

OUR OWN GREAT CENTRAL FAIR.

ON Saturday the crowd was not so great as on the other days of last week, a circumstance attributable to the difficulty experienced by visitors from abroad reaching their homes after a late stay at the Fair on the last day of the week. We resume our notices of the great departments of the Fair.

HORTICULTURAL DEPARTMENT.

Next to the Art Gallery there is no more beautiful display than that made in the Horticultural Department, where nature and art have combined to furnish a magnificent exhibition. With many visitors the horticultural display ranks above that presented in the Art Gallery, and we have no reason to quarrel with the decision. Nothing like it has ever been seen in this country, and to all visitors it must be a matter of profound regret that such a fairy creation will soon pass away from sight forever.

The visitors upon entering the rotunda have spread out before them a rare display of plants, fruits, and flowers, arranged with faultless skill and taste, and intermingled with these are waving banners, tinkling fountains, and beautiful ladies in attendance upon the tables. Treasures drawn from every clime have been compelled to do the bidding of the goddess Flora, and here in her beautiful court she holds high carnival. Her subjects are numbered among the thousands, and are among the most devoted of any earthly potentate's. She here proves herself worthy of the homage drawn from her admirers, and to those who have reared this temple for her short-lived abode among the mortals, she owes a crown of glory fragrant and ever bright as the flowers that surround her temporary throne.

What description shall do justice to this scene? The pen refuses to do duty, and words fail to convey to the few unfortunates who have not seen it the unparalleled richness of the collection and the exquisite taste of the decorations of the Horticultural Department. Fancy a rotunda 190 feet in diameter, filled with rare plants and flowers, arranged in a succession of circles, through which visitors pass and re-pass, drinking in the fragrance of the perfume of the orange tree and the palm, the banana and the magnolia. From the lake, in the centre of this fairy palace, is the Island, with its fountain of hundreds of jets, brilliantly illuminated at night, and a thousand burners of gas, and thus intermingled with all that is sweet and beautiful in the Floral realms, comes the soft music of the band hid from sight by the dense foliage of the Island.

The fountain is worthy of its surroundings. Around the base of a vast pyramid of exotic plants, rising up in air, flows the crystal brook bordered with grassy banks and bearing on its

bosom lovely water-blossoms and the broad green leaves of the *Victoria Regia*, while from its depths burst forth, at intervals, delicate fountains of quaint and various designs. From the summit of the pyramid of plants there falls on every side a dome-like sheet of water, covering the whole as if with a great bell-glass. On the outside of this, and below the circle of water-jets, is a circle of fire—a jet of flame for every one of water. The effect of this arrangement of fire and water is indescribable. The thousand fantastic colors sent forth must be seen, and when seen will never be forgotten. Every drop of water becomes a jewel.

The circular pond or brook which surrounds the pyramid of plants is about fifteen feet in width and three hundred feet in circumference, and is filled with water plants and every variety of aquatic decorations. Twenty-four small fountains play from it; some spouting from the mouths of swans, others revolving in circles of spray, and others mounting gaily in feathering jets. Spreading their great leaves on the surface of the water are several plants of the *Victoria Regia*, and numberless ducks swim about as naturally as if they were alive. The pond is bordered by a circle of smooth green sward, three feet wide. The central pyramid rises thirty feet high, and is of proportionate diameter at the base. It is formed entirely of tropical plants, contributed mainly by Mr. James Dundas, and arranged by his skilful gardener, Mr. Pollock.

Among the vast mass of foliage and blossom which forms this most attractive feature of the department may be named the following plants: The *date palm*, rising high above all; the *dragon tree*, from which is obtained the extract of dragon's blood; *tree ferns* from Australia; the great *Brownii grandiceps* from India, of which there is only one other specimen in the country; a well-grown *camphor tree*; the *Bourbon palm*; two *bananas* in full fruit; the *heparusa longifolia*, a splendid plant; many *rhododendrons* and *pomegranates*, and a fine *India-rubber tree*. At the base is a circle of *zebra plants* and handsome *calladiums*. There may also be seen in the pyramid a Norfolk island pine, some very fine *pitcher plants* and the *Madagascar lace plant*. Around the border of the pond are vases containing rare plants, such as the *Diffenbachia pelta*, discovered by Humboldt, and a variegated *pine apple*; whilst over these hang baskets containing *orchids*, or air plants, some of them very beautiful.

The upper ring of water jets, which surmounts and crowns this pyramidal group, is fifteen feet in diameter, and contains one hundred and fifty jets. The circle of gas pipe below is fifty feet in diameter, and contains one hundred and fifty burners. Among the foliage in the central group are statues, from Mr. S. E. Harrison, and deer, &c., beautifully cast in iron, and contributed by Messrs. Wood & Pe-

rot. These gentlemen also furnished the arrangements for the fountains in the pond.

The plants on the island are so arranged as to leave space for the accommodation of the orchestra, which is thus entirely concealed from view, adding greatly to the effect of the music. Access to the island is had by a beautiful rustic bridge of graceful design.

The Horticultural Hall is one hundred and ninety feet in diameter, and is surmounted by a canvas dome eighty-five feet wide at the base. There are two circular rows of tables, the outside one against the wall, with sixteen tables twenty-five feet long and five wide. Then we have a circular passage-way twenty-five feet wide and five hundred and fifty feet long, overhung with a vast ring of gas-pipe containing five hundred and fifty burners. The inner circle of tables is twelve feet wide, with a passage in the middle of it for the ladies in attendance. The passage round the fountain is twenty-five feet wide, and on its outside circumference are fifty columns, each ornamented with two gas-burners. On the inside of the outer passage-way are also fifty columns. Between each two of these pillars are festoons of evergreens and hanging baskets, and the columns themselves are clothed with laurel, hemlock and pine boughs, brought from the Alleghany Mountains.

Around the base of the canvas dome are fifty flags of different nations, and on the columns hang one hundred shields, bearing the coats of arms of various nationalities, and painted by the artist Grain. Bunting is effectively draped among the columns, and the *coup d'oeil* of all this color and graceful design is charming in the extreme.

The collection of plants and flowers is worthy of an extended notice. And first upon entering, a number of fine aloes and date palms, from the collection of Mrs. George W. Carpenter, will attract attention. The two tables belonging to Fairman Rogers, Esq., are under the charge of Mr. Hibbert, his gardener. Among the very many rare and well-grown plants are the *pandanus javanicus*, the *davellia elegans*, many fine *gloxinias*, among which are the fine varieties, *Mrs. Fisher*, *grandiflora alba* and *imperialis*; the *dracoena ferria*, brought first from China in 1771; the *caladium chantina*, the *Dickensonia antarctica*, from Van Dieman's land; the *pteris tricolor*, the *maranta bicolor*; golden and silver *ferns*, the new plant, *cyprus alternifolius variagata*; the *magnolia pumila* from China, the *Tradescantia discolor*, brought from South America in 1783; the *croton variagata*, from the East Indies; the *certoceras reflexa*, from Japan, which is a perennial bloomer, and many more worthy of notice.

The table occupied by plants, belonging to Mr. Joseph Harrison, is under the care of Mr. Francis O'Keefe. Mr. Harrison exhibits the *auracaria excelsa*, a remarkably fine plant. The