## THE FORMAL GARDEN IN ENGLAND

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The Formal Garden in England by Reginald Blomfield & F. Inigo Thomas

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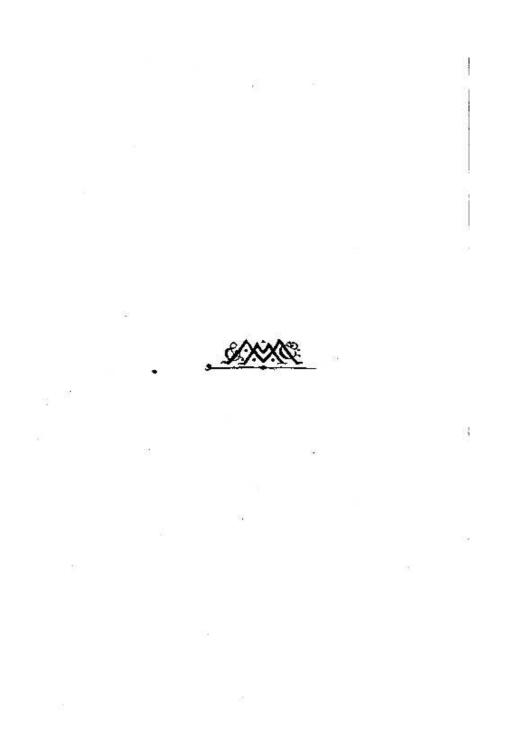
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#### REGINALD BLOMFIELD, M.A., F.S.A.

#### ARCHITECT

AUTHOR OF 'A HISTORY OF RENAMENANCE ABCHITECTURE IN ENGLAND'

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

F. INIGO THOMAS

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### PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION

DURING the last few years the question of garden design has been discussed with a zeal possibly out of proportion to its intrinsic importance, and the subject, as merely literary material, appears to possess a dangerous fascination for writers with a turn for pretty sentiment rather than for exact habits of thought. It is therefore necessary to recall the attention of the thoughtful lover of gardens to what for the purpose I may call first principles, and it has been the object of this short history to show, by some account of what was actually done in the past, that the gardens which we all admire were not laid out at random, but in accordance with a theory of æsthetic which embraced all the arts in its application. I do not mean by this that the garden designers of the seventeenth century went to work with the deliberate intention of realising a theory, but that, living as they did at

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a time when tradition was active and when there existed a sense of the arts in their general relationship, as opposed to the merely skilled individualism of modern art, they inevitably maintained in garden design the habit of mind which they maintained in all the other arts. In other words, garden design took its place in the great art of architecture, with the result of that well-ordered harmony which was characteristic of the house and garden in England down to the middle of the eighteenth century. It has been the work of the last century to destroy this invaluable instinct, and all that it has offered in its place has been a habit of specialising which may sometimes arrive at technical excellence, but has assuredly lost us the architectural sense. It is the absence of this sense which is the most glaring fault of modern design, and it is shown most conspicuously in the work of the modern landscape gardener.

At the date at which the first two editions of this book were issued, a somewhat acrid controversy raged between landscape gardeners and architects. The gardeners said the architects knew nothing about gardening, and the architects said the gardeners knew nothing about design, and there was a good deal of truth on

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#### PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION vii

both sides. The first point to be cleared up was the confusion between horticulture and design, and, having handed over horticulture to the gardener, the question of design came fairly within the province of the architect. In the attempt, however, to dislodge a tradition of bad taste, a somewhat polemical treatment was necessary. The occasion for this no longer exists, and I have therefore omitted the preface to the Indeed the danger at this second edition. moment is rather that one trick of design should be substituted for another, and that in our admiration for certain beautiful old gardens we should attempt to reproduce them blindly under impossible conditions. There are, for instance, sites which make a purely formal garden out of the question; and others in which, even if it were possible, it would not be desirable; and it would be as absurd to make the desperate attempt as is that favourite device of the landscape gardener who cannot resist the manufacture of a hummock in order that he may wind his path all round it. For in design we want not only a sense of beauty, but also common sense ; and the amateur should be on his guard against abstract rules and recipes. What looks well in one place may look very ill in another, and when