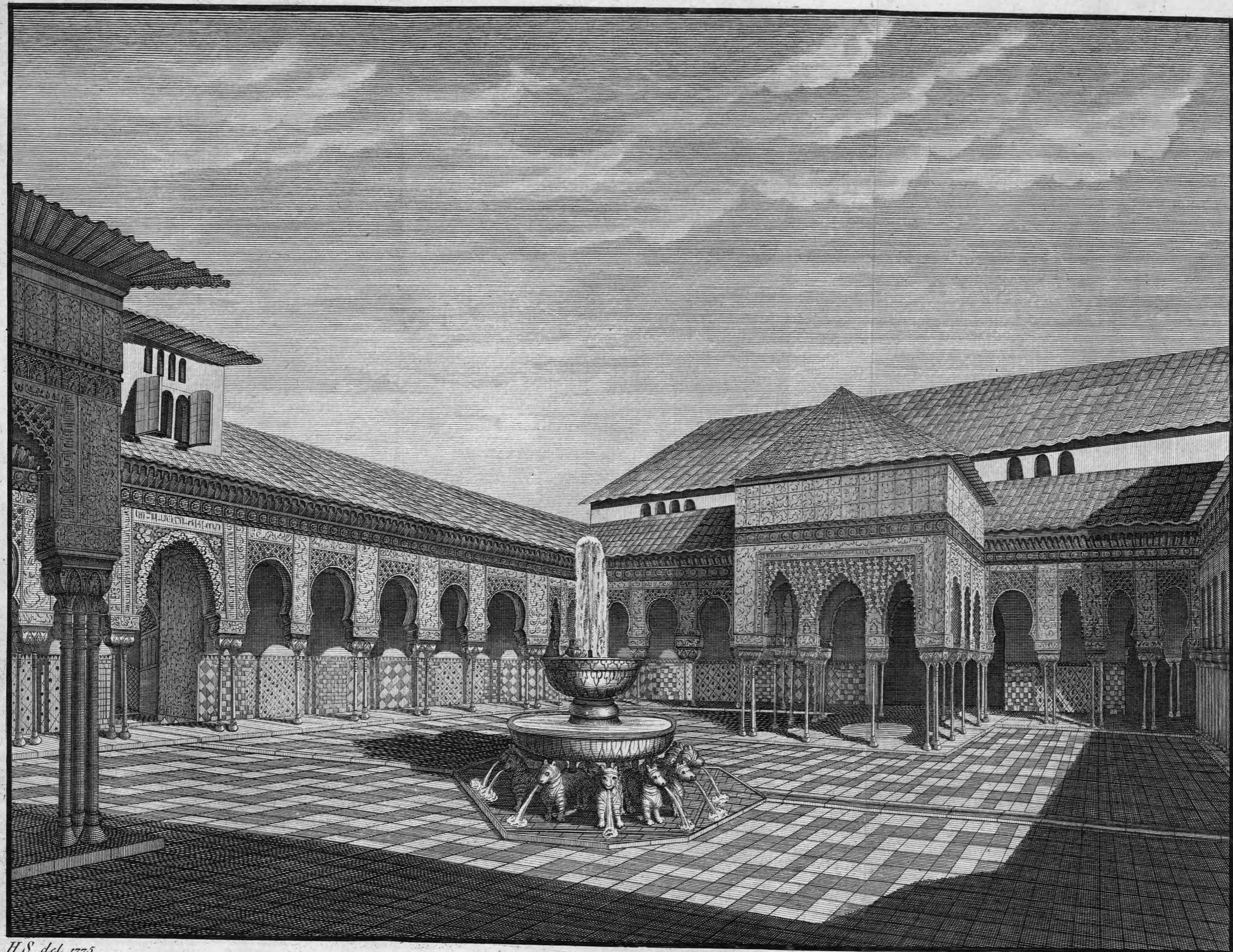


many countries, you may see excellent modern as well as ancient architecture, both entire and in ruins; but nothing to be met with any where else can convey an idea of this edifice, except you take it from the decorations of an opera, or the tales of the Genii. I therefore look upon it to stand alone in its kind, and consequently think no excuse necessary, previous to my entering upon the dry detail I intend giving you of it.

Passing round the corner of the Emperor's palace, you are admitted at a plain unornamented door in a corner. On my first visit, I confess, I was struck with amazement, as I stepped over the threshold, to find myself on a sudden transported into a species of fairy-land. The first place you come to, is the court called the *communa*, or *del mesucar*, that is the *common baths*: An oblong square, with a deep basin of clear water in the middle; two flights of marble steps leading down to the bottom; on each side a parterre of flowers, and a row of orange-trees. Round the court runs a perystile paved with marble; the arches bear upon very slight pillars, in proportions and style different from all the regular orders of architecture. The ceilings and walls are incrustated with fret-work in stucco, so minute and intricate, that the most patient draughtsman would find it difficult to follow it, unless he made himself master of the general plan. This would facilitate the operation exceedingly, for all this work is frequently and regularly repeated at certain dis-

tances, and has been executed by means of square moulds applied successively, and the parts joined together with the utmost nicety. In every division are Arabic sentences of different lengths, most of them expressive of the following meanings, "There is no conqueror but God;" or, "Obedience and honour to our Lord Abouabdallah." The ceilings are gilt or painted, and time has caused no diminution in the freshness of their colours, though constantly exposed to the air. The lower part of the walls is mosaic, disposed in fantastic knots and festoons. A work so new to me, so exquisitely finished, and so different from all I had ever seen, afforded me the most agreeable sensations, which, I assure you, redoubled every step I took in this magic ground. The porches at the ends are more like grotto-work, than any thing else I can compare them to. That on the right hand opens into an octagon vault, under the Emperor's palace, and forms a perfect whispering-gallery, meant to be a communication between the offices of both houses.

Opposite to the door of the communa through which you enter, is another, leading into the *Quarto de los leones*, or apartment of the lions, which is an oblong court, one hundred feet in length, and fifty in breadth, environed with a colonade seven feet broad on the sides, and ten at the end. Two porticos or cabinets, about fifteen feet square, project into the court at the two extremities. The square is paved with coloured tiles; the colonade  
with



H.S. del. 1775.

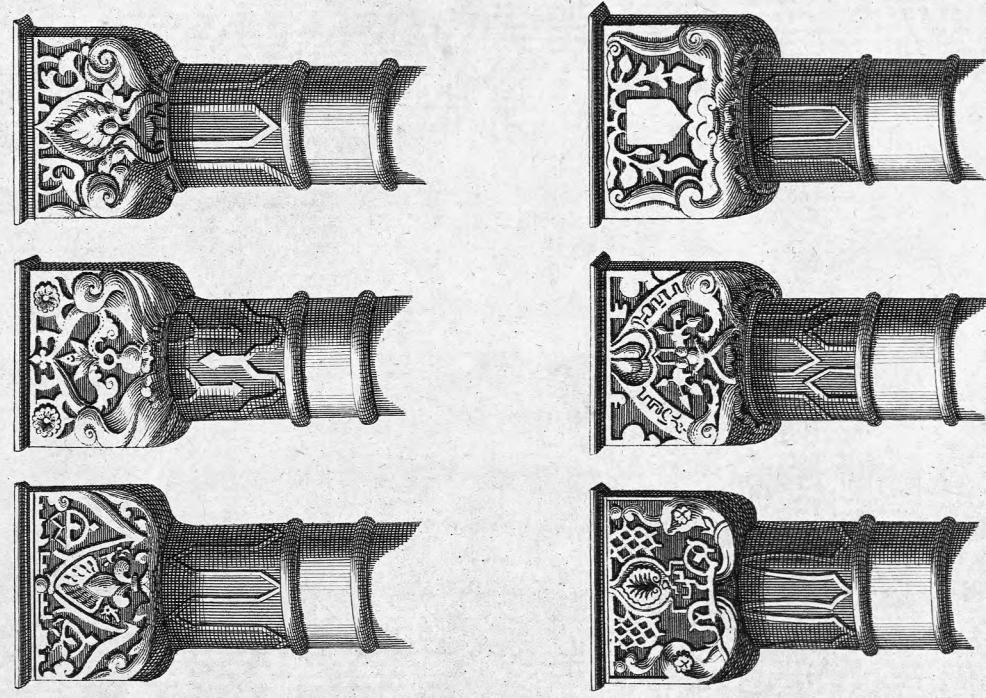
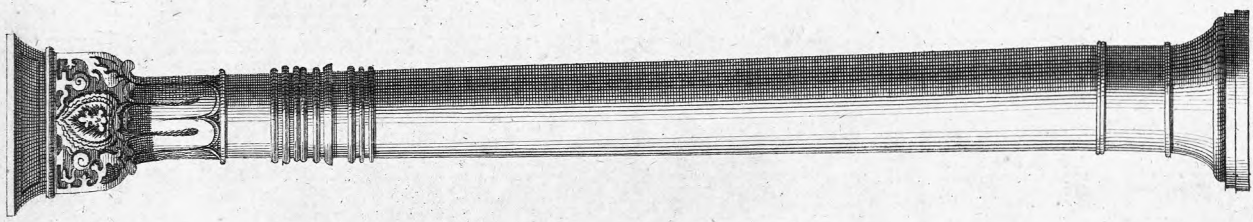
COURT of the LIONS in the ALHAMBRA or MOORISH PALACE of GRANADA.

F. Giomignani sc.

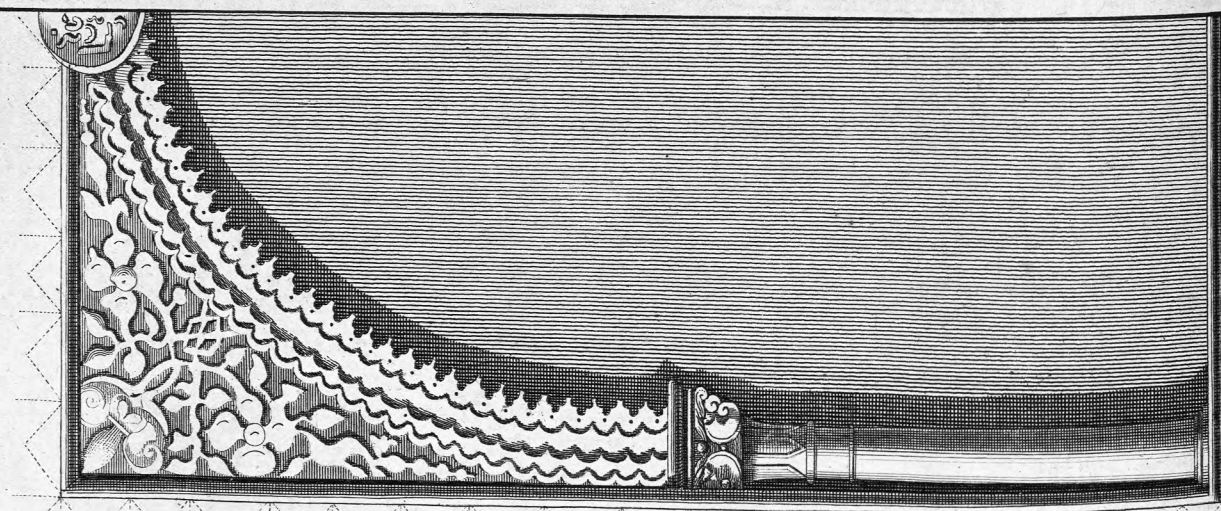
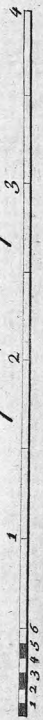




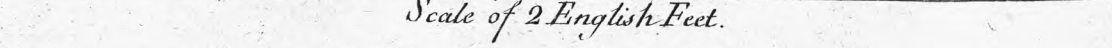
Scale of Castilian feet.



Scale of Castilian feet.



Scale of 2 English Feet.



H. S. del. 1775. Cyph board in the Hall of the *Real Academia de Ciencias* of *Madrid* by the *Marquis of Casa Sotomayor*. *P. Giommani sc.* Column of the Court

with white marble. The walls are covered five feet up from the ground with blue and yellow tiles, disposed chequerwise. Above and below is a border of small escutcheons, enamelled blue and gold, with an Arabic motto on a bend, signifying, "No conqueror but God." The columns that support the roof and gallery are of white marble, very slender, and fantastically adorned. They are nine feet high, including base and capital, and eight inches and an half diameter. They are very irregularly placed, sometimes singly, at others in groups of three, but more frequently two together. The width of the horse-shoe arches above them is four feet two inches for the large ones, and three for the smaller. The ceiling of the portico is finished in a much finer and more complicated manner, than that of the *communa*, and the stucco laid on the walls with inimitable delicacy; in the ceiling it is so artfully frosted and handled, as to exceed belief. The capitals are of various designs, though each design is repeated several times in the circumference of the court, but not the least attention has been paid to placing them regularly or opposite to each other. You will form a much clearer idea of their style, as well as dispositions, from the drawings, than from the most elaborate description I can pen. Not the smallest representation of animal life can be discovered amidst the varieties of foliages, grotesques, and strange ornaments. About each arch is a large square of arabesques, sur-

A a 2

rounded

rounded with a rim of characters, that are generally quotations from the Koran. Over the pillars is another square of delightful filligree work. Higher up is a wooden rim, or kind of cornice, as much enriched with carving as the stucco that covers the part underneath. Over this projects a roof of red tiles, the only thing that disfigures this beautiful square. This ugly covering is modern, put on by order of Mr. Wall, the late prime minister, who a few years ago gave the Alhambra a thorough repair. In Moorish times the building was covered with large painted and glazed tiles, of which some few are still to be seen. In the center of the court are twelve ill-made lions muzzled, their fore-parts smooth, their hind-parts rough, which bear upon their backs an enormous basin, out of which a lesser rises. While the pipes were kept in good order, a great volume of water was thrown up, that, falling down into the basins, passed through the beasts, and issued out of their mouths into a large reservoir, where it communicated by channels with the jet d'eau in the apartments. This fountain is of white marble, embellished with many festoons, and Arabic distichs, thus translated :

“ See'st thou not how the water flows copiously like  
“ the Nile?”

“ This resembles a sea washing over its shores, threat-  
“ ening shipwreck to the mariner.”

“ This water runs abundantly, to give drink to the lions.”

“ Terrible



“ Terrible as the lion is our king in the day of  
“ battle.”

“ The Nile gives glory to the king, and the lofty  
“ mountains proclaim it.”

“ This garden is fertile in delights ; God takes care  
“ that no noxious animal shall approach it.”

“ The fair princess that walks in this garden, covered  
“ with pearls, augments its beauty so much, that thou  
“ may’st doubt whether it be a fountain that flows, or  
“ the tears of her admirers”<sup>12</sup>.

Passing along the colonade, and keeping on the south side, you come to a circular room used by the men as a place for drinking coffee and forbets in. A fountain in the middle refreshed the apartment in summer. The form of this hall, the elegance of its cupola, the chearful distribution of light from above, and the exquisite manner in which the stucco is designed, painted, and finished, exceed all my powers of description. Every thing in it inspires the most pleasing, voluptuous ideas: yet in this sweet retreat they pretend that Abouabdoulah assembled the Abencerrages, and caused their heads to be struck off into the fountain. Our guide, with a look expressive of implicit faith, pointed out to us the stains of their blood in the white marble slabs; which is nothing more than the reddish marks of iron-water in the quarry,

<sup>12</sup> This passage is very obscure in the Latin translation. I have endeavoured to make something of it, but it still remains a forced conceit.