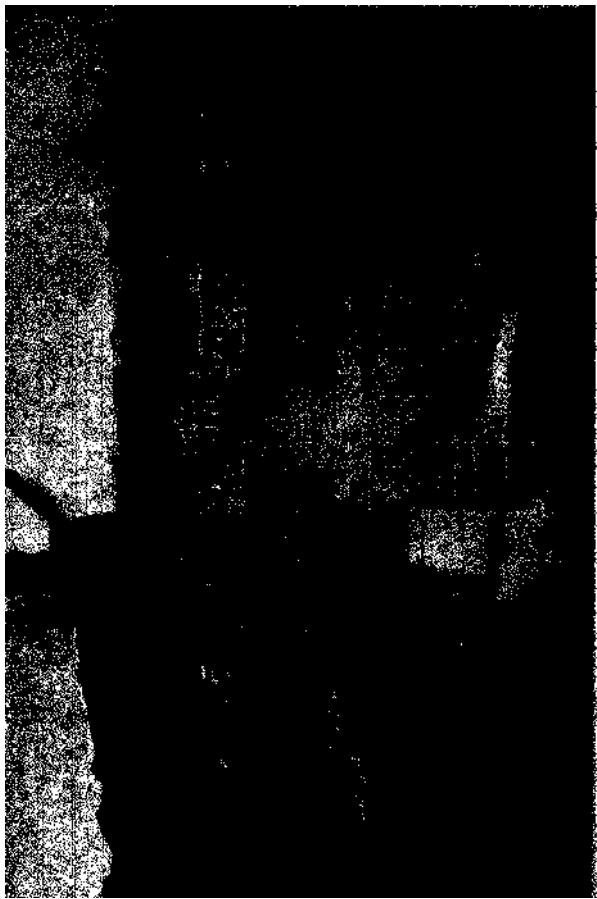
BELONGING to Queen Margherita of Italy. Can be visited only by special permission. The gardens were once formal as may be seen by a painting now hanging in one of Her Majesty's private rooms. Only the merest outline of the original design remains, and the student of gardens will learn nothing from a visit.

## PUBLIC GARDENS, VARESE.

THE gardens of the palace built for the Duke Francis III., of Modena, in 1773. The iron work enclosing the forecourt is very fine. The hill is crowned by a *bosquet*, and though all the detail of the gardens has been done away with, yet in their broad outlines they are a good example of old palace gardens. They were the public gardens of Varese, and are within the town. The palace is the principal feature.



THE GARDENS OF STUPENIGI, FROM THE PALACE.



**PUBLIC GARDEN, VARESE.**



IRON WORK AT THE DUCAL PALACE, VARESE.

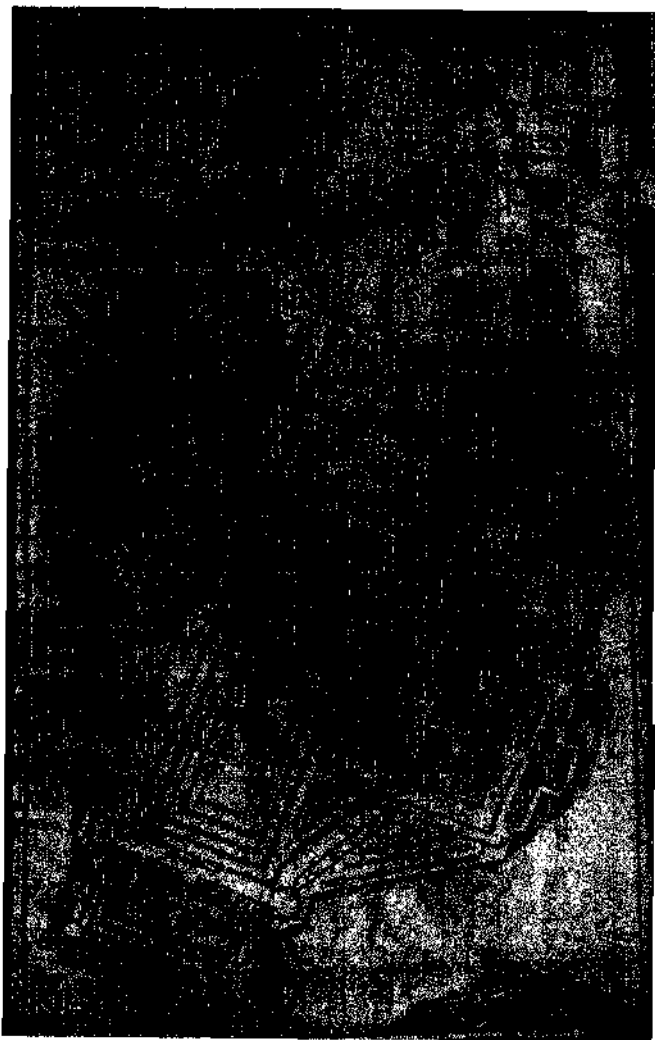
## PALAZZO RECALCATI , VARESE .

Now the Excelsior Hotel. This beautiful building, with its charming courtyard and grounds, was erected at the end of the eighteenth century, but followed the style of older villas. The outlines of the old garden exist, in spite of the sad boast in the hotel prospectus that "nothing of artificial gardening marring nature is to be seen." However, one may hope that the proprietors of so excellent a hotel may use their great opportunities and make this garden an example of what a stately old Italian garden should be and has been, now that there is a revival of the taste for such gardens.

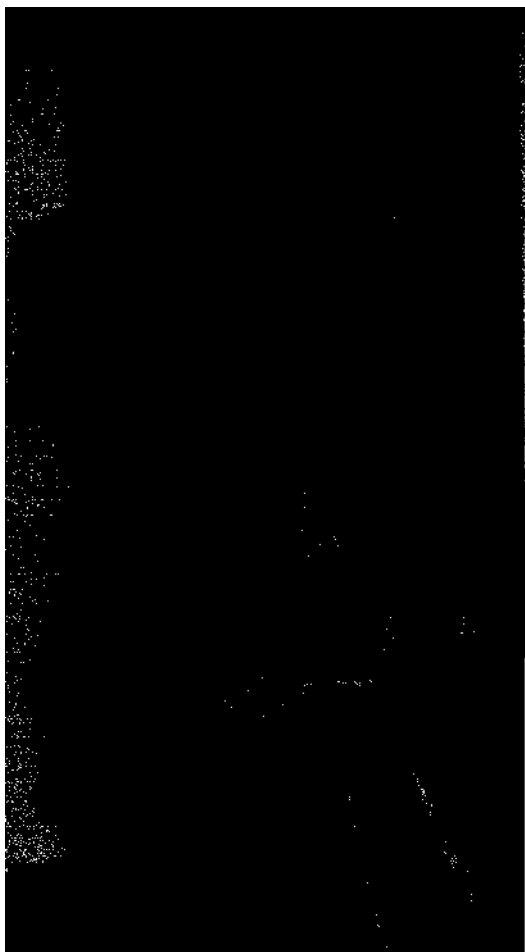
The race of the Recalcati died out and the property was purchased by a Swiss family, the Morosoni. Verdi was an intimate friend of theirs, and composed part of his opera "Lombardi" at the villa.

The *parterre*, with its central fountain and clipped box hedges, might be once again as charming as of old. Excavated under its further end is a grotto with a flowing stream through it, and stepping-stones. It is a pretty and original feature.

The Excelsior is about a mile from Varese, and can be reached by electric tram. It is on a hillside overlooking the lake of Varese.



PLAN OF GARDEN, ISOLA BELLA





WATER GARDEN, VILLA MARLIA.

## ISOLA BELLA, LAGO MAGGIORE.

FORMERLY Isola Isabella. The laying out of the garden was commenced in 1632 by Count Carlo Borromeo, and was continued by Count Vitaliano IV. Carlo Fontana, Castelli, and Crivelli had all a share in the construction of the palace and grounds, while the planning of the water-works was carried out by Mora, of Rome. The work was finished in 1671. The grounds are daily open to visitors.

The old model in the palace, showing the scheme for the whole island which it was intended should be covered entirely by the palace and its grounds, gives a better idea than anything else of the unity and harmony of the plan, so frankly artificial yet so entirely in keeping with its surroundings. The palace was never completed, but on the model the beautiful water entrance that was projected is clearly seen.

The garden, the most important in Lombardy to students, is fully described in all books on the subject. There is a detailed description in Dr. G. Burnet's "Letters." He visited it only fourteen years after the completion of the garden, in 1685. Two features, however, a hasty visitor might overlook. One is the extremely clever way in which the commencement of the central walk is hidden from the palace and from the courtyard. Owing to the shape of the island it was impossible for this walk to be placed in a straight line from the axis of the house. It is reached by a double staircase from the court, and on emerging the walk is seen



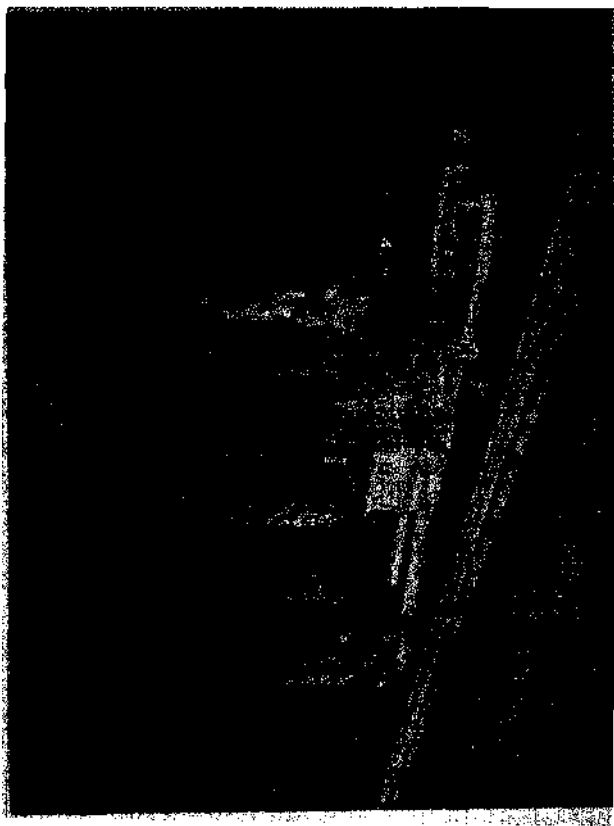
WATER GARDEN, VILLA MARLIA.

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MODEL OF PALACE AND GARDEN, ISOLA BELLA, AS ORIGINALLY PLANNED.

running, straight on and screened by trees from below. The illusion is perfect. The second point of interest is the use that has been made of the gigantic cistern for supplying the fountains, into which water can be pumped from the lake. This forms the foundation of the series of terraces that are so conspicuous at the end of the island opposite to the house.

The place still belongs to a member of the Borromeo family.

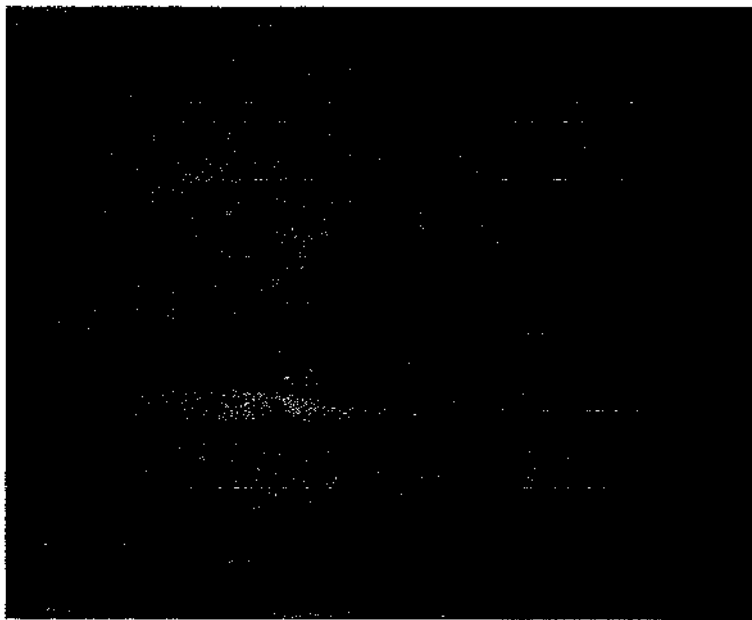
The motto "Humilitas," in ironwork held aloft by a statue, seems hardly appropriate to this sumptuous residence of a prince of the church.

A plan of the house and grounds may be seen in the rooms of the caretaker.

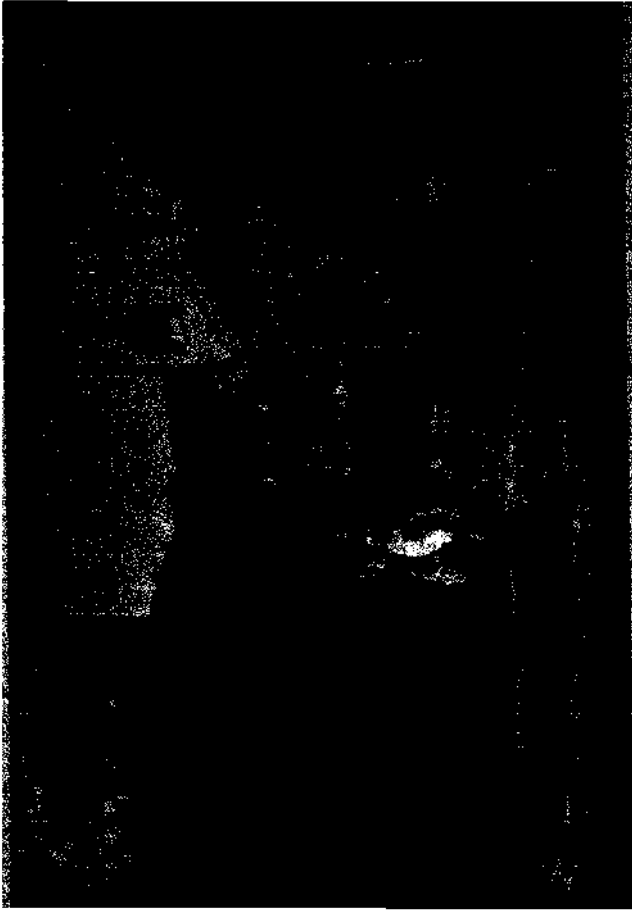
## VILLA CARLOTTA, CADENABBIA, LAKE OF COMO.

FORMERLY Villa Sommariva. Built in 1747 for the Marchese Clerici. It afterwards passed to Count Sommariva. It was purchased in 1842 by Princess Albrecht, of Prussia, and its name was then changed to that of her daughter, Charlotte (or Carlotta). It now belongs to Prince George of Saxe-Meiningen, who inherited it from Princess Charlotte, his first wife. It is open daily to visitors.

Of the original formal plan but little remains except the beautiful water entrance, the wrought-iron gates, and balustrade with statues enclosing the garden, and the forecourt with its fountain and



VILLA CARLOTTA, FROM AN OLD PRINT.



FORECOURT AND STAIRWAY, VILLA CARLOTTA.

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terraces above, each reached by a double stairway of graceful design.

The traveller, studying the art of garden design in Italy, should, after seeing the Villa Carlotta, turn to his right towards Tremezzo. Shortly after passing through it he will find a couple of delightful water entrances. The further one has a most interesting plan, which is worth study. From here a row of twenty minutes or so will take him to the Villa Balbianella (or Arconati).

### VILLA BALBIANELLO, LAKE OF COMO.

ALSO known as Villa Arconati Visconti. Always accessible. Built in 1785 by command of Cardinal Durini, and at one time the residence of the Bishop of Como.

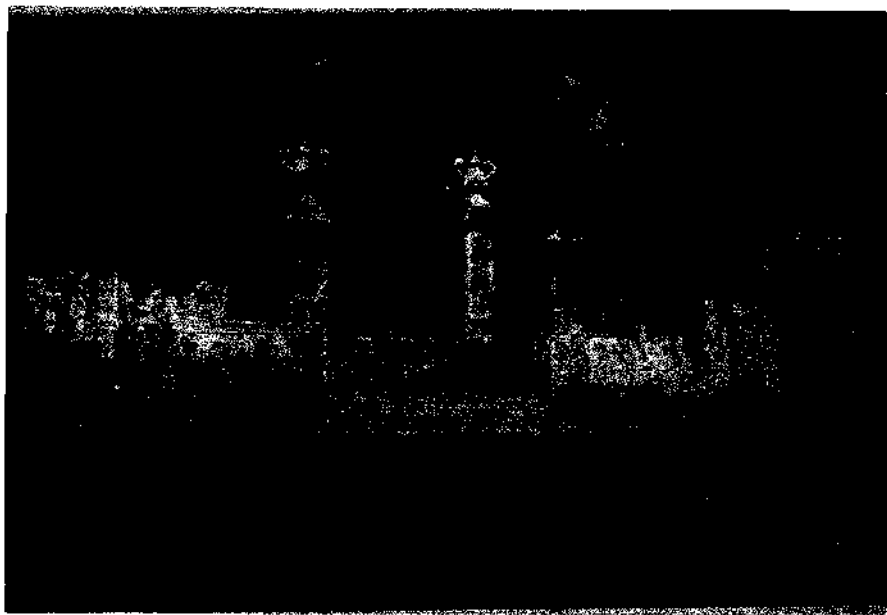
The balustrade of its garden terraces is the famous feature of this villa, and it has two beautiful water entrances, one on either side of the point of the promontory on which it is situated. On an upper terrace is a statue of a Bishop in the act of blessing the waters beneath, and several more statues of Bishops adorn the enclosing wall of the little harbour.

### VILLA GIULIA, BELLAGIO, COMO.

THIS villa must at one time have had a formal garden, but nothing of it remains. The approach to the villa from the Como arm of the lake (at the



BALUSTRADE, VILLA BALBIANELLO.



WATER GATE, VILLA BALBIANELLO.

little hamlet of Loppia) should not, however, be overlooked.

The plan is a fine one, and from the water's edge a beautiful *vide* of cypress climbs the hillside by means of nine flights of sixteen steps each. From the summit a perfectly straight level avenue, enclosed by wisteria-clothed walls with a *tapis vert* in the centre and a path at each side, runs to the villa. It is more than 1,000 metres long and thirty broad. Thus the Villa Giulia straddled right across the peninsula, from the one arm of the lake to the other, the garden descending in terraces to the Lecco arm. This *viale* and walk is now open to the public. It was constructed by Leopold I., of Belgium, who at one time owned this property.

VILLA D'ESTE, CERNOBBIO, LAKE OF  
COMO.

COMMENCED in 1568 from designs by Pellegrino Pellegrini for Cardinal Ptolomeo Gallo. Passed on his death in 1601 to his nephew, Ptolomeo, Duke of Vito. He did not reside there, and eventually it was bequeathed to the Jesuit Order. In 1769 the villa was let to Count Mark Odescalchi and in 1779 to General Marleani. He afterwards bought it and resided there. In 1815, Carolina, Princess of Wales, purchased it. She renamed it the Villa d'Este, and added considerably to the house and grounds. In 1868 the place was purchased for a hotel, and such it is continued



CYPRESS ALLEY, VILLA DESTI.

The only portion of the formal design still remaining is the great cypress *allee* and the grottos below its termination, and what was once the *parterre*—now lawn tennis courts. The cypress walk is bordered on either side by a series of stone basins one above another, from which water drops. At the culminating point is a huge grotto, enclosing a statue and fountain of Ariosto, so usual in schemes of this sort. The lower series of grottoes, in pebbles and stucco, are of exceptionally tasteful design. The remainder of the grounds are laid out in the landscape style, with imitation ruins and little temples. The absurd mock fortifications on the hillside were erected by Countess Calderara, wife of Napoleon's general, Dominique Pino, who, returning home after his triumphs in Spain, was pleasantly surprised to find his victories commemorated in this astounding fashion.

#### PALAZZO GIOVIO, COMO.

Now the Museo Civico. A fine old palace built about the middle of the fifteenth century for the Giovio family. It remained in the possession of their descendants till 1894, when it was purchased by the town of Como for a museum.

The garden is quite a small town garden, but the double stairway leading from the courtyard to the level of the first floor of the palace is beautifully planned, and it has charming gates of wrought iron. It is well worth a visit.



## VILLA CRESPI, COMO.

ALSO known as La Gallia. At Borgo Vico, twenty minutes' walk from the landing place of the steamer at Como. An electric tram runs past the entrance.

Though the villa was built in 1615 by the Abbot Marco Gallio (nephew of Tolomeo, Cardinal of Como), the garden was only laid out in the old style within the last few years. It is interesting to the writer as being the only example of the formal style that she has seen in a modern Italian garden. It was commenced by Prof. Lodovico Pogliaghi, of Milan, who, however, did not complete it. It can be well seen from the high road and is quite small. The gardener (who, in the absence of the family, is the caretaker of the house), Signor Eugenio Marilly, is courteous in showing it and its beautiful hot houses. He presented the writer with a finely illustrated brochure containing a history of the villa. It is now the property of Donna Giulia Crespi Morbio, who bought it in 1901, and by whose orders the garden was laid out. The grounds on the villa side of the high road (which cuts them into two parts) are still quite in the landscape style.

VILLA CASTELLAZZO DEI ARCONATI,  
NEAR MILAN.

ABOUT seven miles out on the road to Varese, and within five minutes' walk of the station.



**DRAGON FOUNTAIN, VILLA CASTELLI**



THEATRE, VILLA CASTELLAZZO.

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It was designed by Jean Gianda, a Frenchman, and the grounds are very large, but though quite flat, the architect has introduced much variety. They contain a beautiful orange garden, a theatre of clipped beach, large aviaries, a seraglio for wild beasts, and many fountains.

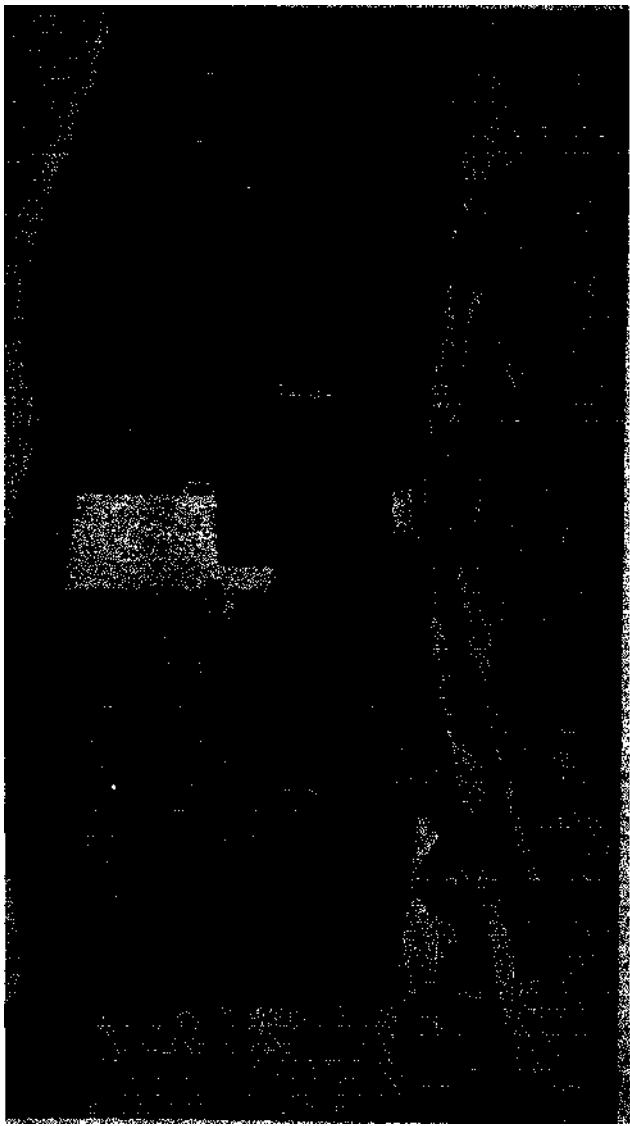
The ironwork, with stone statue-surmounted pedestals enclosing the forecourt, is extremely fine. It is difficult to obtain permission to visit this villa.

### VILLA CICOGNA, BISUSCHIO.

THE station is Bisuschio, on the Varese-Porto Ceresio line, about half an hour by train from Varese.

On leaving the station, turn to the left, cross the railway line, and follow the high road. About a mile from the station, on the right, is the chief entrance to the villa, consisting of modern iron gates and a picturesque lodge, also new, but designed to match the beautiful old villa. Following the road, the village is soon reached, and passing through it to the right, the house is arrived at. It is about one and a half miles from the station.

Count Cicogna most kindly allows visitors to be shown over the grounds, and in this house and garden the old plans have everywhere been most carefully preserved, so the place is one of the most enchanting in Italy and retains all its magic of former days, while it is kept up as are scarcely any others that I have met with in the country. The



SUNE GARDEN, VILLA CICOGNA.

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situation is beautiful beyond the power of words to describe, and the steep hill-side lends itself to a scheme such as we find here so charmingly carried out. The house is built into the slope, and as one ascends from the ground level to the lower terrace a delightfully characteristic and picturesque stable-yard with an old well will be noticed, bounded by the retaining wall of the garden. The lower terrace is laid out with flower beds and has a central fountain, while its inner side has a gallery or long grotto clothed in maidenhair fern running along the whole length. Above this is the upper terrace, and from the end near the house one suddenly obtains a view into the depths of the most enchanting little sunk *giardino secreto* I have ever seen. The larger portion is laid out in symmetrical box-edged beds, and the rest in water spaces. The forecourt and *loggia* which connect it with the house, break up the scheme very attractively.

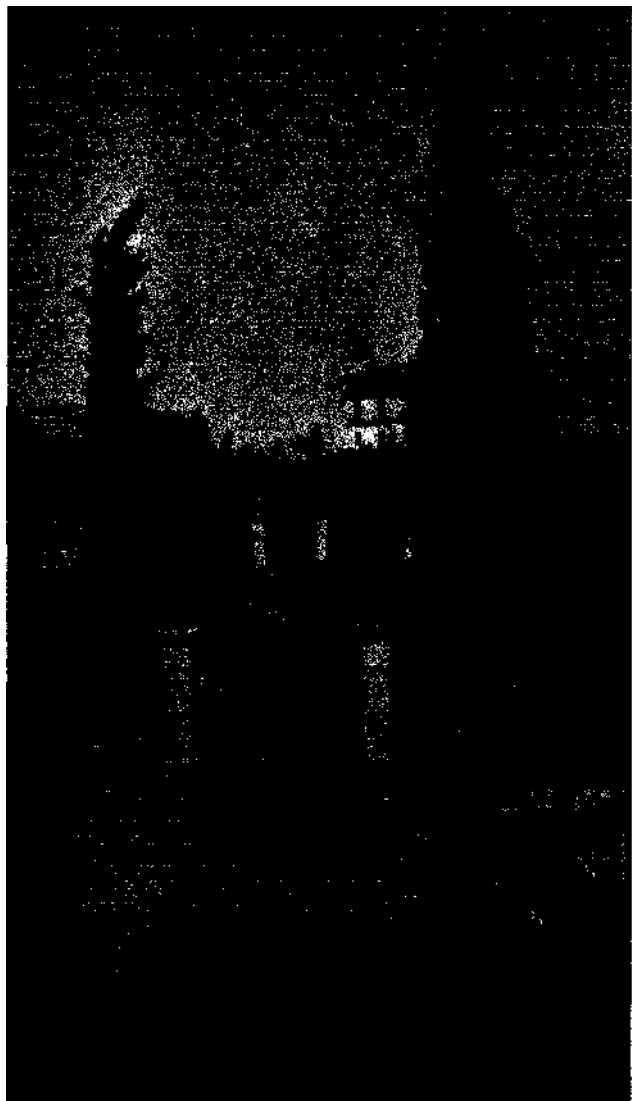
There is a pretty *chateau d'eau* with steps at each side down the hill-side at the back, and in the deep shade of the woods innumerable smooth paths give cool walks at varying levels.

From the front of the villa the old idea of a straight avenue to the entrance gates has been revived, and in the centre it divides and circles round a pool.

With regard to the history of the villa, I am indebted to Count Cicogna for valuable information, and he kindly sent me a copy of *Ars et Labour* for August, 1909, in which a beautifully illustrated article about the place appears.



VILLA CRIVELLI, ENTRANCE GATES.



VILLA CRIVELLI. SLOPING PARTIERE.

In 1476 the records of Varese tell, with great wealth of detail, that the Duke of Milan, Galeazzo Maria Spazza (whose wife was Bona, of Savoy), used to come habitually to Bisuschio to hunt bears in the neighbouring forests, and made his headquarters with the brothers Agostino and Antonio Mozzoni, an extremely ancient family tracing its origin to the Moccioni of Rome. The house and gardens were constructed by order of Ascanio Mozzoni, of Milan, a famous poet and savant of his time, who, however, did not live to see the completion of the work. Angela Mozzoni, daughter of Pietro—the last of the branch—married, in 1580, Count Gian Pietro Cicogna, and thus brought this magnificent estate into that family. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the brothers Francesco and Maino Mozzoni remodelled the villa and gave it the form it has to-day, and which is typical of Renaissance architecture in Lombardy. Campi di Cremona, so well known all over Lombardy, and at the neighbouring Villa Medici, at Frascarolo, painted the external decorations of the porticos.

#### VILLA CRIVELLI, INVERIGO.

INVERIGO is reached in one and a half hours by train from Milan (North station). The villa crowns the hill and is five minutes' walk from the station. Visitors are not welcomed, but by walking through

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the outbuildings (to the left of the main entrance in the village) it is usually possible to visit the garden.

The grounds stretch *en pente* down to the road (between the Villa Crivelli and the Rotondo), and their axis is between the villa and a building with a tower facing it and belonging to the same property. The central line is carried on up the opposite hill-side by means of a flight of steps and a cypress *vide* terminating in a stone seat and statue, which was obviously the old approach to the Rotondo.

The Crivelli garden has certain rather attractive features, though on the whole its exposed and unsheltered aspect deprives it of the charm of the more secluded villas. Its grey stairways, balustrades, and statues are taking, and the level portion between the two houses gives the privacy denied to that on the open hill-side.

### THE CERTOSA DI PAVIA.

To visit the whole of the grounds a special permission, obtainable from the director of the monastery, is necessary.

The Certosa di Pavia is so fully described in guide books that the writer need only say that it was, when built, the most magnificent monastery in the world, and owed its origin to Giovanna Galeazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan. It was begun in 1396.

The garden of the small cloister is a good example of the treatment of an open space enclosed by

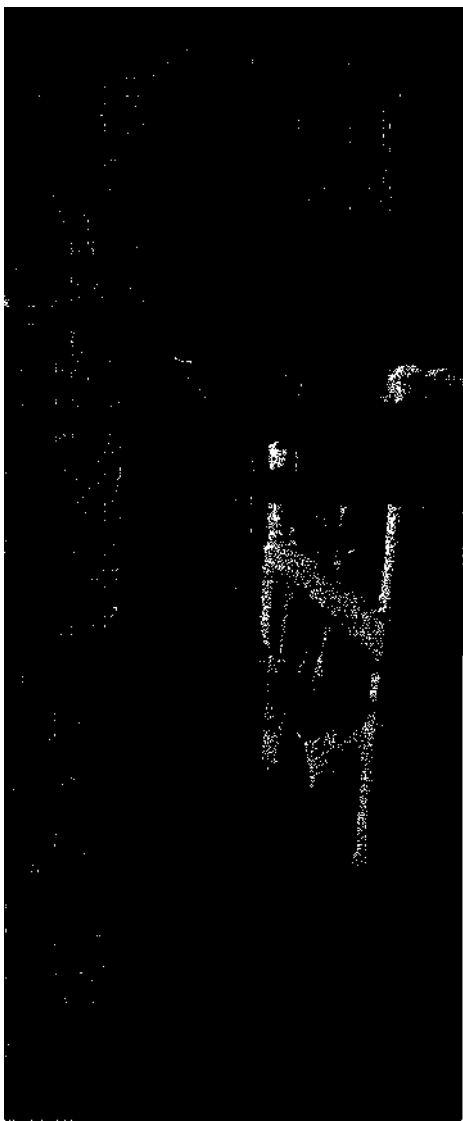


PERGOLA, CERTOSA DI PAVIA.

arcades. The tiny monk's garden is delightfully planned, the centre being enclosed with a stone rail, of which the angles are gracefully carved. The public is admitted to this delightful little retreat, so it need not be described more fully here. A long stone pergola, hung with vines, leads to the large fish pond, usually a prominent feature of a monastery garden. This part of the grounds is not shown, but there is nothing specially interesting about its design.

#### GIUSTI GARDENS, VERONA.

No record is to be found among the public archives of the building of this town palace nor of the laying out of the gardens. Dr. G. Burnet, who visited the garden in 1685, writes : " There is a noble garden in Verona, that riseth up in Terraces the whole height of a Hill." And John Evelyn, in his Diary, says: " At the entrance of this garden grows the goodliest cypress, I fancy, in Europe, cut in a pyramid." We know that in 1739 a *parterre* and a maze still existed. These have now disappeared, and the only survival of the original plan is the glorious cypress walk, beginning near the entrance gate and rising first in a slope and then by terraces to **the** culminating point of the grounds. There are a couple of fountains on the lowest level of the **gardens**.



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The Giusti Gardens now belong to a **market gardener**, who readily admits visitors.

VILLA CUZZANO, VERONA.

AN hour's drive on a level road from Verona. The palace was the country residence of the Scaliger family. It is now the property of Signor Arvedi, who is most kind in allowing visitors to see it. The terrace garden, a wide parterre of broderie, with central fountain, retains its old design and is very attractive, backed by the fine old house. The grotto contains the usual waterworks, but they are not in order, as is so often the case in these old places. Below the terrace garden is a *pente* to the entrance gate guarded by two old cypresses, but all this ground has been utilised for vines. Immediately behind the house, rising effectively above a double stairway, is a chapel. The whole planning of the chapel, house, and garden is most characteristic of its period.

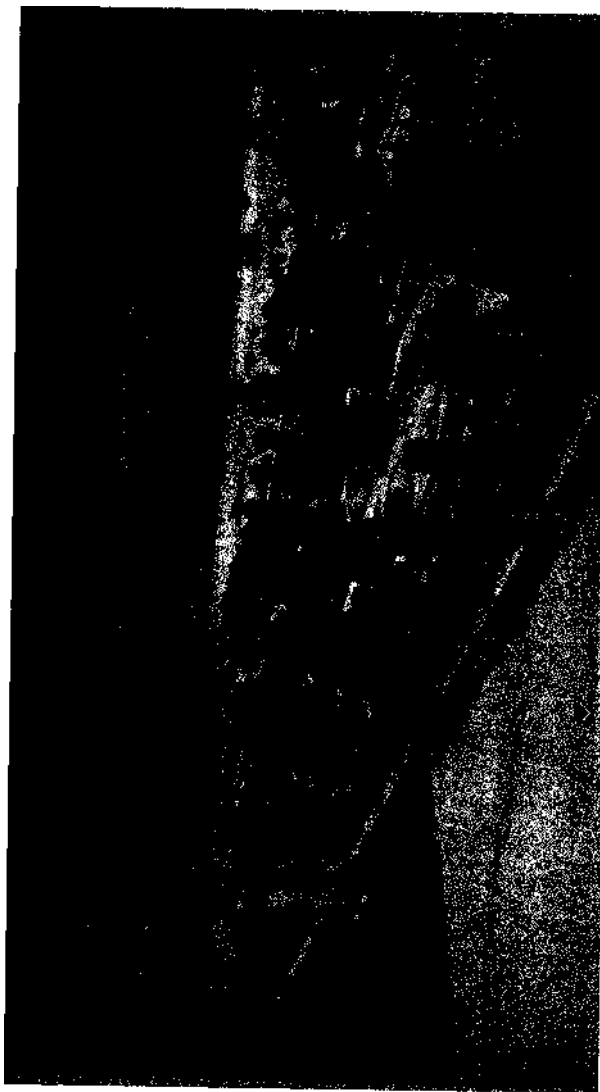
The property was at one time very extensive, and its enclosing wall is still conspicuous for some distance before one reaches Cuzzano. There is no village of that name, which applies only to this estate.

VILLA VALMARANA, VICENZA.

I VISITED this villa in September, 1910. **The** quickest way to it at first coincides with **that** to



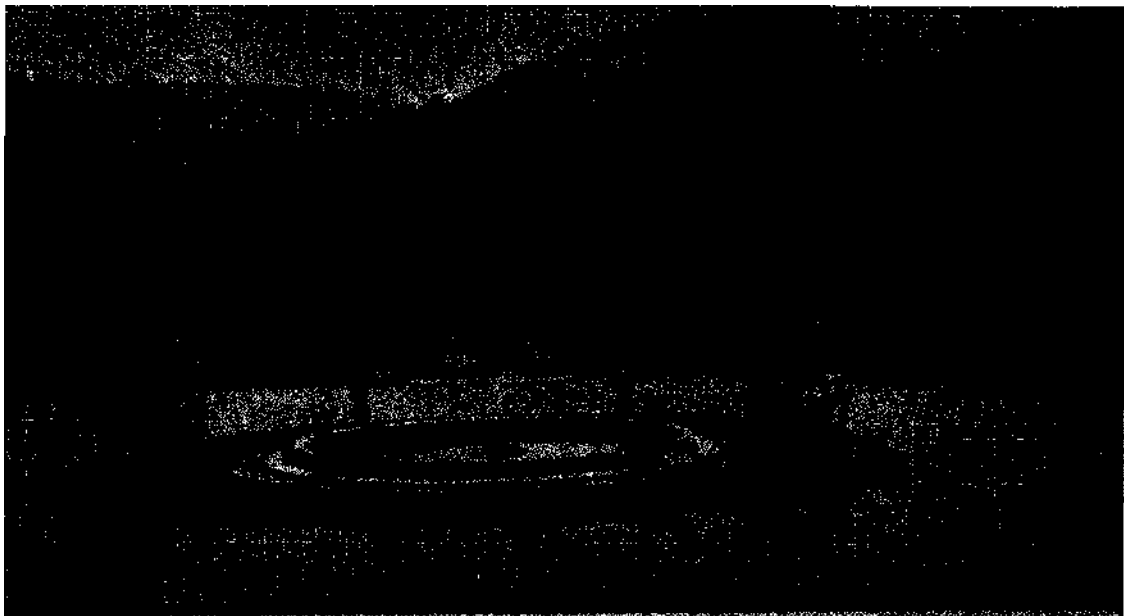
VILLA CUZZANO, VERONA. THE ENTRANCE.



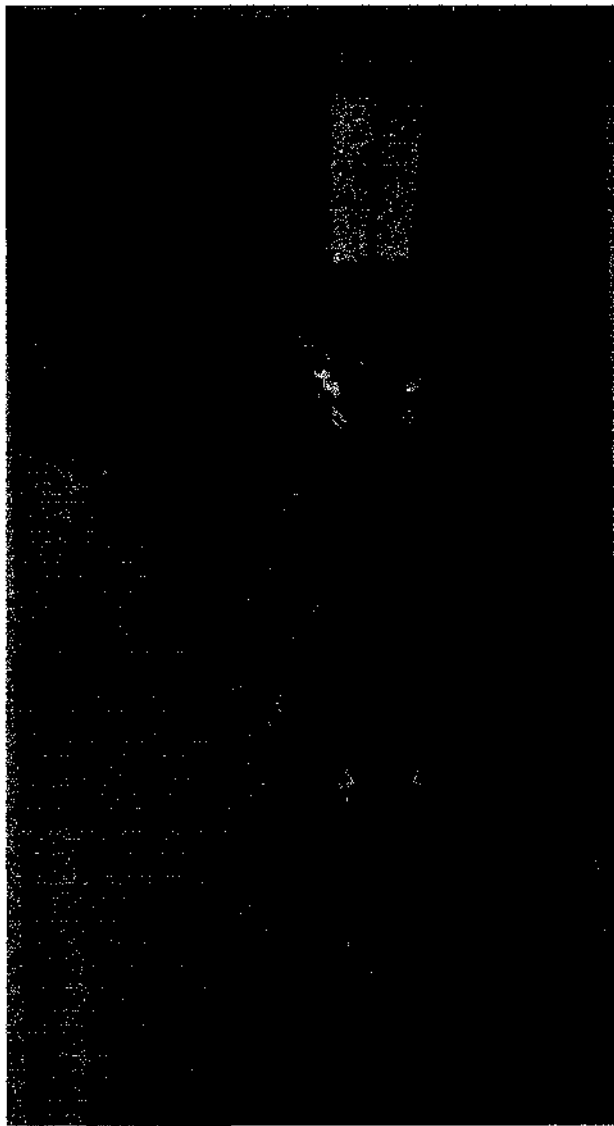
VILLA CUZZANO, VERONA. PARTERRE.

Madonna del Monte. At the top of the first series of arcades (where the church comes into sight) turn along the level road to the left, and after a few yards take the narrow path to the right. This leads between houses for five minutes and joins another coming in from the left close to the picturesque grotesque-crowned wall of the Villa Valmarana. I could not gain admission as no one was in charge and the whole place was locked up. The parterre and lemon house are, however, open to view from the road through iron gates, and the very attractive Loggia attributed to Palladio are well seen. The *parterre* was quite modernised and uninteresting, and the *stanzone* empty. I feel sure, from what I saw, that nothing of the fine old garden described as follows in "Evelyn's Diary," has been retained :

"Count Ulmarini" (a footnote to "Evelyn's Diary" says Lassells calls him Valmerana) "is famous for his garden, being without the walls, especially his *cedrario*, or conserve of oranges, eleven score of my paces long, set in order and ranges, making a canopy all the way by their intermixing branches for more than 200 of my single paces, and which, being full of fruit and blossoms, was a most delicious sight. In the middle of this garden was a cupola made of wire, supported by slender pillars of brick, so closely covered with ivy, both without and within, that nothing was to be perceived but green; betwixt the arches there dangled festoons of the same. Here is likewise a most inextricable labyrinth."



FROM THE CASINO STEPS, VILLA DONA DALLE ROSE.



WATER SCHEME, VILLA DONA DALLE ROSE.

VILLA DONA DALLE ROSE,  
VALSANZIBIO.

TWENTY minutes' drive from Battaglia, which is half an hour by train from Padua. The property of Count Dona dalle Rose, who most kindly admits visitors at any time to his garden, which is one of the most beautiful and interesting in Italy. It was constructed in the sixteenth century for the Martinengo family.

The whole planning of this garden, though quite in conformity with the style of the period, is in one way unlike any other that I know. Driving towards the tiny village that here, as everywhere else in Italy, nestles up close to the residence of the chief magnate of the place, one is struck by a fine old stone archway, pierced by an iron *grille*, whose purpose is to give a view from the outside up the beautiful water scheme, and, from the inside, to form a suitable termination to it. Owing to the fact that the garden fills up the narrow valley and that the house, in order to enjoy a sunny aspect has to face across, instead of up or down it, the usual planning of a *chateau d'eau* down the hill-side was abandoned, and the water was conducted down the very centre of the valley in a series of broad pools. This involved a cross scheme, so from the centre of the villa starts a broad clipped walk transverse to the water, and in the middle stands a fountain forming the true centre of the design. From here one looks up towards a steep *viale* of cypress on the

## 40 Old Gardens of Italy

hill-side behind the villa, and, turning, up a series of huge grassy steps bordered by trees forming a pendant to it on the opposite hill-side.

Within this great square, and parallel with its lines, are magnificent pleached alleys, the finest I have seen in any garden, and passing along them, and then between clipped hedges the visitor finds himself in a square compartment given up to a maze, the well-trimmed divisions of which are kept cut at the top to so even a surface that from the commanding outlook in the centre the whole plan is as clear as a print in a book of designs. Another compartment contains a large circular pond, in the middle of which is an island devoted to a colony of rabbits. Judging by the statues of stone rabbits round the edge, this appears to have been constructed for the purpose for which it is still used.

The steps from the house to the villa are pierced with many secret fountains, and others rise at the side of the central walk.

The Hotel delle Terme, at Battaglia, forms good headquarters from which to visit this beautiful garden, and also the chateau of Cattaiio, but the latter retains no trace of the old garden.

### PALACE OF STRA, ON THE BRENTA CANAL.

ALSO known as the Villa Pisani. Built about 1740 for the Pisani family, of Verona, by Count



Frigmelica. Bought by Napoleon I. for Eugene Beauharnais, Viceroy of Italy. Now a national monument. Permission to visit it may be obtained at the Ducal Palace, Venice. It is on the line of the steam tram that runs along by the Brenta canal from Padua to Fusina. Thus it can be visited either from Padua or from Venice, whence a steamer runs to Fusina in connection with the steam tram.

Very little trace of the once extensive formal garden remains. There is still a maze and a terrace bordering a lemon garden and various summer-houses, but of the great *parterre* seen in Costa's etching no vestige survives. The stable is probably the most magnificent in the world, a veritable palace with collonade in front, and within are rows of stalls, each being decorated by a marble horse on a column, every one differing from its neighbours.

The most distinctive examples of garden architecture at Stra are the *Clairvoyees* and gates. The former are a very French feature, and these windows in the wall, with their beautiful gratings of wrought iron, serve to give life and variety to the grounds within, and are usually placed at the culminating point of a long alley. There are some magnificent gates, too, at Stra, particularly that which faces what was once the water entrance. It has two tall columns, one on either side, with a winding iron staircase round each and a terrace above. It is said that Cardinal de Rohan had a drawing made of this gateway in order that he might have a similar one built at Saverne.

## PALAZZO DORIA, GENOA

BUILT by Fra Giovanni Montorsoli, of Florence, in 1529, for Admiral Andrea Doria. Situated close to the chief railway station. The palace is now in part public offices and grounds, and may freely be entered at any time.

The plan made by M. Gautier in 1832 (see *The Art of Garden Design in Italy*, by H. Inigo Triggs, Plate 17) shows that even then much of the garden remained. In 1904 the writer carefully went over the whole of the ground above the palace to the boundary behind the colossal statue of Jupiter, beneath which is buried a dog that the Doria family took care of for the King of Spain. Gigantic dis-used cisterns, built in huge squares, honeycombed the hill-side and formed the only reminder of the prodigious garden scheme that once existed. A large hotel now occupies this site.

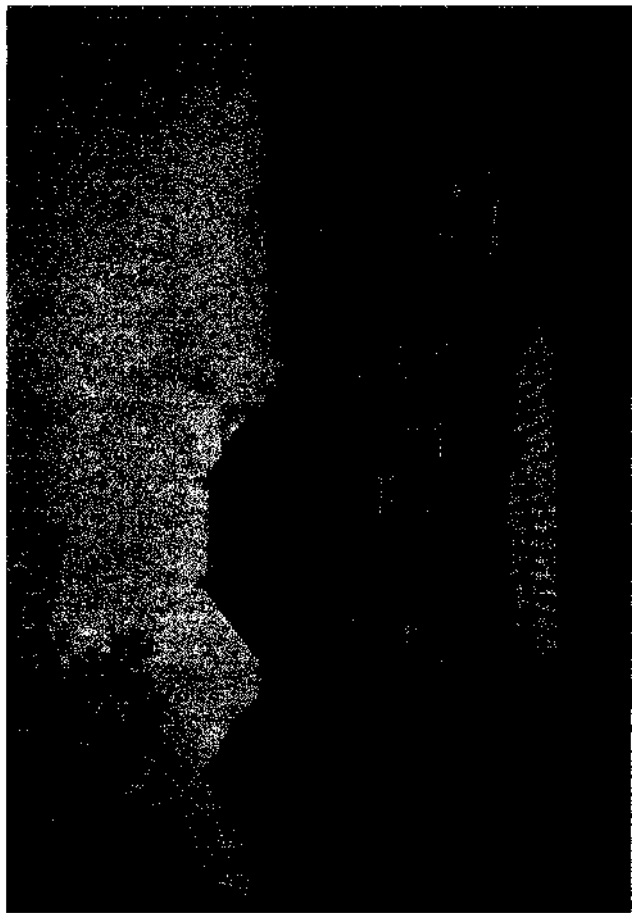
The slip of ground between the palace and the sea is all that now exists of a garden visited by Evelyn in 1644 and charmingly described by him. "It reaches," he wrote, "from the sea to the summit of the mountains." Little imagination is needed to picture its magnificence at a period when the lower terrace, with its white marble balustrade, bordered the water, long before the present unsightly line of docks interposed. This was the spot where the admiral held his famous banquet, when three times new plate was brought and that which had been used was thrown into the sea.

Between the sea terrace and the terrace of the casino the large *parterre* still remains, with its handsome white marble fountain, the central statue of which, in guise of Neptune, was thought to be a portrait of the admiral, and was executed in 1600 by the Carloni. The design of the *parterre* is now concealed by an over-abundant growth of trees and shrubs, as is so frequently the case. Two fountains adorn the upper terrace. The palace should be entered to view the *loggia* painted by Pierino del

VILLA SCASSI, SAMPIERDARENA,  
GENOA.

FORMERLY Imperiali. Built by Galeazzo Alessi (lived 1512-1572), of Perugia, who also laid out the gardens. His best-known buildings are all at Genoa. The casino is now a school and the grounds are public gardens. Reached by tram in about ten minutes from near Genoa railway station. Always open.

The gardens rise in three levels behind the casino, and are most interesting both on account of the early date of their construction and the good taste of their design. They are slightly *en pente* and have good stairways leading from terrace to terrace, and the usual central grottos in both the retaining walls, the lower having a pool in front. The terraces have tasteful screens at their terminations.



VILLA SCASSI, SAMPIERDARENA.

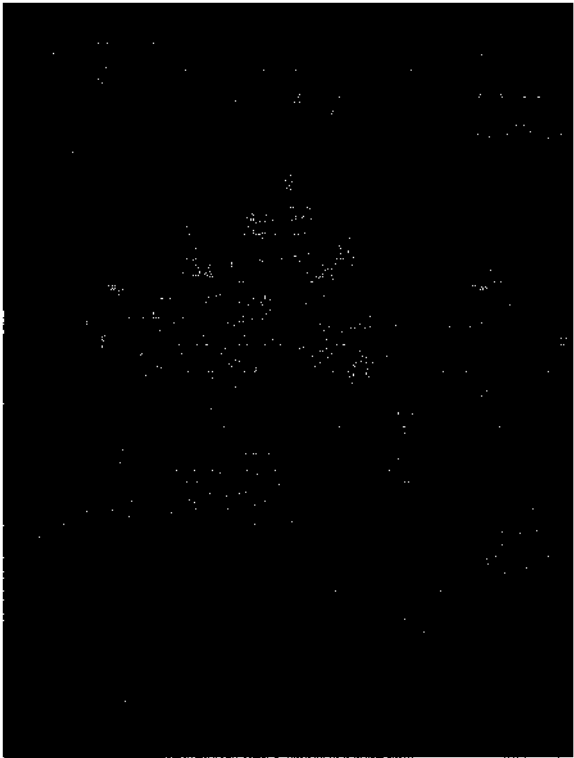
## 4.6 Old Gardens of Italy

### VILLA COLLODI, PESCIA.

ALSO called Villa Garzoni. During the middle ages it belonged to the See of Lucca, and in 1430 was besieged by the Florentines. It was for generations the property of the Garzoni family, and still belongs to them. The present house and garden date from the middle of the seventeenth century. In an old book owned by the proprietor of the Hotel Universo, at Lucca, the writer found a statement that the design was due to Ottaviano Diodati, a native of Lucca, who also competed with Vanvitelli for the design for Caserta. But as Francesco Sbaria's ode to "The Poms of Collodi" was written in 1652 (about a century earlier), the garden must have existed then. The old book is a "Guida di Lucca," compiled by Marchese Antonio Mazzarosa, Lucca (Tipografia di Guiseppe Giusti), 1845.

The garden of Collodi is open to the public on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Sundays. It is about two miles from Pescia station. Cabs will be found there.

Collodi is imposing rather than charming. The position of the casino, quite detached from the chief scheme of the garden, is peculiar, and gives the impression that from the first the grounds were laid out for public use. The fact that the tiny hamlet is only gained by passing through the gates of the great feudal demesne strengthens this suggestion, and detracts from the sense of harmony **and**



VILLA COLLODI, PESCIA.

privacy conveyed by most of the famous gardens. At the top of the cascade is a huge figure of Fame with two others reclining at her feet and representing Florence and Lucca. The cascade itself is broken up by figures of birds. A dense *bosco* of ilex clothes the slope above, and terrace above terrace rises to meet it from the *parterre*. The great middle terrace is backed by the high clipped edge of the *bosco*. At the end of this terrace, when walking towards the casino, and on the inner (or right) side, is a pretty little theatre, with wings of topiary work as at Marlia. A rustic bridge across a small ravine leads to the house. From the road below a wonderful system of ramps rise past two sentry boxes to the palace. Collodi is by far the most important garden in the neighbourhood of Lucca. The two large pools in the *parterre* are not pleasing features of the design.

#### VILLA MARLIA, LUCCA.

LUCCA is a good centre for the garden explorer. Even within the city the writer came on the remains of two old gardens. One is the garden of the Palazzo Bottoni, just outside the Porta San Gervasio. It retains only its rectangular plan with four gates and a grotto. It is not worth a visit, but the concierge readily admits anyone interested, and postcards of it may be seen in the shops. The other is the garden of the seventeenth century













