

THE LAY FIGURE : ON GARDEN ACCESSORIES. ♦ ♦ ♦

"I was asked the other day by a friend of mine to look at some things he had bought to put in his garden," said the Critic. "He called them ornaments, but they seemed to me curiously unornamental and mostly pretty poor stuff." ♦ ♦

"Things of that sort generally are," agreed the Architect. "For some unaccountable reason the majority of what are known as garden ornaments have a very small degree of artistic interest and are usually bad both in design and treatment. I find them as a rule more than a little depressing." ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

"You take them too seriously," laughed the Plain Man. "Surely, they are good enough for their purpose. You would not expect to find important works of art stuck about a garden; that is not the right place for them." ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

"Why not?" asked the Critic. "Why should bad art be more suitable for a garden than good?" ♦ ♦ ♦

"Yes, and what on earth do you think their purpose should be?" added the Architect. ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

"Well, I take it that their only purpose is to add a touch of variety to the garden and to give it some amusing features," answered the Plain Man. "So long as they are quaint and original it does not matter whether they are particularly artistic or not. After all, they are mixed up with other things and no one ever looks at them very closely." ♦ ♦ ♦

"And any kind of stuff will do to fill a gap; that is your view," commented the Critic. "Evidently there are lots of people who think as you do, and that is why so many of these garden accessories are of such an undesirable type. The makers of such things know their public and provide what they imagine is likely to be in demand." ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

"Can you blame them for that?" demanded the Plain Man. "It seems to me that they would be fools to do anything else. They evidently satisfy their public: that is all that can be reasonably expected of them." ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

"But there is a public that would take better work," protested the Architect.

"I have had several clients who wanted ornaments for their gardens and yet had to go without because they would not accept the ridiculous objects that were offered to them." ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

"People who are as particular as that must have their ornaments specially made for them," returned the Plain Man. "There would be a chance for you then to design something which would come up to your standard of artistic propriety. Why, you might set a new fashion in garden decoration." ♦ ♦ ♦

"There is many a true word spoken in jest," broke in the Critic. "It would be quite possible to set a new and much better fashion in garden ornaments if the architects and sculptors would take up the matter properly. There have been some isolated efforts in this direction which show significantly enough what garden decoration could become in the hands of capable men who were prepared to study its particular needs and to suit their work to the surroundings in which it would have to be placed. It would greatly please me to see a real artistic movement grow up from this beginning." ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

"I am quite ready to make the most of any chance that comes my way," declared the Architect: "and I am entirely willing to adapt myself to the conditions under which I might have to work. The artistic movement you desire could only become efficient by suiting itself to these conditions." ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

"Precisely; it would have to take into account the whole principle of garden design," agreed the Critic. "It would have to deal not only with the improvement of the garden ornament as a desirable detail but also with the use of such objects in the scheme of garden decoration and with their relation to the architectural plan of the whole place. It would have to consider questions of cost, suitability of materials, ease of production, and so on; and it would have to be backed up by men who would approach these questions seriously and practically." ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

"I thought we were talking about bird-baths and sundials," laughed the Plain Man. "We seem to have enlarged our subject." ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

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