

By a curious caprice he kept the rich cloth woven with the Napoleonic Bees but added his own cipher to each Bee.

A few more buildings were added here and there, including the Castellucia, an octagonal «fort-like» structure erected on the west side of the park not far from the present American Hospital. It was for the use, amusement and training of the little princes in the arts of war.

By 1818, the great period of construction was over and with occasional minor additions and completion of the throne room (1845) little other than maintenance was required. In 1859 Ferdinand II died at Caserta of a contagious disease and a year later Garibaldi drove the Bourbons from Italy.

#### **GREAT HARMONY.**

The main work at Caserta was completed between 1752 and 1790, thus giving great unity and harmony to the style of both buildings and decoration, none of which is appreciably out of keeping with the style originally planned.

Unfortunately the use to which the palace is at present put does not permit uninvited inspection of many of the better rooms and in any case a description of them is both beyond the scope of the article and competence of the writer. The Royal Stairway usually excites a just admiration, both for its proportions and the skilful blending of the quiet toned material employed.

The three statues at the head of the first flight are models. They are by Solari (who also designed the Venus in the park), Salomone (right) and Violani (left). The subjects are obvious. The lions are also to the design of Solari.

#### **LIKE VERSAILLES.**

The chapel is, despite Italian opinion, in many ways reminiscent of that at Versailles. It has the ornate double Corinthian columns supporting, with the aid of numerous cherubs and angels, the curved roof, the hexagonal cassettoni decorations. The altar, curi-

ously enough, is a model, the original being in the Naples Museum, while the Ciborium is also a model in wood.

The best Neapolitan painters of the day designed and executed the murals and hanging lanterns in the chapel. So rich are the materials employed and so ornate is the decoration that it impresses rather than inspires, for there is no real focus on which the undistracted eye can rest.

Of the other rooms, that of the Halberdiers and the Bodyguard are more simple and more to the average Anglo-Saxon taste. Those commenced by Murat in the Imperial style are also among the more attractive, particularly the well executed panels in bas-relief in the so-called rooms of Mars and Astrea. They reproduce the old colouring in yellow and green to great perfection.

The furniture in the bed-chamber where Ferdinand II died in 1859 is entirely a reproduction, the original having passed officially through the disinfestor.

#### **GREATER REALISM.**

Reference has already been made to the theatre completed as early as 1769. The backstage was originally in stone but was removed in 1772 in order to give greater realism to the fire scene in the last act of Metastasio's «Dido.» Later, a movable backstage was added to allow for the showing of real woods where such were demanded by the script.

This is but another example of the persistence of that extraordinary sense of the dramatic, and the keen search for realism, which has been maintained from the Rome of Nero to the Italy of Mussolini.

The Palace of Caserta, well sited, well conceived, brilliantly started yet never completed, typifies the last period of royal palace building in Europe. Designed with its park as a whole, even in its incompleteness it seldom fails to impress and to that extent it has fulfilled one of the main objects of its Bourbon creators.