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The Improvements of Rome

BY
ARTHUR SYMONS.

II.

The artistic sense: it is there that the modern Roman is lacking. What the ancient Romans did he desires to do; only, the essential thing is not there, the sense of proportion, of beauty, of taste, the artistic sense.

Between the Capitol and the Piazza Venezia, partly hidden by walls and hoardings, there can be seen vast irregular substructures of stone work, already in parts lined with white marble, in the form of what seems to be a large modern house, with doors and windows; everywhere big doors leading to nothing and narrow windows through which no one will ever look. The hinder part of the structure is as yet left plain, but the front and sides are clamped and embossed with irrelevant and mediocre decoration. At each corner there is stuck a composite blob of ornament, in which a garland of palm-leaves seems to support a cluster of Roman breastplates, shields, and helmets. Other blobs, with discs containing winged heads, are slung to the flat part of the wall by marble ribbons; here and there are brocades of scroll-work and foliage, and the cornices of the windows are teased into flowery patterns. Fluted columns with ornamentations of palm-leaves springing from the base, support I know not what, and a few trivial nude figures are carved on flat pillars dividing the windows.

This house, as it seems, this immense and mean house, is no more than the base for the gigantic monument to Vittorio Emanuele, which has got no further after twenty years labour. There is to be an equestrian statue on the summit, when all is done, and some two millions of pounds have been spent; but no one knows much about the statue, for the sculptor who was to have done it is dead, and the statue is still to make. In preparing the ground for the monument some mischief has already been done, but the most serious part of the mischief is only as yet decided on, not done. One corner of the Piazza Venezia is made by the angle of the Palazzo Venezia and

Voir la traduction de cet article à la page 1 du Supplément.