

**Figure 6.12** The Charminar, Hyderabad, India

**Figure 6.13** Triumphal Arch, Nancy



6.12



6.13

Tyrins may indeed have foreshadowed its much later and more famous Propylaea designed by Mnesicles for the Acropolis in Athens: this is the model, though trabeated, for all city gateways. To see the decorative function of the portal fully developed in medieval times it is necessary to turn to the great Islamic cities where the portal announced the presence of the city, cemetery and mosque, or as in Hyderabad, India identified the location of the city centre (Figure 6.12).

France, during the Renaissance, saw the merger of the Roman triumphal arch tradition with the medieval concept of the city gateway or portal. For example, some fine portals were built as gateways to Paris, including Porte Saint-Martin and Porte Saint-Denis. Outside Paris many fine gateways were built in provincial capitals. For example, Nancy is endowed with Porte des Illes, Porte Stanislas, Porte Saint-Nicolas and Porte Sainte-Catherine (Figure 6.13). In Britain during the nineteenth century this tradition was continued with many fine monumental arches completed. One of the best examples to be found is the portal to Birkenhead Park, the Wirral.

The last type of arch used in the decoration of the city is the temporary arch. The tradition of the temporary decorative arch goes back many centuries: for example, Napoleon commissioned such an arch to celebrate his marriage to Josephine. Designed by Percier and Fontaine in the Imperial Style, it is said by Adshead (1911a) to have been one of the most beautiful of street decorations ever conceived. Belfast still holds to this tradition of city decoration using temporary arches to adorn Protestant streets during the 'marching season' in July. Despite the overtones of chauvinism such features, nevertheless, celebrate a community's spirit and by their colourful spontaneity add a decorative dimension to a city in need of a human touch.

This century has seen the destruction of many fine city gateways to make way for the encroaching motor car. In towns like Kings Lynn the original settings of the gateways have been destroyed to permit the car to pass unhindered. With current



**Figure 6.14** Place Vendôme, Paris

attitudes to pedestrianizing large areas of the city centre, particularly in continental Europe, the portal could again become an important feature in the urban structure of the city.

#### MONUMENTAL COLUMNS

There are two main types of monumental columns. The first has its origins in Hellenic and Hellenistic Greece while the second type is associated with Ancient Rome and is the development of the Greek column on an altogether grander scale. Pliny, writing in approximately AD 50, explains that statues of great men are placed on columns to raise them above statues of ordinary men (Adshead, 1911b). He was also of the opinion that the custom of erecting monumental columns for statues was a much older tradition than that of building triumphal

arches. Since the idea of the monumental column is Greek in origin and the triumphal arch, as such, was never used in Hellenic cities, this may in fact be the case.

The Greek monumental pedestal or column was small in scale, consisting of a highly decorative shaft, fluted and carved with acanthus leaves or twisted serpents. The top of the shaft was reserved for an allegorical figure or symbol, for example at Olympia it was the winged figure of Victory, while at Delphi it was a group of Caryatid Dancers or an archaic Sphinx. The monumental column shaft of the early Greek period was not based upon a typical column from the temple: it was an appropriately designed pedestal for the specific purpose of supporting a fine piece of sculpture which was to be seen and appreciated from the ground.