

at Rome, which formerly used to be one of the great attractions of the city, and which were closed to the public by the Duke Ripalda, upon the announcement to him, by the Government, that it was intended to sequester the greater portion of the garden, and destroy the historical casino standing in it, in order to carry out part of the plans for the improvement of the Tiber.

The villa, which Raphael has immortalised, was built for Alexander Chigi, the great banker of Rome of the sixteenth century—the Rothschild of his day—by Baldassare Peruzzi; and where, to keep the great painter at work, Chigi had to set aside an apartment for the use of the Fornarina. Chigi desired the architect to design the house in proportion to the grounds which extend to the river-side, and make, as it were, the villa and gardens parts of one complete composition. Along the river-side Peruzzi constructed an embankment, and planted upon it a wide ilex and laurel grove, 260 mètres in length; and at one end also a casino, or summer-house—the same wherein Chigi gave that sumptuous banquet at which Leo X., the Cardinals, the Duke of Ferrara, the Marquis of Mantua, and all the foreign ambassadors in Rome were his guests. At the conclusion of the banquet, all the massive gold and silver plate it was served upon was thrown into the river; but this, it was said, was only an act of sham display on the part of the banker, who had taken the precaution to stretch a net below in the river, of which no trace could be seen,