

LANDSCAPE GARDENING

AT THE PAN-AMERICAN.

LANDSCAPE gardening, or, to use an awkward term that is now employed for want of a better, landscape architecture, is an art in its infancy which is being practiced by very few persons in Europe and America. Every architect feels himself competent to design the surroundings of dwelling, mansion, or palace, and every gardener is equally sure that the architects know next to nothing on the subject, while he can do the trick according to plain rules of planting. Between the two there is room for a man, call him landscape architect or engineer if you will, or invent for him the term agrifictor, "land-modeler," who shall arrange an estate or a park or small property as a painter of an ideal landscape arranges a picture, using the buildings as one ingredient—hills, and valleys, forest and glades, lawns and bosquets, avenues and bridge paths as others. To do this requires imagination and as profound a knowledge of trees, shrubs, and flowers as any gardener can possess, because if he does not do the planting himself, but employs a gardener, he must know what the latter can do and how it is best done.

If this be true of the grounds of private owners, what shall be said of expositions which are here to-day and gone the next? When and where has the setting of an exposition received the time and attention that so difficult and rarely practiced an art demands? Certainly not in this country, for the Centennial was well-nigh guiltless of such imaginings and the Chicago Fair relied almost exclusively on architecture and lake front for its effect. The late Paris Exposition was a little, but a very little, aided by the trees of the Champs Elysées, and the Paris Exposition before that one did not have even that aid. The conditions of an exhibition are adverse, that is certain; but it does not follow that hereafter this factor in the general plan will be neglected. On the contrary, the Pan-American, by so much as it has attempted in that direction and in so far as it has failed to use the factor for all it might be used, is certain to prove an object lesson for the management of fairs to come.

The scheme of the Pan-American as it was laid out by Mr. John M. Carrère and approved by the Board of Architects and the managers of the Exposition, called for a liberal employment of the art of the "agrifictor." The style of the architecture which is in its broadest view Renaissance and in a narrower Free Renaissance in its Spanish development, suggested the formal garden with trees and plants that belong to a much more southern climate than that of the great lakes. In their mind's eye the architects saw the red sloping roofs and turrets and colored gables rising from a mass of such solid verdure as we see in Spain and Italy, and sometimes in Mexico, verdure that should afford the basic note of color against which the brighter hues would stand, with which all would agree, one moreover that might bind together buildings and sculpture and porch and bridge, coping and balustrade, kiosk and formal retaining walls on the canals.

These views and prophetic forecastings had to be made, however, without regard to our climate and its vagaries. All that could be done the year before was to plant certain hardy trees and leave them to survive the Winter; where water was to assemble in pools and canals, lay the foundation for such aquatic plants as need a year's start. Certain beds of flowering bushes and roses were made ready the year before and are now among the most delightful surprises in an exhibition that is full of color and surprises in many directions. But cypress and palm and orange trees were forced to wait until the uncertain weather of Lake Erie had had its game of now-you-see-the-Spring, now-you-don't played out to its satisfaction before these final touches to the architecture and sculpture could be made. Mr. Rudolph Ulrich, who supervised the gardening for the World's Fair at Chicago, had this difficult and ungrateful task. And after all was done, and the exposition was opened, it was seen that had twice or thrice the number of poplars, Belgian baytrees, California palms and oranges, New Jersey cypress, lotus, and water lilies been set out, they would have been none too many to carry out the ideas of Mr. Carrère as he conceived the exposition.

But as the days have gone by this weakness of the grand undernote of green has been less apparent. The abundant rains of May and June made up in part for the delay that was forced upon the landscape gardener by the rudeness of March and April. Gradually the leafage has begun to make itself felt, particularly along the sunken gardens running transversely to the axis of the exposition, which represent the level of Amherst Street, and on the borders of the canals, where happy city parade in gondolas of the right funereal hue, driven by the actual gondoliers of Venice. It is formal enough, this green that shows in bits of lawn and in evenly planted trees, but how grateful to the eyes and how necessary to the scene! There are spots, indeed, such as the Plaza north of the Electric Tower, and the area of fountains just south, where the absence of verdure in large, telling masses seems to cry aloud that something is missing from the scene, especially during

the hours when the sun is ruthless. While bringing out in artistic fashion the dark shadows of column and architrave and overhanging eaves, the sun enjoys nothing more than searing the eyes with rays that reverberate from wall and statue and pavement, causing one to long for an oasis of leaves.

In fact, our climate contains all climates, from the months when trees and shrubs need coverings to protect them from the searching cold to those that are on us now, when only those plants which are used to the tropics can keep their equanimity, their soft rustling, their green. The two extremes work sad havoc for the landscape gardener, who must replace flowers over night and strive by watering—a very inadequate thing—to make up for the natural moisture that comes by way of the clouds.

Fortunately the Pan-American has no stint of the wherewithal to artificial watering, and the gardener does what he can. The Niagara River is not like some great watercourses in the West we read of, where drought causes the bed of the river to appear and grass waves on the track of the steamboat; what the abundant water can save is preserved. But it must be said that Buffalo has had a hard time with the climate, which delayed the exposition unduly through snow and cold and rain, and then subjected it to scorching heat. These extremes are particularly unfortunate when trees of a certain size are transplanted, for they need all their vitality to establish themselves in the new soil, and have little to expend in resisting the assaults of heat and cold.

No landscape architect by profession, no professional agrifictor seems to have had the exposition grounds in charge, and the result is that plantations and garden beds are more in the nature of chance additions and stop-gaps than a scheme elaborated from the start with due consideration of the approaches, the height of buildings, the distance at which the verdure was to be seen. Places for beds of flowers and plantations of trees were assigned on the general scheme, but they were not wrought out carefully beforehand, as a landscape architect must work them out if he is an artist and understands his profession. No provision was made for a specialist in this line. Your true agrifictor must be a landscape painter in his way, only he deals with the real hills and valleys, woods and lakes, bosquets and flower beds, driveways and footpaths. This is a point which managers of future expositions ought to remember. A man who is about to lay out a town or a fine country seat is foolish not to engage an architect to put the estate in shape as well as an architect to design his house. Much more should an exposition call for the best specialists in this branch of art, since the man who designs the buildings has all he can do, without burdening him with that background and setting against and within which the building is to stand. The gardening is therefore an adjunct, but a somewhat meagre adjunct to the architecture, and fails to make itself felt with that easy insistence a good landscape architect teaches.

What there is of it is formal, but its quantity is so restricted that one does not readily think of the classic examples that survive in Italy and France.

For one thing, we cannot conceive of a fine formal garden with saplings in place of trees and hedges a foot or so high, because the important gardens and parks we see abroad have lofty trees and tall hedges and other signs of age, which add to the charm. But how did these famous gardens look when they were young? They must have had low hedges and small trees and in general presented a dwarfed appearance. Such gardens we sometimes meet with in copper plates that embellish old Dutch and Italian books. Harsh and angular and not a little disillusioning are the scenes in these old cuts, which present the formal garden at the time they were most admired, not in the succeeding generations. For after the fashion for them had waned nature gently led them out of the wilderness of humdrum and pretentious art into the wildness of the romantic and the picturesque.

Now, the Pan-American gardening smacks too much of the early periods of the formal garden before the trees and hedges and creepers had had time to grow. Compared with the buildings, the trees look too small, because one cannot transplant big trees except at exorbitant cost. So the vista down the central axis or that on one of the lateral avenues suffers from the small size of the trees and shrubs as well as the absence of liberal and judicious bunching. Calculate as they might, the architects of the Pan-American did not realize how the distances and the showy buildings would swallow up the trees and plants when scattered in lines or dotted here and there among the sculpture.

Among the arrangements of the Pan-American's general plan that one could have wished otherwise ordered is the approach. In order to secure the best results, it should have been through Delaware Avenue, with its quadruple row of trees and handsome residences, to the right past the lake, the charming lake, with its little bays and islands, through the trees and past

the lawns of the park. Then, turning to the left, one would pass the Fine Arts Gallery, catching glimpses of the State and Foreign Buildings through the trees, and, still skirting the lake, reach the avenue that leads straight over the causeway called the Triumphal Bridge to the Esplanade and the Electric Tower.

That is the route every one should take, either by carriage up Delaware Avenue, or, better, alighting from the trolley at Forest Avenue, where Delaware turns to the right, and there drive into the fair, or else make the approach on foot. Most people take the railway and enter at the extreme north of the grounds, or, when they take the trolley, push on to the lower or central gate on the west, thus missing an approach which would take them by gradations from the "natural" gardening of the park to the "formal" of the Fair.

By taking the southeast corner of the Pan-American grounds as one's objective in this way, the beauties of the whole plan unfold themselves successively. Having seen so much of trees and lake and tempting bits of tower and pylon at the approach, one is ready for the relative paucity of verdure on the grounds themselves. The equestrian monuments and masts that greet you prepare you for the rest. So it is that as you move on toward the bridge the side bridges over the canal unfold to right and left in all their formality. Glimpses of magnificent rose plantations shine on the left; water lilies and sedges are seen on a lower level to the right. Then, as you pass across the bridge, you see the green though scattered setting of the pagodas to right and left, made with formal bay and cypress, and in the sunken gardens of the Esplanade green masses of aquatic plants again, and, nearer still, the green borders of the canals. In this way the impression that the Pan-American should have more abundant greenery is reduced to a minimum.

It is easy to see that here the architects could not do what they wished, could not force the public to approach through the park. As a substitute they have tried to deflect the tide of visitors to the southwest corner, where one passes the New York State Building on the right, and is led by a broad path to the Triumphal Bridge. But it is only a substitute. Every one must feel that here was a condition made by the railway and the trolley lines against which there was nothing to be effected.

As in architecture and sculpture and the painting of architecture, the Pan-American is suggesting and partially working out in the fold of gardening a number of problems of great moment to civic art on a grand scale. The country should pay the tribute of National admiration to the leading citizens of towns like Chicago and Buffalo for the expenditure of time, effort, wealth in ways that bring such questions up. It matters little whether the main-spring of their endeavor has been civic ambition to excel and the wisdom that expends money liberally to gain future rewards. Justice should be rendered to their success in giving object lessons to artists of all kinds on a colossal scale, lessons from which the builders of cities and the embellishers of existing towns can draw a host of facts to guide them. The mere point of mass and height of verdure in relation to mass and height of buildings is a cardinal point for the modeler of land who is working to secure beauty as well as convenience for urban populations.

The labors of the botanists who have searched the earth for shade trees and others that have advantages in color or flower, the labors of the gardeners who have changed flowers and trees and adapted them to cool climates, permit the twentieth century to attack problems never solved before, and the great financial scale on which expositions are now run is a factor of equal importance. Buffalo learned from Chicago, and St. Louis will learn from Buffalo, what to use and what to avoid. The chief lesson is that the emplacement for an exposition should be studied by the landscape man and architect together, and two years at least should be occupied with grading and planting before the buildings are begun.

CHARLES DE KAY.