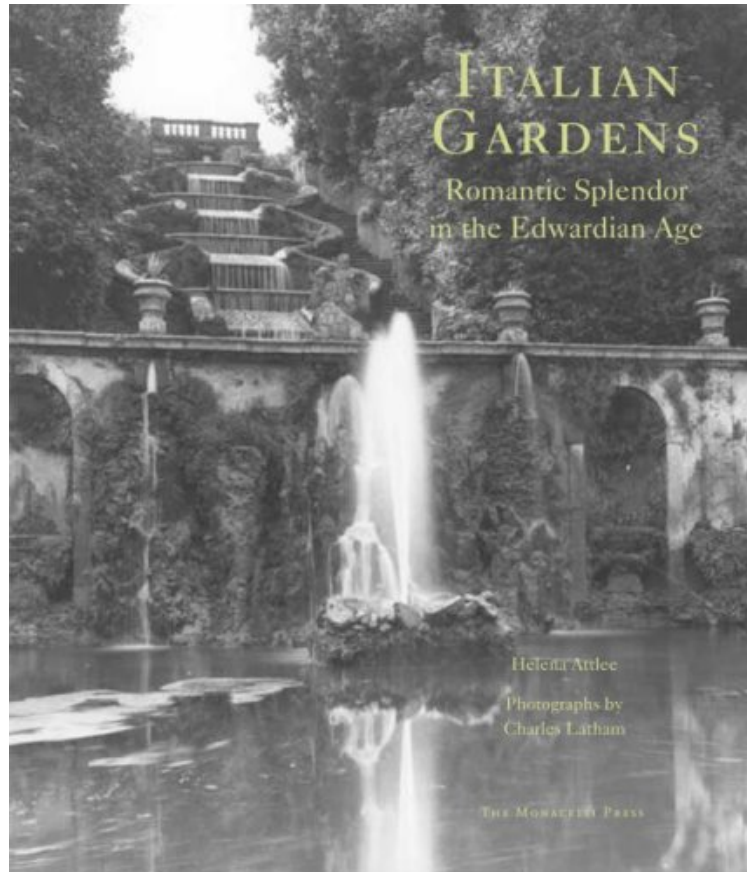


(Download ebook) Italian Gardens: Romantic Splendor in the Edwardian Age

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Helena Attlee

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Helena Attlee : Italian Gardens: Romantic Splendor in the Edwardian Age before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Italian Gardens: Romantic Splendor in the Edwardian Age:

For centuries, the cardinals, popes, and rulers of Italy have devoted themselves to creating vast villa gardens that represent their wealth and power, provide a calm refuge from city life, and showcase lavish plantings and rare flowers. Here, in over two hundred exquisite photographs taken during the Edwardian era when these historic gardens were at their peak, twenty-two of central Italy's most ornate and spectacular palace gardens are presented. Italian Gardens reveals the vanished magnificence of the aristocracy's landscapes in superb images from the archives of Britain's renowned Country Life magazine. Classic photographs of unrivaled beauty and composition display patterned grottoes, elaborate terraces, sophisticated fountains, antique statuary, and sun-dappled arbors to provide an important record of these gardens at a nostalgic moment in time, before the two World Wars provoked irrevocable changes in Italy's political and economic climate and many gardens fell into neglect. These vivid images dating from the early 1900s possess a quality of light and depth of detail not seen in modern photographs. Discussing the history and design

of each garden, author Helena Attlee brings to life the personalities responsible for such extravagant creations as the Alley of a Hundred Fountains at the Villa d'Este in Tivoli, the swirling parterres de broderie of Villa Doria Pamphili in Rome, the broad terraces and majestic staircases of the Vatican Gardens, the frescoed loggia of the Villa Medici in Fiesole, and the border of innumerable citrus trees circling the Isolotto in Florence's famous Boboli Gardens. This volume introduces the intricacies and ornaments of the sumptuous gardens of Rome and Tuscany, and will transport readers to these unique, fragrant landscapes.

"The larger-than-normal size [of Italian Gardens] beautifully illustrates the light and shadow and all the tones in between that Latham captured in such a brilliant manner . . . You may have seen pictures of Villa Lante, but not like the ones published in this book. [Charles] Latham's work leaves out nothing: it includes the water and the statuary, the architecture and the plantings in simply amazing detail." Jane Berger, Association of Professional Landscape Designers

About the Author Helena Attlee is a journalist who has written about gardens and garden history for over twenty years. Her work has appeared in a wide range of journals and magazines, and she regularly leads garden tours throughout Western Europe. She is also the author of *The Gardens of Portugal* and *The Most Beautiful Country Towns of Provence*. Charles Latham, staff photographer for England's *Country Life* magazine, was widely acknowledged as one of the twentieth century's preeminent architectural and landscape photographers. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. From: Introduction Helena Attlee

VICTORIA STATION, LONDON, spring 1903. A short, stocky man with a red beard stands on the platform beside a pile of trunks. The first of them is marked with his name - Charles Latham Esq - and covered in a collage of labels that map out the course of the long journey ahead of him: London to Dover on the boat train, Dover to Calais by ferry, Calais to Paris, and then a change of train for the twenty-four hour journey to Turin. In Turin he will change trains once again before the final leg of his journey - another sixteen hours to Rome, via Genoa and Pisa. The second-class ticket for this long and complicated journey cost him 6. 16s. 3d. Another trunk in the pile bears the name of Mr T. Dollinger, who will be Charles Latham's guide and interpreter in Italy. At this moment Mr Dollinger appears through clouds of steam that billow across the platform, a bowler hat on his head and a porter at his side. The train is due to depart in a few minutes and the porter is anxious to load the gentlemen's luggage. He is about to swing the final trunk up into the guard's van when Mr Latham stops him. Speaking abruptly in a broad, south London accent he points out the labels distributed evenly all over it, their red lettering spelling out the word 'fragile'. Mr Latham has every reason to be cautious. The trunk contains the tools of his trade: a large-format camera, folded down for travelling, several heavy boxes of fragile, glass-plate negatives, plate holders, a tripod and a selection of lenses. Exposure meters had been invented by this time, but Latham was of a generation that had no use for them. Long experience had taught him to estimate his exposures, using one set of calculations for sunny weather, and another for sun and cloud. There were no second chances. Glass plates were extremely heavy to carry and expensive to process, and he permitted himself only one shot of each view. Latham is likely to have consulted a Baedeker before his departure. If so, the journey in the London to Dover boat train may have been the last time he allowed himself to be separated from his trunks, for nobody could ignore the chilling warning issued in it under the heading 'Luggage': 'As several robberies of passengers' luggage have been perpetrated in Italy without detection, it is as well that articles of great value should not be entrusted to the safe-keeping of any trunk or portmanteau, however strong and secure it may seem.' Good fortune attended Latham and Dollinger, however. They travelled without mishap and arrived in Rome with their trunks intact. It was here that Latham began work on the magnificent collection of photographs that would eventually illustrate *The Gardens of Italy*, an elegant, two-volume work, published in 1905 in London by Country Life Books. Many of these beautiful photographs are reproduced once again in this book.

At the time of his Italian adventure Charles Latham had been a freelance photographer of architecture and gardens for almost thirty years, and was widely acknowledged as one of the finest photographers in the country. He worked at the cutting edge of his trade, producing pictures remarkable for their non-invasive style, their beautifully balanced composition and their almost scientific clarity. His career was reaching its apex at about the same time as *Country Life Illustrated*, a 'journal for all interested in country life and country pursuits', was launched in London on 8 January 1897. This new magazine was the brainchild of Edward Hudson, the prosperous owner of Hudson Kearns, a family business responsible for publishing a rather unsuccessful magazine called *Racing Illustrated*. Hudson decided to relaunch the ailing magazine, and joined forces with Sir George Riddell, a solicitor who held shares in another magazine publishing company called George Newnes Limited. The outcome of their collaboration was *Country Life*, a weekly magazine for a general audience, with articles on architecture and gardens, illustrated with specially commissioned photographs. Initially, Hudson relied on commercial firms to photograph the featured houses, but in 1898 Charles Latham, whose architectural photography had been much admired in such publications as J. A. Gotch's *The Architecture of Renaissance England* (1894) and G. H. Birch's *London City Churches* (1896), was offered the job of staff photographer. It was to prove an inspired appointment by Hudson, as Latham's work transformed the magazine. Through its 'Country Homes and Gardens' series, *Country Life* became closely associated with the creation of a superb photographic record of British country houses - the hallmark of the magazine to this day.