HOUSES & GARDENS OF THE RIVIERA

VILLA ROSEMARY, ALPES MARITIMES.

A Residence of
The Hon. Sir JOHN WARD

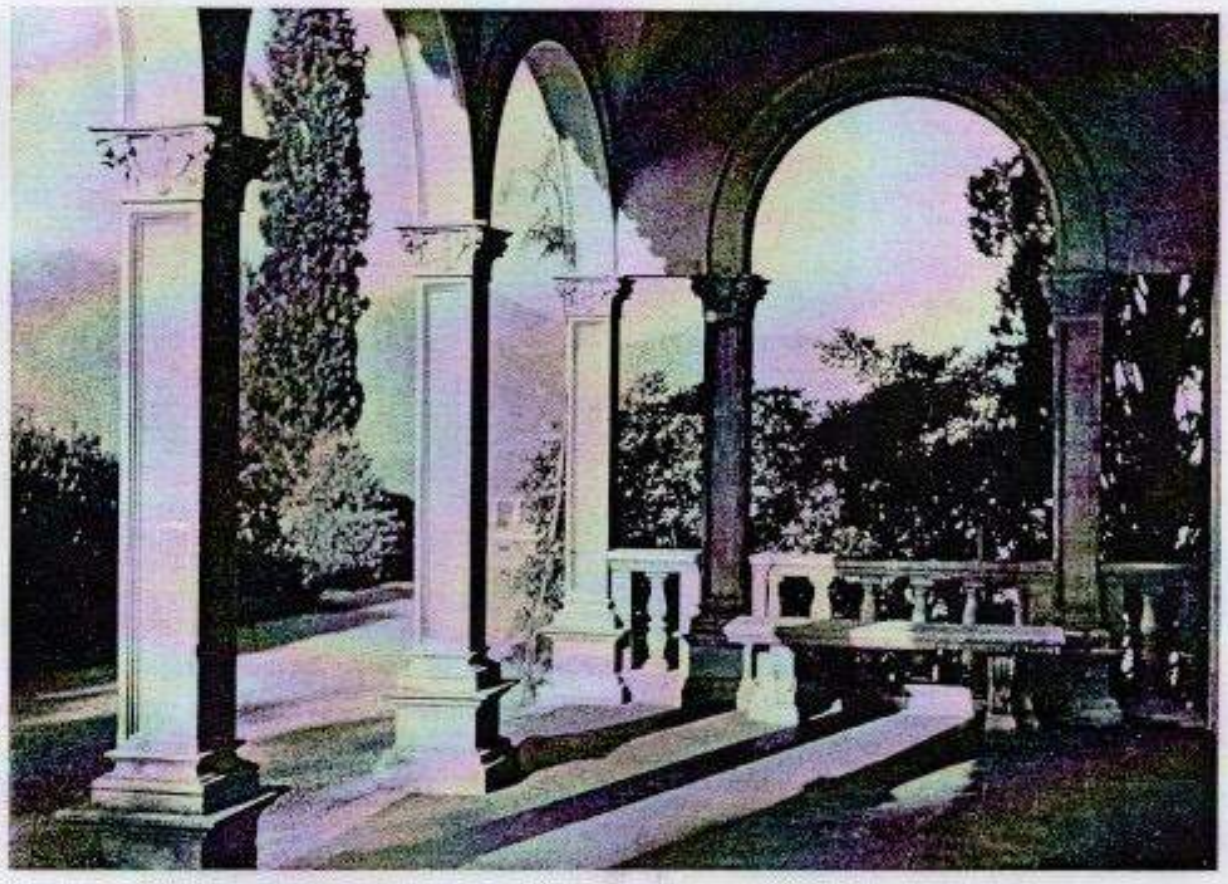
The villa and gardens, designed by Mr. Harold Peto, are on the east side of Cap Ferrat, and are treated so as to be attractive all the year round.

IN 1912 the Villa Rosemary, the home of Sir John and Lady Ward, and its garden were described and illustrated in COUNTRY LIFE of March 30th, 1912, shortly after the building of the House, and the changes that have come about through the natural growth of a Riviera garden since that date are very interesting. This villa and garden show, perhaps better than any other, the genius of Mr. Harold Peto, the architect, in utilising the ground at his disposal and in designing a house and garden that form a home as well as being eminently in keeping with the local climate and situation. Cap Ferrat, on the east side of which the villa stands, certainly lies in a perfect situation, where the views of the eastern Riviera and the Alpes Maritimes are unequalled; but the origin of the Cap Ferrat colony has confined the scope of the architects within fairly narrow limits, for Cap Ferrat has never been under peasant proprietorship. It is far too rocky and stony for even the hard-working Riviera peasant to attempt to scratch a living from its soil, and it is where the peasant has formerly tilled the hillsides, and perhaps cultivated groves of olives or lemons or oranges, that some of the most charming Riviera gardens have been formed, for it is in such situations that there is a background on which the garden design can be planned. It is true that this soil has a reputation for being perfect for carnation growing, but its depth is negligible. The consequence was that Cap Ferrat was a rocky, inhospitable waste until it was taken over by a building company, whose charges were so high that no one could afford an unlimited garden. The difficulties that arose are, of course, obvious: how to place the house and design the garden within a small area with a maximum of privacy, without spoiling the outlook and causing a messy effect. It is very easy, in such a case, to spoil one, other or both, and very difficult to blend the two into a harmonious whole that takes every advantage of the ground at one's disposal. It is unnecessary to say that Mr. Peto has been entirely successful.

The area is square, with an elongated north-east corner, and the site is on the top of a rocky cliff above the sea, the rocks being of an amazing apricot colour, a dazzling contrast to the vivid blue. There is a magnificent view of the Alpes Maritimes with their patches of light and shade towards the north and north-east. The house lies as near the north-east corner as possible, with the main garden lying to the south and slightly west. As with all houses designed by Mr. Peto, the architecture differs entirely from the usual type to be found on the Riviera, and yet is absolutely in keeping with the climate and conditions prevailing on that sunny coast. The side with the main entrance is severe in style and is pierced by no important windows, whereas the garden side is exactly what

G. R. Ballance. 1.—THE GARDEN FRONT OF THE VILLA ROSEMARY. *Copyright*

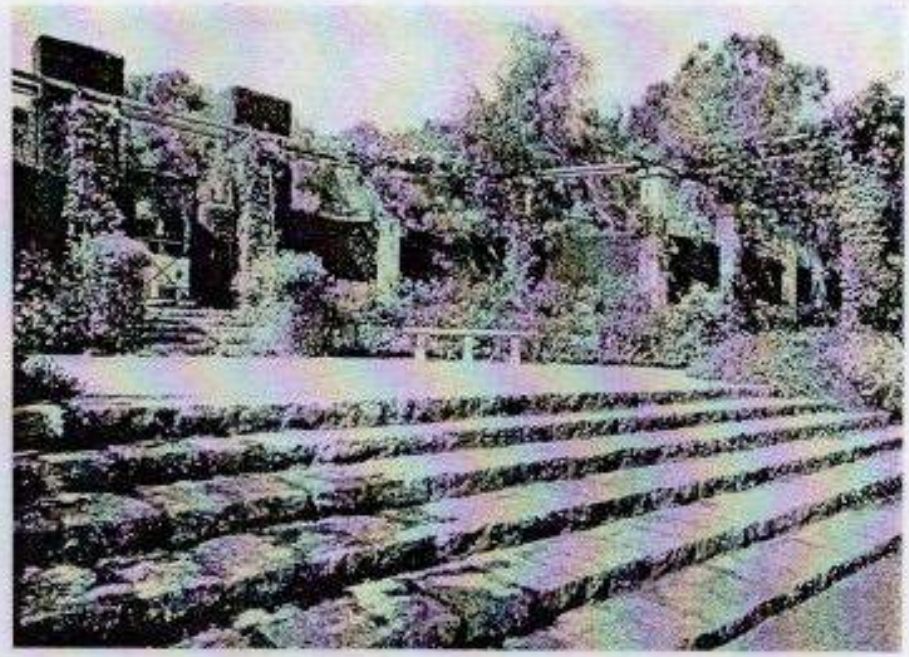
3.—THE HOUSE, FROM THE PERGOLA STEPS.



3.—THE GARDEN PERGOLA, WITH THE ALPES MARITIMES BEYOND.

G. R. Ballance. 4.—THE PAVED TERRACE AND SQUARE POOL.

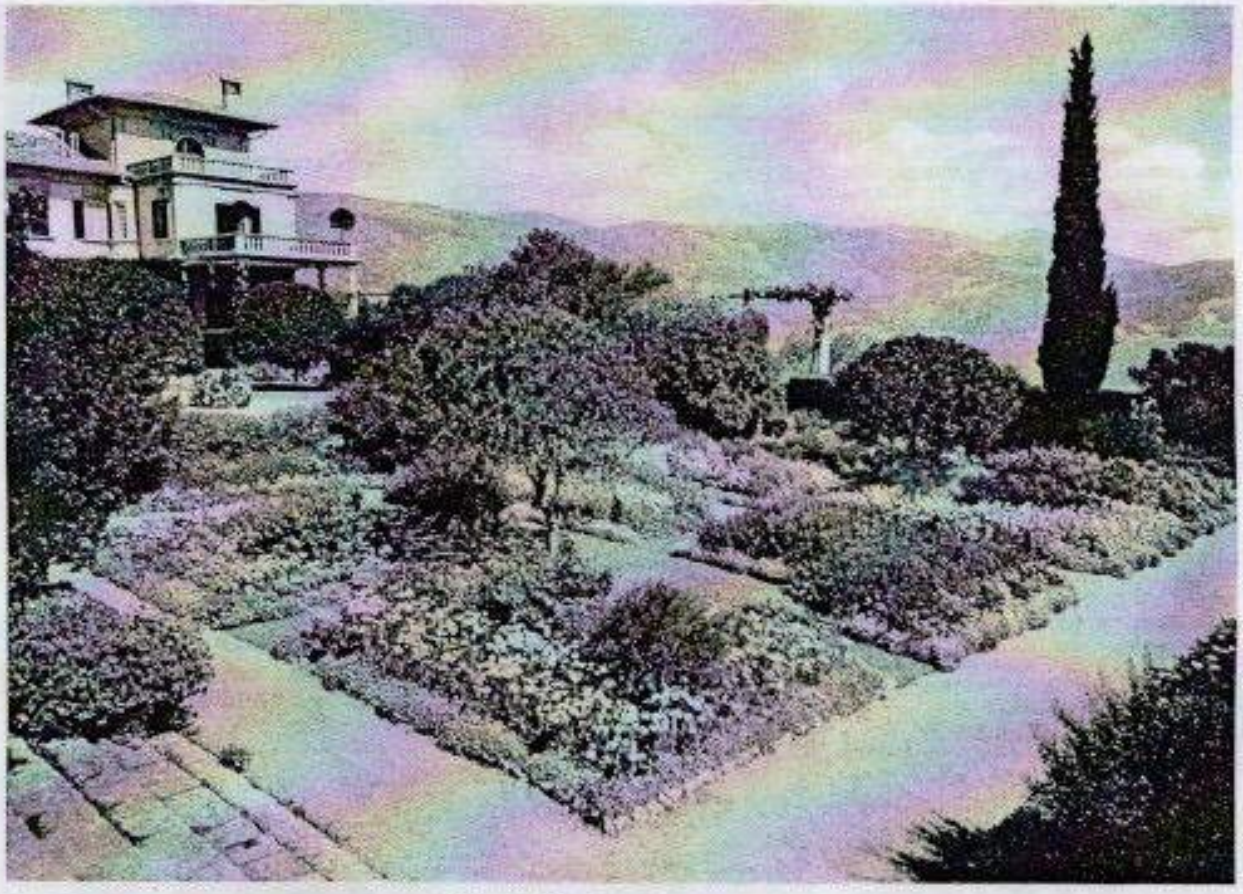
one would wish where the main life of the villa concentrates, with ample fenestration, loggias and balconies, and its large marble-paved terrace. The first illustration to this article shows the charm of the garden front of this house. It is pleasantly broken in outline without being *bizarre*, while there is sufficient shade on the terrace or in the loggias without heavy shade trees crowding in on the house and shutting off a fine view of the garden. The stone of the house is that which exists all over Cap Ferret, while the upper portions are coated with plaster, with graffiti cut through the light coloured surface, showing the dark red undercoat through, a treatment much used in Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The main living-rooms lead off the broad terrace and are decorated with charming simplicity.



5.—PERGOLA AND TERRACE IN FRONT OF THE TENNIS COURT.

As the whole garden consists of a little over two acres, it is obvious that, from its size, it had to be treated as a whole, and not divided into several small gardens. In some cases, Riviera gardens that we have visited have appeared overcrowded, for the sole reason that too many types of gardens have been attempted, either in an area that is too small or is unsuitable. Consequently, the result appears to be messy or even banal. There is not the slightest suggestion of this at the Villa Rosemary. It is true that under the pines between the main garden and the road there is an excellent stretch of wild garden; but, as will be seen from Figs. 7 and 8, the formal garden consists of a rectangle which is designed as a single unit divided into three sections, those at either end consisting of lawns studded with oranges, while that in the centre contains the main display of flowers arranged in small beds. On the west it is bounded by a wide pergola broken in the middle by wide steps (Fig. 2) and a little terrace leading to the tennis court. The pergola is simple in style, with plain stone supports and wooden horizontals; this, in turn, is backed by a clipped cypress hedge. The charm of this side of the garden is in the perfect proportion between the pergola and the steps. This might appear to be a minor point at first glance, but it is really of the greatest importance in garden design; a narrow flight of deep steps would be inconspicuous compared with the size of the pergola, which is, of necessity, of ample scope in the sunny climate of the Riviera. In the same way a smaller pergola would be dwarfed by the width of the steps. This terrace in the middle of the long west side gives a suggestion of a noble garden entrance, in addition to making a definite break in what, at the main gardening season, is a solid wall of vegetation. It allows for many pleasant pictures in a garden of comparatively

G. R. Ballance. 6.—THE PERGOLA, LEADING TO THE VILLA. *Copyright.*



7.—THE MAIN DISPLAY OF FLOWERS.

G. R. Ballance. 8.—THE FORMAL GARDEN, FROM THE HOUSE. Copyright.

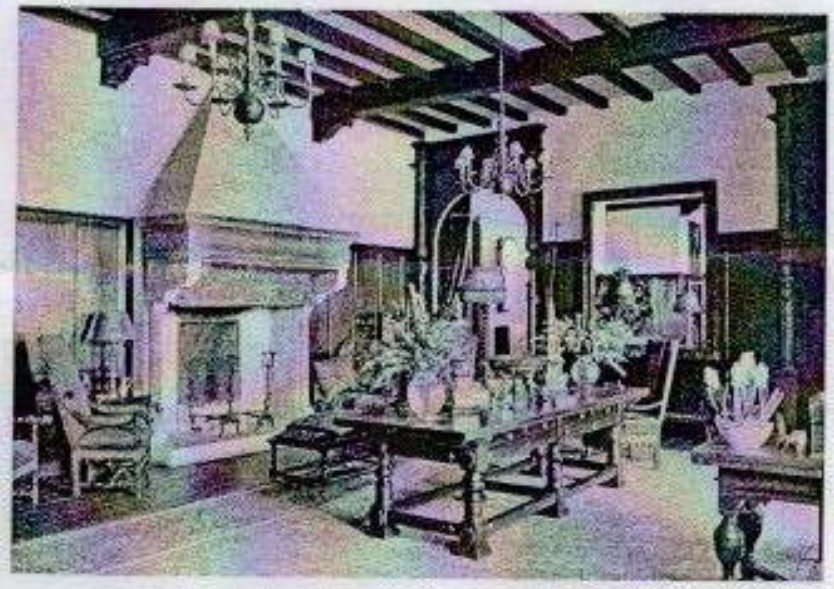
small size. It will be noticed that the height of this green, well sprinkled with flowers, is on the land side, thus allowing an uninterrupted view on the east or sea side of the far end of the Riviera.

It will be seen that flowers play a comparatively small part in this garden. They are grown in mass in the middle of the three portions into which the rectangle is divided, where beds gay with colour surround little patches of lawn shaded by standard orange trees, which here take the place of the standard flowering trees of the English garden, such as cherries and magnolias. Oranges are a great feature of this garden, and in the centre make the shade trees. If one does not know the climate, the criticism might be levelled that they bulk too large, and, indeed, as viewed from the upper storeys of the house, such a criticism might be justified; but it must be remembered that shade is absolutely necessary in such a climate, where the sun is scorching, and that the shape and size of the garden does not allow the presence of large forest trees or even the tall cypress in numbers, where their height would not be in proportion to the size of the garden. These oranges are eminently suited: they are shapely and well branched; their foliage is luxuriant, and when they are loaded with golden fruit they are among the most attractive of all trees. Growing, as they are, in patches of bright green lawn, they make a wonderful show, whether seen by themselves or with a background of beds filled with bright-coloured flowers.

At the far end of the garden, facing the broad steps leading down from the house terrace, is a long open loggia, an idea adapted from old Moorish gardens, where a building at the far end of the garden from the house was often placed. This is set on a little terrace of its own, and not only forms a charming garden house, from which a marvellous view is obtained, but it adds a particular finish to the garden that is almost necessary where the land drops suddenly to the sea below. It is in touches like this that the garden of the Villa Rosemary differs from the average. The corners are closed as shelters, but through the double arcading magnificent views are obtained of the sea to the south and the Riviera to the north with its backing of hills. It is from such a position that the beauties of the Riviera can be most clearly seen, with the grim shape of the mountains behind.

No visitor can help being impressed with the skill with which this charming garden has been designed. It contains everything that is necessary on the Mediterranean coast—colours, shade, a little formal gardening and a touch of the wild garden. It would have been so easy to spoil a small area like this by attempting too much on the stereotyped lines that are so often met with on the Riviera. The very nature of this promontory forbids the use of mass upon mass of flowers in formal array, for it is rugged and rocky, and was originally pine-clad. With the magnificent views north, east and south, you do not want a kaleidoscopic effect in the immediate foreground, as, whatever the beauty of the garden may be, the main keynote of the villa is its existence as a

9.—THE DINING-ROOM.



10.—THE SALON, WITH AN OLD ITALIAN FIREPLACE.

G. R. Ballance. 11.—THE BOUDOIR. *Copyright*

view-point. And so the planning of the gardens has been subdued in treatment so that it may be a pleasaunce from which the beauties of the surrounding sea and land and hills may be seen. The house is as charming as any of Mr. Harold Peto's designing, and, like all of them, it is more of a home than of a temporary residence for a few months in the winter. This takes on an additional importance when it is realised how many now use the Riviera as a place of permanent residence. We can imagine no month in the year when the Villa Rosemary would not make a perfect dwelling place, and, perhaps, therein lies a great deal of its charm. So many estates on the Riviera are so obviously arranged that their beauties are crowded into a few weeks. Not so the Villa Rosemary. E. C.

AT THE THEATRE

LOOKING FACTS IN THE FACE

THOUGH there have been no new productions, the week in which I write has not been barren of theatrical excitement. A woman-architect has won the competition for the New Memorial Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon—an undertaking which American money has helped to make feasible. There has been some outcry in the Press against accepting these American subscriptions, an outcry which seems to me to be entirely foolish. It is largely American money and American spectators who make the Festival itself feasible, and I really do not see why those who pay the piper should not be associated with the tune. During the week, that very vague body which is supposed to have a certain number of thousands locked away to form a National Theatre for London has been raising its heavy head and talking the stale old talk about plans and a site. One knows perfectly well that nothing will come of this. What is the good of building a magnificent house when there is nothing to house? Shakespeare? But if any two things can be said to be proved up to the hilt and beyond it, it is that this country doesn't want grand opera and doesn't want Shakespeare. Some little time ago one of our leading English actors, and, incidentally, quite a good actor, was approached by one of those wild and woolly gentlemen whose hobby it is to back plays and players. This wild and woolly person offered to back this actor at any theatre in London and in any play he chose to name. The actor chose His Majesty's Theatre, and when pressed for the name of his play, said, "Othello." "Hang it all, man!" cried the backer. "I'm serious enough. Why can't you be serious too?" There has never been a time when Shakespeare has been the most popular dramatist in this country. In his own day it may be doubted whether he came better than third in point of popularity. Even in the days of Kean and Kemble he was played off the stage by tenth-raters like Sheridan Knowles. And all the theatrical world realises that Shakespeare in the West End to-day, apart from visitors and "stunts," is not only a joke, but a very poor joke. We are always being told that we shall not have a national drama until we have a National Theatre to house it in. This also is nonsense. We already possess a national drama which is finer than the drama of any other country in the world. The point is that we have not got an audience which wants to see that national drama and that when we have built our National Theatre it will be empty. We are told that there is enough money for the bricks and mortar, but what I want to know is, who is going to provide the money to keep open a theatre which the public will steadily refuse to enter. Sir Thomas Beecham has, at any rate, not made the mistake of asking for subscriptions to build a new opera-house. London is teeming with opera-houses, which are being used for fancy dress balls, cinema shows and the like. What Sir Thomas is asking for, and not getting, is money for the working expenses of an opera. Now, the trustees for the National Theatre—or, rather, for its funds—would do a great deal better, to my way of thinking, if they would abandon all idea of turning their capital into bricks and mortar and turn over the interest of their funds to the venture at Sadler's Wells. Their capital would thus remain intact until such time as the spirit for serious playgoing is born again in Englishmen.

This week also comes the news that Mr. Cochran has joined hands with an American gentleman in an enterprise for supplying London with the largest and in every way the whoppingest cinema yet built anywhere. It is to hold something like ten thousand people at a time, and, according to the publicity-mongers, "steps will be taken to compel the public to come in." But he who runs or even walks about the West End reading cinema queues knows that the public will not need any compelling, but will come in of its own accord. There can be no possible shadow of doubt that the two arts to which the present-day Englishman is wholly devoted are moving pictures and moving greyhounds. Sir Thomas Beecham has the greatest difficulty in getting tappence a week out of anybody: the dogs appear to have no difficulty in getting two shillings a night out of everybody. To refuse to look facts like these in the face is the sheerest moral and intellectual cowardice.

On an evening in April of last year a new theatre was opened in the Haymarket. Its proprietors, the Carlton Theatre Company, Limited, hailing from Wardour Street, made in the programme of the opening night the following good Wardour Street announcement:

> Viewing the Carlton, the spirit of Shakespeare might well say, as he said in Henry the Fourth—"Fore God, you have here a goodly dwelling and a rich."
>
> He would be thinking of the site too, for it is enshrined in crowded memories of spacious days in Theatre History—it is eloquent of Mrs. Siddons, John Kemble, Edmund Kean, Macready, and the heroic Garrick.
>
> Here on the heart of the West End, in the Haymarket, you may imagine the ghost of an old coach driving full gallop through the stalls on its way to adventure. But we shall take you further than the old coach travelled and to braver adventures. The world is our parish and our story, all the doings of men in it.
>
> The Carlton Theatre is the ideal setting for that wonderful harvest of the eye which gives glory to the legitimate Theatre and its young sister, the Screen.

In the last paragraph the cat was out of the bag. Hollywood, and not the world, is to be the parish of the Carlton Theatre, and its story is to be the doings of the preposterous shoot-walkers of Los Angeles. One play, which is a musical version of an imbecile farce, is all that these brave supporters of the drama have given us. The announcement is already out that next month the usual sensational picture will be released. The site which is so eloquent of Mrs. Siddons will silently resound to the grimaces of some noodle in "Petals of Passion" or some such nonsense.

Well, it may be held that half of mischief is done away with as soon as mischief is looked in the face. The thing for theatre lovers to do in this country is to consolidate, to realise what it is that the theatre can do best, and to see that it does it. The theatre must abandon spectacle, because in that branch of the game the cinema beats it hollow. The theatre will probably have to abandon large playhouses and heavy rentals; and possibly the only economical way to victory here will be to build more and smaller playhouses. But the first thing of all for serious supporters of the drama to do is to get together and count noses, and see how few noses there are to count. We shall not do serious playgoing any good by pretending that every Englishman is at heart a lover of art, a lover of grand opera, a lover of the serious drama. Every Englishman is nothing of the kind. What every Englishman is at heart is a good cricketer. We do not expect temperamental Italians to stand up to fast bowling on a bumpy wicket, but we do expect every Italian to be able to turn out a cavatina. Why should we expect the Englishman whose heart is set on wicket-keeping to know or care that it is a hundred years this year since the greatest playwright since Shakespeare and Molière saw the light? Knowledge of this sort is not in his genius, which is strictly for something else.

A year or two ago some little rhymes about national characteristics were going the rounds of the French music-halls. That hitting off the Italian genius was as follows:

> Un Italien, c'est une semaine;
> Deux Italiens, c'est une conversation;
> Trois Italiens, c'est la dispute!

Now, with apologies to Signor Mussolini, that is not a thousand miles from the Italian character as exemplified in peace and war. Nor may we think injustice was done to the German by:

> Un allemand, c'est un pédant;
> Deux allemands, c'est une brasserie;
> Trois allemands, c'est la guerre!

Now let us look at the verse in which the characteristics of the Englishman were set forth:

> Un anglais, c'est un imbécile;
> Deux anglais, c'est un match de boxe;
> Trois anglais, c'est une grande nation!

A great nation, you perceive, but composed not of opera singers and opera lovers, nor yet serious playgoers, but of boxers and simpletons. Well, the reproach is true enough; and the healthiest thing for the theatre and the drama is the knowledge that to every Englishman who will pay to go leisurely to see Shakespeare, Congreve, Galsworthy and Shaw there are ninety-nine who will tumble over each other in the frenzied determination not to miss Bébé Buttercup in "Craters of Desire."

GEORGE WARRINGTON.