CHAPTER XXXVI

THE HOUSE OF THE FAUN

The house of the Faun, so named from the statue of a dancing satyr found in it (Fig. 258), was among the largest and most elegant in Pompeii. It illustrates for us the type of dwelling that wealthy men of cultivated tastes living in the third or second century B.C. built and adorned for themselves. The mosaic pictures found on the floors (now in the Naples Museum) are the most beautiful that have survived to modern times.

![Plan of the house of the Faun](image)

The wall decoration, which is of the first style, in the more important rooms was left unaltered to the last, and is well preserved. This decoration, however, does not date from the building of the house. In order to protect the painted surfaces against moisture, the walls in the beginning were carefully covered with sheets of lead before they were plastered. Later two doorways were walled up, and the plastering over the apertures, which was applied directly to the wall surface without the use of lead sheathing, forms with its decoration an inseparable part of that found on either side. When the original decoration was replaced by that which we see on the walls to-day it is impossible to determine, but the change must have been made before the first century B.C. A few unimportant rooms are painted in the second and fourth styles.

An entire block (VI. xii.), measuring approximately 315 by 115 feet, is given to the house; there are no shops except the four in front (Fig. 137). The apartments are arranged in four groups: a large Tuscan atrium, B, with living rooms on three sides; a small tetrastyle atrium, \( \delta \), with rooms for domestic service around it and extending on the right side toward the rear of the house; a peristyle, G, the depth of which equals the width of the large and half that of the small atrium; and a second peristyle, K, occupying more than a third of the block. At the rear of the second peristyle is a series of small rooms (\( \gamma-\nu \)) the depth of which varies according to the deviation of the street at the north end of the insula.

In front of the main entrance we read the word HAVIV (more commonly written \( \textit{ave} \)), 'Welcome!' spelled in the sidewalk with bits of green, yellow, red, and white marble. The street door here, quite exceptionally, was at the outer end of the vestibule. It consisted of three leaves (seen in Fig. 139) and opened toward the inside, while the double door between the vestibule and the fauces (A on the plan) opened toward the outside; the closed vestibule was not unlike those of many modern houses. Fragments of the lintel over the outer door, with its projecting dentil cornice, are preserved in one of the shops (Fig. 138).

The shops with their upper floors, \( \textit{pergulae} \), were nineteen feet high. When the shutters were up they presented a monotonous appearance (Fig. 139), but on sunny days, when
the articles offered for sale were attractively displayed, and buyers and idlers were loitering in front or leisurely passing from one to the other, shops and street alike were full of color and animation.

The floor of the fauces, as of many of the other rooms, is rich in color. It is made of small triangular pieces of marble and slate — red, yellow, green, white, and black. At the inner end it was marked off from the floor of the atrium by a stripe of finely executed mosaic, suggestive of a threshold (Fig. 140), now in the Naples Museum. Two tragic masks are realistically outlined, appearing in the midst of fruits, flowers, and garlands, the details of which are worked out with much skill.

The walls of the fauces are ornamented in an unusual manner. The ordinary decoration of the first style is carried to the height of eight feet. Above this on either side projects a tufa shelf about sixteen inches wide, on which is placed the façade of a diminutive temple; that on the left is seen in Fig. 141. The front of the cella, with closed doors, is presented in relief, but the four columns of the portico stand free. The shelf is supported underneath by a cornice which rested originally on stucco brackets in the shape of dogs; the underside is carved to represent a richly ornamented coffered ceiling.

The atrium was a room of imposing dimensions. The length is approximately 53 feet, the breadth 33; the height, as indicated by the remains of the walls and the pilasters, was certainly not less than 28 feet. Above was a coffered ceiling. The sombre shade of the floor, paved with small pieces of dark slate, formed an effective contrast with the white limestone edge and brilliant inner surface of the shallow impluvium, covered with pieces of colored marbles similar to those in the fauces. Still more marked was the contrast in the strong colors of the walls. Below was a broad surface of black; then a projecting white dentil cornice, and above this, masses of dark red, bluish green, and yellow. The decoration, as usual in the first style, was not carried to the ceiling, but stopped just above the side doors; the upper part of the wall was left in the white.

As one stepped across the mosaic border at the end of the fauces, a beautiful vista opened up before the eyes. From the aperture of the compluvium a diffused light was spread through the atrium brilliant with its rich coloring. At the rear the lofty entrance of the tablinum attracted the visitor by its stately dignity. Now the portières are drawn aside, and beyond the large window of the tablinum the columns of the first peristyle are seen (Fig. 141). The shrubs and flowers of the garden are bright with sunshine, and fragrant odors are wafted through the house; in the midst a slender fountain jet rises in the air and falls with a murmur pleasant to the ear. If the vegetation was not too luxuriant, one might look into the exedra, on the further side of the colonnade, and even catch glimpses of the trees and bushes in the garden of the second peristyle.

Of the rooms at the side of the atrium, one (f') was apparently the family sleeping room; places for two beds were set off by slight elevations in the floor. This room had been care-
fully redecorated in the second style; the room opposite, the decoration of which was inferior to that of the rest, was perhaps used by the porter (*atriensis*).

The tablinum (D), like that of the house of Sallust, had a broad window opening on the colonnade of the peristyle. In the middle of this room is a rectangular section paved with lozenge-shaped pieces of black, white, and green stone; the rest of the floor is of white mosaic. The floor of each ala was ornamented with a mosaic picture. In that at the left (C) are doves pulling a necklace out of a casket—a work of slight merit.

The mosaic picture found in the right ala is characterized by delicacy of execution and harmonious coloring. It is divided into two parts; above is a cat with a partridge; below, ducks, fishes, and shellfish. A large window in the rear wall of this ala opens into the small atrium, not for the admission of light, but for ventilation; in summer there would be a circulation of air between the two atriums.

Two doors, at the right and the left of the tablinum (seen in Fig. 143), opened into large dining rooms, one (E) nearly square, the other (F) oblong. Both had large windows on the side of the peristyle, and the one at the left also a door opening upon the colonnade. The mosaic pictures in the floors harmonized well with the purpose of the rooms. In one were fishes of various kinds, and sea monsters; in the other was the picture

—often reproduced—in which the Genius of the autumn is represented as a vine-crowned boy sitting on a panther and drinking out of a deep golden bowl.

The colonnade of the first peristyle was of one story (Fig. 141). The entablature of the well proportioned Ionic columns presented a mixture of styles often met with in Pompeii, a Doric frieze with a dentil cornice. The wall surfaces were divided by pilasters and decorated in the first style. In the middle of the garden the delicately carved standard of a marble fountain basin may still be seen.

The open front of the broad exedra (H) was adorned with two columns, and at the rear was a window extending almost from side to side, opening upon the second peristyle. Between the columns of the entrance were mosaic pictures of the creatures of the Nile,—hippopotamus, crocodile, ichneumon, and ibis; and in the room, filling almost the entire floor, was the most famous of ancient mosaic pictures, the battle between Alexander and Darius.

This great composition has so often been reproduced that we need not present it here; as illustrating the style and treatment, however, we give a small section, in which the face of Alexander appears (Fig. 142). The mosaic is a reproduction of a painting made either in the lifetime of Alexander, or soon after his death. The battle is perhaps that of Issus. The left side of the picture...
is unfortunately only in part preserved. At the head of the Greek horsemen rides Alexander, fearless, unhelmeted, leading a charge against the picked guard of Darius. The long spear of the terrible Macedonian is piercing the side of a Persian noble, whose horse sinks under him. The driver of Darius's chariot is putting the lash to the horses, but the fleeing king turns with an expression of anguish and terror to witness the death of his courtier, the mounted noblemen about him being panic-stricken at the resistless onset of the Greeks. The grouping of the combatants, the characterization of the individual figures, the skill with which the expressions upon the faces are rendered, and the delicacy of coloring give this picture a high rank among ancient works of art. The colors in the mosaic are necessarily more subdued than in the original painting.

A corridor (r), both ends of which could be closed, led from the first to the second peristyle. The columns here, of the Doric order, were of brick, with tufta capitals, the shafts being edged, not fluted. The entablature rested on a line of timbers, as often in the buildings of the Tufa Period. In our restoration

**Fig. 142.**—Detail from the mosaic picture representing a battle between Alexander and Darius. Alexander, having thrown aside his helmet, is leading the charge upon the guard of Darius, who is already in flight.

(Fig. 141) an upper colonnade of the Ionic order is assumed, extending about the four sides. The restoration is here possibly at fault; the colonnade may have been in two stories only on the south side, with twice as many columns above as below.

On either side of the exedra were two dining rooms (I, J), one open in its entire breadth upon the second peristyle, the other having a narrow door with two windows. The fine mosaic picture in I was found in so damaged a condition that the subject—a lion standing over a prostrate tiger—could not be made out, until a duplicate was discovered in 1885.

In the sleeping room on the other side of the corridor (N), which had been redecorated in the second style, remains of two beds were found. The room next to it (L) was the largest in this part of the house; at the time of the eruption it was without decoration and was used as a wine cellar. A great number of amphorae were found in it, as also in both peristyles.

One of the small rooms at the rear (q) was perhaps occupied by the gardener; the one next to it (r) was the doorkeeper's room. At v is a long, shallow niche, designed for statues. Nearer the corner were two smaller niches, each of which was ornamented in front with pilasters and a gable. These were the shrines of the household gods; in front of them were found two bronze tripods, two bronze lamp stands, two pairs of iron tongs, a couple of common lamps, and the remains of a branch of laurel with the bones and eggs of a dove that had nested in it. A bronze statuette of a Genius was found seemingly in one of the niches.

The domestic apartments were entered by a front door between the two shops at the right (Fig. 139). The vestibule, unlike that of the other entrance, is open to the street, the faucets being narrower and deeper. The relation of the tetra-

**THE HOUSE OF THE FAUN**

style to the Tuscan atrium is indicated in our transverse section (Fig. 143). The alae (c, c') are here at the middle of the sides; the one at the left served as a passageway between the two atriums. The four tufta Corinthian columns, nearly twenty feet high, are well preserved, as well as the pilasters at the entrances of the alae. A tablinum was not needed in this part of the house, and the space which it might have occupied was given
to the andron (\(k\)) and a sleeping room opening on the first peristyle (\(l\)).

This part of the house was much damaged by the earthquake of 62, and there are many traces of repairs, particularly in the upper rooms. The walls were simply painted in the fourth style. Two money chests stood on large flat stones in the rear corners of this atrium.

In one of the rooms at the front (\(e\)) there are traces of shelves; stairs at one side led to the upper rooms at the left of the atrium, the shape and size of which are indicated in Fig. 143. On the right, also, there were small chambers over

![Diagram of the house of the Faun showing the two atriums with adjoining rooms.](image)

...connected the rooms at the right of the small atrium with the closet (\(n\)), the bath (\(o, o'\)), the kitchen (\(M\)), and the large bedroom (\(N\)) opening on the second peristyle. The two rooms of the bath, tepidarium and caldarium, were provided with hollow floors and walls, and were heated from the kitchen, into which the draft vents (p. 188) opened; in order to make the smoke less objectionable, the kitchen was built very high, with several windows.

The kitchen is of unusual size. A niche for the images of the household gods was placed in the wall at the left, so high up that it could only have been reached by means of a ladder. The front is shaped to resemble the façade of a small temple, and in it is a small altar of terra cotta for the burning of incense.

The first room at the right of the corridor (\(n'\)) was completely excavated in 1900, and found to be a stall. In it were brought to light the skeletons of two cows and of four human beings, an adult and three children.