CHAPTER XLIV

ROMAN VILLAS.—THE VILLA OF DIOMEDES

Two classes of villas were distinguished by the Romans,—the country seat, villa pseudurbana, and the farmhouse, villa rustica. The former was a city house, adapted to rural conditions; the arrangements of the latter were determined by the requirements of farm life.

The country seats manifested a greater diversity of plan than the city residences. They were relatively larger, containing spacious colonnades and gardens; as the proprietor was unrestricted in regard to space, not being confined to the limits of a lot, fuller opportunity was afforded for the display of individual taste in the arrangement of rooms. We can understand from the letters of Pliny the Younger, describing his two villas at Laurentum and Tifernum Tiberinum (now Città di Castello), and from the remains of the villa of Hadrian at Tivoli, how far individuality might assert itself in the planning and building of a country home.

The main entrance of a country seat, according to Vitruvius, should lead directly to a peristyle; one or more atriums might be placed further back. The living rooms would be grouped about the central spaces in the way that would best suit the configuration of the ground and meet the wishes of the owner. In farmhouses there would naturally be a court near the entrance; and the hearth, as we have seen, down to the latest times, was placed in the room that corresponded with the atrium of the city house. In most parts of Italy a large farmhouse would contain appliances for making wine and oil.

The arrangement of the two types of country house in the vicinity of Pompeii may be briefly illustrated by reference to an example of each, the villa of Diomedes and the farmhouse recently excavated at Boscoreale.

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angle with the street. The orientation of the building was determined by an abrupt descent in the ground, which runs across the middle and divides it into two parts. The front part, the rooms of which are numbered on the plan (Fig. 183), is a few feet above the level of the street at the entrance. The rear portion, as may be seen from our section (Fig. 184), is considerably lower; on the plan the rooms of this portion are designated by letters. From traces of the second style of decoration found in two of the rooms, and from the character of the masonry, we infer that the villa was built in Roman times, but before the reign of Augustus.

In front of the door was a narrow porch (Fig. 184). The door opened directly into the peristyle (3 on the plan), in the middle of which was a garden. At the left is a small triangular court (17) containing a swimming tank (§) and a hearth (e) on which a kettle and several pots were found; the Romans partook of warm refreshments after a bath. The wall back of the swimming tank was in part decorated with a garden scene, not unlike those in the frigidariums of the two older public baths. Over the tank was a roof supported by two columns, and on the other two sides of the court there was a low but well proportioned colonnade.

The arrangements of the bath were unusually complete, comprising an apodyterium (19), a tepidarium (20), and a caldarium (21), from which the tepidarium was warmed by means of an opening in the wall; the caldarium had a hollow floor and walls, and was heated from the kitchen (22). In the tepidarium were found four panes of glass about 10½ inches square, together with the remains of the wooden frame in which they were set. The caldarium, like those of the public baths, had a bath basin and a semicircular niche for the labrum.

A small oven stands on one end of the hearth in the kitchen, and a stone table is built against the wall on the long side. The room in the corner (23) was used as a reservoir for water, which was brought into it by means of a feed pipe and thence distributed through smaller pipes leading to the bath rooms and other parts of the house.

At the left of the peristyle is a passage (15) leading to a gar-
den which has not yet been excavated. The only apartment of special interest in this portion of the house is the semicircular sleeping room (14) built out into the garden. It faced the south, and had three large windows; it was separated from the rest of the house by an anteroom, *procæton* (13), at one end of which is a small division (β) designed for the bed of an attendant. In the semicircular room are an alcove for a bed (γ) and a stationary wash bowl. The plan is similar to that of a bedroom in Pliny’s villa at Laurentum. Another sleeping room (9) was provided with both a large and a small door (p. 261).

The large room (8) at the rear of the peristyle may be loosely called a tablinum; it could be closed at the rear. Back of the tablinum was originally a colonnade (26), which was later turned into a corridor, with rooms at either end; the original form is assumed in our restoration. Beyond the colonnade was a broad terrace (28) extending to the edge of the garden. It commanded a magnificent view of Stabiae, the coast in the direction of Sorrento, and the Bay. Connected with it was an unroofed promenade over the colonnade (e, f, g, h) surrounding the large garden below. A rectangular room (27, indicated on the plan but not in the restoration) was afterwards built on the terrace.

Members of the family could pass into the lower portion of the villa by means of a stairway, at b; the slaves could use a long corridor (a), which was more directly connected with the domestic apartments. The flat roof of the quadrangular colonnade (e, f, g, h) was carried on the outside by a wall, on the inside by square pillars (Fig. 184). The rooms (i, k) opening into the front of the colonnade were vaulted, and the decoration, in the last style, is well preserved; the ceiling of the corner rooms (l, m) is flat, and the decoration of one of them (I) is noteworthy; green and red stars are painted on a white ground. In the narrow space between i and c a cistern was built, from which water could be drawn by means of a faucet in front.

At the opposite corners of the colonnade were two airy garden rooms (n, o). Outside of the left arm (e, f) was a broad walk the villa of Diomedes, restored.

The garden enclosed by the colonnade was planted with trees, charred remains of which were found at the time of excavation. In the middle was a fish pond (r), in which was a fountain. Back of it was a platform, over which vines were trained on a framework supported by six columns, making a pleasant arbor in which meals were doubtless often served.

The door at the rear of the garden led into the fields. Near it were found the skeletons of two men. One of them had a large key, doubtless the key of this door; he wore a gold ring
on his finger, and was carrying a considerable sum of money—
ten gold and eighty-eight silver coins. He was probably the
master of the house who had started out, accompanied by a
single slave, in order to find means of escape.

The floor of the three sides of the colonnade was a few feet
higher than that of the front. Underneath was a wine cellar,
lighted by small windows in the wall on the side of the garden;
it contained a large number of amphorae.

At the time of the eruption many members of the family
took refuge in the cellar. Here were found the skeletons of
eighteen adults and two children: at the time of excavation the
impressions of their bodies, and in some instances traces of
the clothing, could be seen in the hardened ashes. Among the
women was one adorned with two necklaces and two arm bands,
besides four gold rings and two of silver. The victims were
suffocated by the damp ashes that drifted in through the small
windows. According to the report of the excavations, fourteen
skeletons of men were found in other parts of the house, to-
gether with the skeletons of a dog and a goat.