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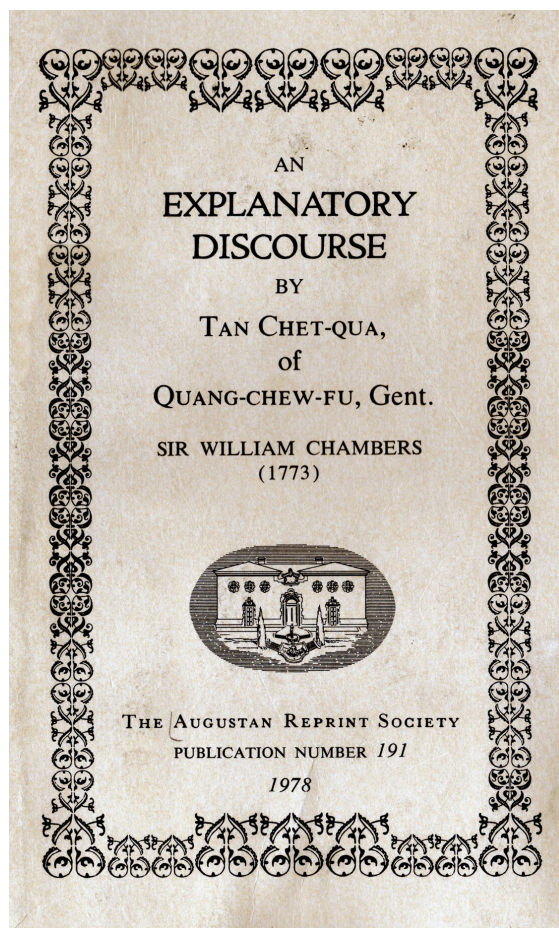
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[Pg i]

AN

**EXPLANATORY
DISCOURSE**

BY

**TAN CHET-QUA,
of
QUANG-CHEW-FU, Gent.**

**SIR WILLIAM CHAMBERS
(1773)**

***Introduction by*
RICHARD E. QUAINANCE, JR.**

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1978

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INTRODUCTION

This "Explanatory Discourse" first appeared, in the latter part of March 1773, annexed to the second and last edition of Sir William Chambers' *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* of the preceding May. As an effort, curiously hedged, to impersonate a Chinese spokesman it seeks to exploit the satiric vantage points of philosophic naivety and trenchant candor enjoyed by Goldsmith's observer Lien Chi Altangi in London a dozen years earlier. But Chambers' ventriloquism is both more defensive and more aggressive than what we find in *The Citizen of the World*; the Preface here in his own voice admits sensitivity to the "abuse" which the Dissertation

[Pg ii]

[Pg iii]

had incurred for its scenic fantasy, its brief opening and closing attacks on "Capability" Brown, and its pervasive criticism of the blandness of Brownian landscaping. By assuming the voice of Tan Chet-qua Chambers is able to pretend to more authoritative familiarity with actual Chinese gardens even as he deplores his readers' misapprehension that his interest lay mainly in masquerade, entertainment, or "the mere recital of a traveller's observation" (p. 113). It was probably a strategic error to entrust the substance of his genuine and quite respectable challenging of Brownian style, to what he terms the "vehicle" of alleged first-hand reports of preferable "Chinese" lay-outs. By this date, some two decades after the chinoiserie fad had crested in England, most of his readers might fairly be termed rather jaded. They preferred to overreact to the frivolity and whimsey they had come to think essentially Chinese, rather than to ponder what Chambers seriously urges from behind his silken "screen": his interest in a variegated emotional response to deliberately variegated landscape. An admirer of Burke's Sublime, Chambers saw advantage in complicating the suavity of Brown's gentle contours, shaven lawns, free-form reflecting lakes, and still short tree-clumps, through a program of landscaped stimulation of contrasting associative moods. This is the essence of that argument which Chambers "cloathed ... in the garb of fiction, to secure it a patient hearing" (p. 112) in three publications appearing over sixteen years. There is no evidence that he was better understood through publication of this "Discourse," the last of the three.^[1]

Of course, it is not as a satirist, an aesthete of landscape, or even as a masquerading orientalist that Sir William Chambers (1723-96) has been best known in his time and since: with Robert Adam, he led the British architectural profession virtually from the time he undertook his first commissions around 1757. The two buildings for which he is justly best remembered are the Chinese Pagoda at Kew Gardens and Somerset House, between London's Strand and Waterloo Bridge. Yet from that solid Palladian structure now housing the General Register Office it takes more than the dozen miles up Thames to reach the pagoda which in 1762 reared its eighty bright wing-displaying dragons on ten successive roofs, and from the height of fifty meters flashed its glazed tiles across suburbia. Chambers developed simultaneously and maintained through his career two contrasted sensibilities. The dignified town house he designed for his family in 1764 fronted Berners Street with a massive rusticated doorway, yet had interior chimney-pieces and a rear elevation modelled in "fanciful" papier-mâché which his biographer John Harris supposes was painted and varnished chinoiserie. He made his way to the top of his profession and earned royal recognition through tectonic skills that absorbed him with Somerset House, for instance, during the last two decades of his life. But as early as 1752 he had ventured the striking practice—standard by the century's end through his pioneering and Adam's—of drawing elevations of a building proposed as it would appear if already conditioned by time, decaying and overgrown by vegetation.^[2] Deciding what to make of his three publications on Chinese gardens will not be eased by polarizing his sources of inspiration or consigning his life into stretches during which the dominant interest was product or process, structure or affect. Here is no schizoid or frustrated Pre-Romantic—a Chatterton who somehow survived his suicide attempt to edit copy for the *Gentleman's Magazine*—but a consummate professional.^[3] The mythic "Cina" of which this "Discourse" was Chambers' latest account grew and changed with him from his first-hand experience of Canton at the age of twenty, through his architectural training in Paris and Rome, and throughout his practice and success as the Establishment architect of his age in England.

The recent thorough Harris biography leaves it appropriate here only to survey the facts most pertinent to his publications on Chinese gardens and to advance a few speculations. The first son of a well-to-do Scottish sutler to the armies of Charles XII of Sweden, Chambers early left his native Gothenburg for schooling supervised by relatives in Yorkshire. Between the ages of 17 and 26 his cosmopolitan rearing proceeded with his apprenticeship to supercargoes or agents aboard three successive vessels of the Swedish East India Company trading in ports along the Indian coast and as far east as Canton. Although his eye and sketchbook were thus early busied with oriental sights, what Chambers later wrote of Peking (or much else Chinese beyond the docks of Canton) was, as he admitted, based upon the observations of others. Yet it must have been rare and significant enough in those days that when this Westerner determined to devote his earnings from the final voyage to an education in architecture, he had seen proportionately so much of non-European building. Even before enrolling in J.-F. Blondel's Ecole des Arts for the 1749-50 winter, Chambers may have met Frederick, Prince of Wales, in London, and been encouraged by Frederick's exotic interests.^[4] It was during his second of five springs in Rome, living with his English wife over the shop of Piranesi, that Chambers learned of Frederick's death in March 1751 and designed for him a mausoleum based on the ancient and neo-classical shapes before his eyes; in one of his sections for this project he depicted it decaying like some of them, with cypress trees beginning to grow out of the rubble that was to have been its roof! Though this design was never executed, Chambers did meet with royal patronage upon his return to London and dedicated to the new Prince of Wales—soon his pupil in drawing, and three years later, George III—his first book, *Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, Machines and Utensils* in 1757.

The opening sentences which Samuel Johnson contributed to Chambers' *Designs* scorned the "power" with which "novelty attracts regard"^[5]—a ground-note directly contrary to Chambers' sarcastic apology for "the monster Novelty" here in his 1773 Preface. But in 1757 he could expect his crisp text and twenty-one plates to administer a calming dose of authenticity to the chinoiserie fever then raging. In fact, this large and handsome volume appears to have driven from the market the pattern-books of "William Halfpenny" and others, with their ridiculous dragon-finials atop Georgian hip-roofs and Venetian windows bordered by crockets—the

[Pg iv]

[Pg v]

carpentry trade trying to sustain a mood for renovations waning by the early fifties. Chambers hoped to put a stop "to the extravagancies that daily appear under the name of Chinese, though most of them are mere inventions, the rest copies from the lame representations found on porcelain and paper-hangings." This sniffy professionalism would broaden by 1772 into mockery of the "kitchen gardeners, well skilled in the culture of sallads, but little acquainted with the principles of Ornamental Gardening"^[6]—which everyone took for a swipe at Launcelot "Capability" Brown, "yon stately gentleman in the black perriwig" (p. 157 below).

[Pg vi]

Yet probably a more general and generous motive prompted Chambers to boost in this public way, on the last five pages introducing his *Designs*, a landscape-style in which he could hardly expect to exercise his training or build the career just beginning. The lay-outs of Kent and Brown took inspired advantage of topography, plants and climate peculiar to the south of England, but to anyone coming like Chambers from the gardens in and near Paris and Rome it might appear by 1757 that the English style risked parochial self-exaggeration to the point where all anecdotal human interest would be suppressed in the name of a "Nature" literally isolated. Cosmopolitanism, more enlightened than ever, befitted a Britain engaged in Pitt's "Great War for the Empire" which would extend its holdings from Montreal to Madras. Was there not an earlier empire whose leader had left visible tokens of his eclecticism? "[H]Adrian, who was himself an architect, at a time when the Grecian architecture was in the highest esteem among the Romans, erected in his Villa, at Tivoli, certain buildings after the manner of the Egyptians and of other nations."^[7] It was timely to identify a pure "original" example of culture native to quite another organic whole, and then to transplant it intact to a British scene large enough to sustain it. Botanically viewed, this is the principle on which arduous horticultural experiments were being performed at this stage in England's imperial history: the removal to Kew of Lebanese cedars, oriental Ginkgoes, persimmons and Sophoras, or American locusts in the earlier 1750s, and later, the infamous Bounty venture to transplant in Jamaica breadfruit from the South Seas. Architecturally applied, it would seem to be the principle on which Chambers developed his designs for a score of buildings after the manner of the Romans, Chinese, Moors, and of other nations, erected at Kew Gardens by the time the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1763.^[8] In this concern he seconded but went beyond the hopes of Horace Walpole and William Mason that "this whole kingdom might soon become one magnificent vast Garden, bounded only by the sea" (below, page 133). The syntax of Lewis Mumford seems apposite: of Frederick Law Olmsted, the designer of New York's Central Park just a century later, Mumford has remarked that "By making nature urbane he naturalized the city."^[9] At Kew, by making the garden cosmopolitan, Chambers helped to globalize the capital of empire and proposed the world as Enlightened Eden.

[Pg vii]

It was not, of course, such national or global edenic visions which chiefly exercised readers of Chambers' 1757 essay "Of the Art of Laying Out Gardens Among the Chinese" and brought down upon his 1772 *Dissertation* the ridicule which prompted the "Explanatory Discourse." Rather, it was the lurid details through which both accounts maintained that "The Chinese artists, knowing how powerfully contrast operates on the mind, constantly practise sudden transitions, and a striking opposition of forms, colours, and shades." Though this principle earned sympathetic response from theorists like Burke and Karnes at home and Delille on the Continent, Chambers pressed his luck too far when he described what he claimed to have observed, or heard from Chinese observers, of "three different species of scenes, to which they give the appellations of pleasing, horrid, and enchanted." Particularly vulnerable were the programmed *frissons* of "their scenes of horror": "some miserable huts dispersed in the mountains serve, at once to indicate the existence and wretchedness of the inhabitants."^[10] By 1772 the *Schadenfreude* has deepened: "Their scenes of terror are composed of gloomy woods, &c. gibbets, crosses, wheels, and the whole apparatus of torture are seen from the roads. Here too they conceal in cavities, on the summits of the highest mountains, foundries, lime-kilns, and glass-works, which send forth large volumes of flame, and continued columns of thick smoke, that give to these mountains the appearance of volcanos." This was the sort of opening which William Mason exploited in his *Heroic Epistle to Sir William Chambers* of March, 1773:

Now to our lawns of dalliance and delight,
Join we the groves of horror and affright;
This to achieve no foreign aids we try,
Thy gibbets, Bagshot! shall our wants supply;
Hounslow, whose heath sublimer terror fills,
Shall with her gibbets lend her powder mills.^[11]

Mason's *Heroic Epistle* was one of the century's most popular poems and, cheered on by Walpole, a viscosly successful effort to tar with Chambers' lavish brush his patron George Bute and other assorted Scots, any critic of Brown, and the Tory establishment at large.

[Pg viii]

Yet behind Chambers' oriental screen the novelty, enduring interest, and even the practicality of some of his ideas can be observed. That concern to naturalize the smoky mills of industrialization may be developing a hint (concerning Middleton Dale, in the Peak District) on page 94 of Thomas Whately's supremely influential *Observations on Modern Gardening* (1770). If Chambers' generation was neither the first nor last to grapple with what "progress" had done to the land, the English landscaping movement presented a new stage for that encounter. While Chet-qua's proposal to frame the dreary tracts around a metropolis "into scenes of terror" seems less than helpful, how neatly he anticipates Cézanne's transfer of his easel into the abandoned Bibémus Quarry (pp. 130-132). Foreshadowing William Cowper's satire of "Th' omnipotent magician,

Brown" in *The Task*, Chambers had warned that estate-"improvement" could lead to irreparable devastation of the nation's woodland. Several of Chambers' means to certain effects sound more like a practical landscape architect at work than a Disneyland impressario parading his promised thrills: when he urges diversification of material relative to seasonal change or human entertainments, for instance, or the use of wire fencing and other substitutes for the ha-ha. His interest in the harmonizing of diverse but massed hues and textures has been recognized as an early glimpse of the "English" effects secured by Gertrude Jekyll a century and a quarter later.^[12] Though extravagances of Chambers' language distracted attention from the liberalism of his views, such passages of the *Dissertation* as pp. 49-50 read like the Picturesque identified by William Gilpin, Uvedale Price, and Richard Payne Knight in the 1780s and '90s. Far from the (Sino-British) imperial privity which Mason tartly mocked are Chet-qua's suggestions that the country-house owner drop his palings and open his grounds to "Holy-day folks," as he opens his Park to his kitchen-garden. More than this, he should offer "meats for every palate," plan not for his family or honored guests alone, but for tastes more susceptible to surprise than theirs. Likewise the circuit plan would be well replaced by another less coercive.^[13] Points like these reveal in Chambers a solicitude on behalf of a general public of garden-strollers not at all necessarily landholding, nor self-conscious as "connoisseurs." Perhaps this is why, when the planners grouped around Nikolaus Pevsner and his *Architectural Review* surveyed their task in post-war England, they would find fresh applications for the term "picturesque" and fresh relevance in this Tory's "Chinese" gardens.^[14] Sinologists and landscape-historians have long recognized, to be sure, that Chambers' descriptions (like most of what the West has wrought in the name of Chinese gardening since Sir William Temple enunciated his shadowy *sharawadgi* principle in 1685), while they may correctly celebrate specific details, or the general principles of surprise and variety, register no sensitivity to the Taoist or Buddhist teleology crucial to oriental planning. What Chet-qua calls "supernatural scenery" is hence "enchanted" by the same spirit of diversion animating the Druid or Dark Walk and subterranean Fairy Music of Vauxhall Gardens, across the Thames from Somerset House.^[15] Enlightened secularization of the genuine oriental principles of immanence and affect may, however, be exactly what makes a paragraph on page 52 of the 1773 *Dissertation* sound so much like a ground-plan for a short story of strollers' interwoven and inconsequential conversations and interior monologues, Virginia Woolf's "Kew Gardens."

[Pg ix]

If allowances are made for the persistent difficulty of transcribing Chinese phonemes, and for Chambers' dependence upon Cantonese rather than Mandarin dialect, the oriental dress of the *Discourse* is less bogus than might be assumed. Chambers' varying spellings of the then reigning emperor's name would exemplify the first problem, my failure to authenticate the poem on pages 118-119 the second. (Over 42,000 unindexed poems in Mandarin are attributed to this emperor, now known here as Ch'ien-lung.) Proustian though they may seem to Westerners, the synesthetic effects of tea-taking and the evocativeness of the scents and hues of "Mei-hoa" (plum-blossom), "fo-cheou" (chrysanthemum), and pine are indeed celebrated in much Chinese poetry.^[16] Whoever wrote the poem, it aptly dramatizes the suggestible ethos which Chambers recommends to English artists and their public.

This "Discourse" is appreciably more puckish in tone than the earlier two-thirds of Chambers' published "Chinese" work. The half-title here, page [109] of the second edition, heaps Chambers' own initialed honors^[17] upon the Canton "Gent." Chet-qua, and with the ironies of his Preface and elaborate courtesies of the Introduction, the fun has begun. Identification of a Chinese alter ego enables Chambers to claim a kind of diplomatic immunity for both his enthusiasms and his judgments against the English style. By half-heartedly ascribing the preceding 107 pages of *Dissertation* also to Chet-qua, and receding as mere "Editor" of the lovable old gourmet's remarks (page 148n), he trusts to keep one step ahead of his Whig adversaries. With exemplary tolerance such as had enhanced the European stereotype of the Chinese sage throughout the century, Chet-qua finds more to commend in French and Italian gardens, more to tease disarmingly in the Dutch, than Chambers had earlier. Finally, since an actual Chinese artist-about-town usually known as Chitqua had only recently returned to Canton, Chambers may have hoped his masquerade could stir British hospitality for his ideas. Within weeks of reaching London in August 1769, Chitqua had had a royal audience. The miniature portrait busts he modelled in clay at ten guineas apiece, as well as his delicate manners and physique ("the eyelashes almost always in motion") earned the admiration of Wedgwood's friend Thomas Bentley. One of his busts was shown in the 1770 Royal Academy exhibition, and during that year he visited Oxford, met Chambers and Bishop Percy, and sat down with Horace Walpole among others at the first official Academy dinner. Lashes and all, he figures in Zoffany's "Life School of the Royal Academy," painted in 1771. But what peculiarly recommends Chitqua to Chambers' purposes here is perhaps a mob's intervention at the start of his homeward voyage to Canton that spring, when xenophobia and "the superstitious fears of the mariners" forced him to return to London for another ship. On page 141 Chambers differs from the *Gentleman's Magazine* reporter who had Chitqua "accidentally ... fall overboard" at Gravesend, but whatever the facts, the parallel to Jonah at Joppa might be as clear to Chet-qua's adversaries as it was to that reporter and win the "Discourse" a more candid hearing than the *Dissertation* had enjoyed.^[18] To an unidentified reader of his first edition Chambers had justified such artfulness, and his entire "Chinese" myth for the promotion of a change in landscaping-style, this way: "I thought it necessary to move in an exalted sphere. Our Gardeners, and I fear our Connoisseurs too, are such *tame* animals, that much sparring is necessary to keep them properly on their haunches."^[19] Such quixotic energy even Mason had to salute, in the last line of his *Heroic Epistle*.

[Pg x]

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

- [1] The "Explanatory Discourse" is the last of Chambers' works to be reissued in 20th-century facsimile. Chambers' *Designs of Chinese Buildings* (London, 1757), rpt. in facsim. (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), concludes its text with his essay "Of the Art of Laying Out Gardens Among the Chinese," pp. 14-19, rpt. in John Dixon Hunt and Peter Willis, eds., *The Genius of the Place* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), pp. 283-288. *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (London, 1772), of which the illus. title-page reappeared in the 2nd ed. (London, 1773), hence here, was rpt. in facsim. ed. John Harris (Farnborough, Hants.: Gregg International, 1972). I quote from pp. [111]-113 of "An Explanatory Discourse"; Chet-qua drops his mask on p. 159 below. Concerning the fad see Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (London: John Murray, 1961), esp. ch. vi.
- [2] John Harris, *Sir William Chambers, Knight of the Polar Star* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1970), p. 24 and pls. 7, 94 (not to be confused with the earlier accepted practice of designing ruins: pls. 31, 81). For the "fanciful" aspects of his town house see pp. 11, 217.
- [3] For the evidence of correspondence esp. from 1770-74 see Heather Martienssen, "Chambers as a Professional Man," *Architectural Review*, 135, 2 (1964), 277-283.
- [4] Harris gathers evidence for the meeting with Frederick, pp. 33-35, and on pp. 18-19, surmises that Blondel's teaching "may well have been the foundation of Chambers's eclecticism.... The choice of a Parisian education underlines Chambers' European character."
- [5] *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, ed. George Birkbeck Hill and L. F. Powell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), IV, 188.
- [6] *Designs*, first page of unpaginated Preface; *Dissertation* (1773), p. iii. Cf. "William and John Halfpenny" [Michael Hoare], *Chinese and Gothic Architecture Properly Ornamented* (London, 1752), e.g. pl. 2.
- [7] *Designs*, second page of unpaginated Preface.
- [8] W. J. Bean, *The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew* (London: Cassell, 1908), pp. 194-195, following Sir John Hill, *Hortus Kewensis* (London, 1768); Chambers, *Plans, Elevations, Sections and Perspective Views of the Gardens and Buildings at Kew* (London, 1763).
- [9] "Frederick Law Olmsted's Contribution," *Roots of Contemporary American Architecture*, ed. Lewis Mumford (New York: Reinhold, 1952), p. 111. *Dissertation* (1773), p. 103 and cf. his letter of 13 May 1772 in Harris (1970), p. 192; Walpole, *On Modern Gardening*, ed. W. S. Lewis (New York: Young Books, 1931), p. 66; Mason, *The English Garden*, Book I (1772), final line.
- [10] *Designs*, p. 15 (ed. Hunt and Willis, p. 284).
- [11] Chambers' prose is cited *Dunciad*-fashion in the *Epistle, Minor English Poets, 1660-1780: A Selection from Alexander Chalmers' The English Poets [1810]*, ed. David P. French (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1967), VIII, 108. See Isabel W. Chase, "William Mason and Sir William Chambers' Dissertation on Oriental Gardening," *JEGP*, 35 (1936), 517-530; R. C. Bald, "Sir William Chambers and the Chinese Garden," *JHI*, 11 (1950), 287-320.
- [12] Cowper, Book III, "The Garden," 1. 766, in *A Collection of English Poems 1660-1800*, ed. Ronald S. Crane (New York: Harper, 1932), p. 998; *Dissertation* (1773), pp. xi, 23-30, 37-39, 91-99; cf. Derek Clifford, *A History of Garden Design*, rev. ed. (New York: Praeger, 1966), pp. 211-212. [Pg xii]
- [13] "Discourse," pp. 125-128, 133, 137-138, 143, 155-156; *Dissertation* (1773), pp. vi, 53; Harris, p. 192.
- [14] Pevsner, "The Other Chambers," *Architectural Review*, 101 (1947), 195-198.
- [15] Temple, "Upon the Gardens of Epicurus," ed. Hunt and Willis, p. 99; Osvald Sirén, *China and Gardens of Europe of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Ronald, 1950), p. iv; "Discourse," pp. 155-156.
- [16] I owe this information to Prof. Ching-I Tu of Livingston Coll. and Dr. Nelson Chou of the East Asian Lib., both at Rutgers Univ. Likewise helpful but in no way blameworthy in my remarks on matters Chinese were Prof. King-Lui Wu and Mr. Antony Marr of Yale Univ. and Prof. Andrew Plaks of Princeton Univ. Though some of the proper names Chet-qua uses eluded verification, the worst blunder noted was "Ty," which means "emperor," at p. 139*n*. Endowing Chet-qua with "nine whiskers" instead of the traditional five beards sorts with the unusually narrow proportions and numerous stories of the Kew Pagoda. Rhymes and short syntactic groupings in italics, pp. 141, 158, are not Confucian; the 28th year of Ch'ien-lung's reign (p. [115]) would be 1764. Yet the idiom in the final n., p. 163, is authentic.
- [17] The initials stand for Fellow of the Royal Soc. of Sweden; Member of the Royal Acad. of Arts, Paris; Member of the Italian Acad. of Arts, Florence; Treasurer of the Royal Acad.; Comptroller General of His Majesty's Works; Architectural Tutor to the Queen. Chambers' international reputation was assured by his *Treatise on Civil Architecture* (1759).
- [18] "Historical Chronicle," G.M., 41 (1771), 237-238; William T. Whitley, *Artists and their*

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[Pg xiv]

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[Pg xv]

DISSERTATION

ON

ORIENTAL GARDENING;

BY

SR: WILLIAM CHAMBERS, Kn^t:

Comptroller General of his Majesty's Works.



LONDON:

Printed by W. GRIFFIN, Printer to the ROYAL ACADEMY; sold by Him in *Catharine-Street*:

and by T. DAVIES, Bookseller to the ROYAL ACADEMY, in *Russel-Street*,

***Covent Garden*: also by J. DODSLEY, *Pall Mall*: WILSON and NICOLL, *Strand*:**

J. WALTER, *Charing Cross*: and P. ELMSLEY, *Strand*. 1772.

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[Pg xvii]

DISSERTATION

ON

ORIENTAL GARDENING;

BY

S^R WILLIAM CHAMBERS,

COMPTROLLER-GENERAL OF HIS MAJESTY'S WORKS, &c.

THE SECOND EDITION, WITH ADDITIONS.

TO WHICH IS ANNEXED,

AN EXPLANATORY DISCOURSE,

BY

TAN CHET-QUA, of QUANG-CHEW-FU, Gent.

LONDON:

Printed by W. GRIFFIN, Printer to the ROYAL ACADEMY;
sold by Him in
Catharine-street; and by T. DAVIES, Bookseller to
the ROYAL ACADEMY, in
Russel-street, Covent-Garden: also by J. DODSLEY,
Pall-Mall; WILSON and
NICOLL, *Strand*; J. WALTER, *Charing-Cross*; and P.
ELMSLEY, *Strand*. 1773.

AN

[Pg xix]

EXPLANATORY DISCOURSE,

BY

TAN CHET-QUA,

OF

Quang-Chew-fu, Gent. FRSS, MRAAP;

ALSO,

MIAAF, TRA, CGHMW and ATTQ.

WHEREIN

**The PRINCIPLES laid down in the Foregoing
DISSERTATION, are illustrated and
applied to PRACTICE.**

PREFACE.

[Pg 111]

Every new system naturally meets with opposition; when the monster Novelty appears, all parties, alarmed at the danger, unite to raise a clamour: each cavils at what it doth not like, or doth not comprehend, till the whole project is pulled to pieces, and the projector stands plumed of every feather; not only robbed of the praise due to his labour and good intentions, but, like a common enemy, branded with scorn and abuse. In the first hurry of criticism, every deviation is accounted an error; every singularity an extravagance; every difficulty a visionary's dream: warm with resentment, biassed by interests and prejudices, the angry champions of the old, rarely show mercy to the new; which is almost always invidiously considered, and too often unjustly condemned.

Sensible of these difficulties, the Author of the foregoing Dissertation, written in direct opposition to the stream of fashion, harboured no sanguine hopes of fame from his Publication: far from expecting at the first, either applause or encouragement, he even judged artifice necessary to screen him from resentment; and cloathed truth in the garb of fiction, to secure it a patient hearing.

[Pg 112]

The success of his little work, however, in one sense, far exceeded expectation: at its first appearance here, it found not only a patient, but a very indulgent reception; and it has since been equally fortunate in France, and other parts of Europe; where Monsieur Delarochette's elegant translation has made it known.

Yet flattering as this extensive suffrage may seem, it is in reality rather mortifying to the Author; who finds, from the nature of the encomiums bestowed upon his performance, that it has been more generally liked than understood; and that, whilst a few have honoured it with a deliberate reading, and separated the substance from the vehicle in which it was contained, far the greater number have mistaken the mask for the reality, and considered it simply as a pleasing tale; as the mere recital of a traveller's observation; or, as the luxuriant effusions of a fertile imagination, a splendid picture of visionary excellence.

[Pg 113]

Whether these misapprehensions arose from want of perspicuity in the writer, or want of attention in the readers, admits of no dispute; the former was most probably the case. The Author therefore, who wishes to be perfectly understood, and is more ambitious of being useful than entertaining, humbly begs leave to offer, at the end of this second edition, such reasons and explanations as seem necessary, either to remove doubts, or clear obscurities; he flatters himself they will be found sufficient, and serve to place the work in its true, its most advantageous light.

Of these illustrations he saw the necessity some time ago, and framed them into a Discourse supposed to be pronounced by Chet-qua, then in England; judging it, at that time, a sort of propriety to put in the mouth of a Chinese, what farther information was wanted relative to his country.

[Pg 114]

But as there is now no longer any necessity for disguise, both the Dissertation and Explanatory Discourse ought certainly to appear in their natural dress. To new-model them, however, would require more time than the Author can possibly spare; he therefore has republished the Dissertation, in its original form, and the Discourse as it was originally written; hoping the indulgent reader will pardon these defects, and gather the fruit, if there be any to gather, without minding the trees on which it grows.

Introduction.

[Pg 115]

All the world knew Chet-qua, and how he was born at Quang-chew-fu,^[20] in the fourth moon of the year twenty-eight; also how he was bred a face-maker, and had three wives, two of whom he caressed very much; the third but seldom, for she was a virago, and had large feet. He dressed well, often in thick sattin; wore nine whiskers and four long nails, with silk boots, callico breeches, and every other ornament that Mandarins are wont to wear; equalling therein the prime macarones, and sçavoir vivres, not only of Quang-chew, but even of Kyang-ning, or Shun-tien-fu. Of his size; he was a well-spoken portly man, for a Chinese; a pretty general scholar; and, for a heathen, a very compleat gentleman. He composed a tieh-tse, or billet-doux, at pleasure; recited verses, either in Mantchou or Chinese, and sung love-songs in many languages. He likewise danced a fandango, after the newest taste of Macao, played divinely upon the bag-pipe, and made excellent remarks; which, when he lodged at Mr. Marr's, in the Strand, he would repeat to his friends over a pipe, as often as they pleased; for he was fond of smoaking, provided the tobacco was good; and, upon these occasions, was always vastly pleasant, and very communicative.

[Pg 116]

Amongst his favourite topics were painting, music, architecture and gardening; to the last of which he seemed most affected, often disserting thereon till he was tired, and the audience fast asleep; for the tone of his voice was like opium to the hearers; his method was diffuse, and the subject, though a good one, not generally interesting.

One day he launched out into a long description of the Eastern Gardens, especially those of his own country, to which he was exceedingly partial; and, in the conclusion, compared them to a splendid feast, at which there were pleasures for every sense, and food for every fancy; whilst our Gardens, he said, were like Spartan broth, which was disgusting to all but Spartan palates; or like the partial niggardly treats of the fable, adapted only to organs of a peculiar construction: he advanced many other odd positions, spoke very freely, as well of our Gardeners, as Gardens, and

[Pg 117]

ended recommending the Chinese taste, in preference to all others.

We were diverted with the discourse, from its singularity, and the variety of new ideas in which it abounded; yet as it ran in direct opposition to the general opinion and usage of England, and recommended a system which appeared to us rather visionary than practicable, we animadverted upon all its parts with the utmost freedom; neither sparing the speech nor speaker in any particular.

The severity of our criticism at first disconcerted poor Chet-qua, who remained silent, and in apparent confusion; but, after a short pause, he reassumed his usual good humour, his countenance cleared up, he arose, bowed to the company, and stroking his nine whiskers, began the following discourse.

[Pg 118]

DISCOURSE, &c.

*Tan lou ty tchan yué^[21]
Ko ou, pou ko choué.
Ou yun king tai pan
Fou fou teou lo ty*

If, in the hurry and warmth of speaking, Chet-qua has used expressions that seemed disrespectful, or inadvertently started notions that appeared extravagant, as you, Gentlemen, are pleased to assert, it is more than he intended;

[Pg 119]

his sole aim at this meeting, has been to point out a style of Gardening preferable to your's; and to shew how much more may be done in that Art, than has hitherto been thought on, by your or any other European nation:

[Pg 120]

to enumerate impossibilities, or amuse an audience with golden dreams and glittering shadows, would answer no useful purposes; and could, therefore, neither be the business nor intention of Chet-qua, who speaks not for

[Pg 121]

the pleasure of speaking, nor with a desire of tickling the ear, but with the hope of being serviceable; he laments his want of perspicuity, to which alone your misapprehensions must be imputed; and begs leave to trespass on your patience a few moments longer, to explain himself more clearly, and endeavour to remove your prejudices against him.

[Pg 122]

He is sorry to have been under a necessity of censuring, even in a distant manner, what seemed to him imperfect amongst you; but whoever would be instrumental in the advancement of science, must declare his mind freely, and sometimes enforce his precepts by examples that exist: his observations have been as general as the subject would permit; for it is never his inclination to give offence; yet where truth is to be investigated, the truth must necessarily be told; else little or no progress can ever be made: where men play the sycophants, and tacitly suffer, or meanly applaud, what they do not approve; no amendment can ever be expected.

It is true, that dissensions in opinion, however well meant, will often bear an invidious aspect, and always must offend some interested individuals; yet, to the community, they are generally advantageous, and should always be favourably received, as they give birth to new discoveries, and ultimately point out the highest perfection: had no man ever ventured to dissent from his neighbour, our age would be as dark as were those of Fo-hii, Shing tong, or Whoang-tii,^[22] and I am firmly persuaded, that your English Gardening would now have been much more perfect, had any one ever dared to dispute its excellence: but to dissent, is an unthankful business; a dangerous talk, that few have spirits to undertake, particularly where party-rage is violent, at it now and then seems to be amongst you.—But I come to the point.

[Pg 123]

In China, our large Gardens are obtained at an almost incredible expence, and attended with many inconveniencys: amongst you, whose policy, whose manners are totally different from ours, they might often be had at a moderate charge, and without much trouble; for formidable as they may at first appear, it is certain that most of their scenery is easily executed, when proper opportunities occur, which is frequently the case in Europe, particularly in England; where your illustrious families have large domains; where agriculture is neater and more various than in other countries; and where the face of nature is in general more luxuriant; as well as better contrasted.

[Pg 124]

It is natural enough for a stranger to be dazzled with the splendor of our Oriental plantations; upon a cursory inspection, to conclude them too vast, too magnificent, too expensive for European imitation; and that, in your part of the world, the greatest princes should not be indulged with such articles of luxury, calculated, as they seem, to exhaust their treasures, waste their lands, rob and oppress their subjects: but a more attentive examination will probably give birth to more favourable opinions, and serve to prove, that not only your princes, but even your private gentlemen, may emulate us in this particular very safely; and that our style of Gardening may be adopted amongst you, even in its whole extent, without being attended with any of the inconveniences just now recited.

[Pg 125]

It is not the fence that constitutes the Garden; Cobham, Stourton, Blenheim, would still be what they are, though the pales or walls by which they are enclosed were taken away: neither is privacy necessary to the essence of a Garden; for Richmond and Kew are surely the same, when open to all the world, as when they are only accessible to the Royal Family; nor is useful or

profitable culture incompatible with the idea, either of our Chinese, or your English Gardening.

Any tract of land, therefore, whose characteristic expressions have been strengthened by art, and in which the spontaneous arrangements of nature have been corrected, improved and adorned by the hand of taste, ought to be considered as a Garden, though only fenced with common hedges, and although the roads or paths passing through it be publick, and the grounds of which it is composed cultivated to the utmost advantage.

There remains then no obstacle to your rivalling the Chinese, either in the grandeur or extent of their Gardens: in which, you seem to fix, the insuperable difficulties of the imitation; since you have parks, forests, manors and royalties, some even in private hands, more extensive than is necessary; and since these may be so improved, and converted into gardens upon the plan now mentioned, without waste of land, without invasion of property, without annoyance or seclusion of the public, and certainly with less damage or expence to the owner, than are usually incurred in the article of your common Gardening; as no chargeable keeping or fencing would be necessary, no grounds unprofitably employed, no considerable assistance from art wanted: for the features of real nature, being in themselves generally more perfect, as well as greater than the finest imitations, require very few helps; seldom any that are expensive. [Pg 126]

Every artist, therefore, who has the fortune to meet with patrons of large possessions, and liberal sentiments, may give full scope to his imagination, and boldly apply whatever he has seen, heard, or his own fancy may have suggested, that is great, extraordinary, or surprising: instead of confining his views to a few acres, to form a trifling composition, scarcely superior to the desert at a festival; and which, insignificant as it would be, none but the healthful and vigorous could ever see; he may convert a whole province into a Garden; where the spectator, instead of toiling on foot, as usual, to see a few nothings, and performing more revolutions than a horse in a mill, may wander over a whole country at his ease, in ships or in barges, in carriages or on horse-back, feasting the sight with scenes of the boldest dimensions, and contemplating the luxuriant varied productions of Nature, improved and nobly enriched by Art. [Pg 127]

And permit me to say, that Gardens of this sort, would not only be more magnificent, but also much more beautiful and perfect in every respect, than any even amongst the best of your artificial performances. In the great style of Gardening, neatness is not only superfluous, but destructive of the principal intent: the common roads, bridleways and paths, of a country, however wild, are always preferable to the stiff, formal, made walks of a Garden; they are, in themselves, grander, more natural, and may, with a very little assistance; a few accompaniments, be made as commodious, as rich, as varied, and as pleasant. [Pg 128]

Fields covered with corn, turneps, beans, potatoes, hemp, or productions of a similar nature; meadows, pasture lands, hop grounds, orchards, and other parts of English culture; interwoven with common hedges, or blended with accidental plantations, require little, if any assistance from Art, to be more picturesque than lawns the most curiously dotted with clumps; and villages, country churches, farm-houses or cottages, when placed with judgement, and designed with taste, enrich and adorn a landscape as well as more expensive structures.

The rivers of Nature flow in forms that Art can never equal: their natural modifications, particularly in mountainous places, are sufficiently numerous; a little management heightens or diminishes all their expressions, varies their appearances, and adapts them to scenes of any character: their banks are soon adorned, even in the richest manner; for roses, a thousand other shrubs, and most perennial flowers, will grow as easily, and with as little culture, as primroses and briars do. A few of these, a little planting properly employed, and blended with rural buildings, bridges, ruins, monumental urns, and other trifling decorations, spread over the whole an appearance that equals, even surpasses the most elaborate cultivation. [Pg 129]

In every large tract of land, there generally are some places abundantly supplied with water, which often flows through uncouth marshy bottoms of little use or value to the owner: by raising heads at their extremities, these are easily overflowed; and lakes of very considerable dimensions may thus be obtained, often without much trouble, always with great advantages, as well in point of profit as of pleasure; and wherever it may be necessary to dig, in order to give a proper depth to the water, the earth may be raised into islands of various shapes, which serve to complicate the forms, to enrich and beautify the scenery. [Pg 130]

Though woods, from various causes, are now more rare than heretofore amongst you, yet are there, in most parts, some still remaining; their natural beauties are many, and little more is left for art to do in them, than to form roads, to thin or thicken them occasionally; where it may be wanting, to intersperse, amongst the plantations, a few proper shrubs and flowers; to open recesses, and to decorate them with objects; this done, they will be infinitely superior, in every respect, to any of the gaudy trifling confused plantations with which all your English-made Gardens are so crowded.

England abounds with commons and wilds, dreary, barren, and serving only to give an uncultivated appearance to the country, particularly near the metropolis: to beautify these vast tracts of land, is next to an impossibility; but they may easily be framed into scenes of terror, converted into noble pictures of the sublimest cast, and, by an artful contrast, serve to enforce the effect of gayer and more luxuriant prospects. [Pg 131]

On some of them are seen gibbets, with wretches hanging in terrorem upon them; on others, forges, collieries, mines, coal tracts, brick or lime kilns, glass-works, and different objects of the horrid kind: what little vegetation they have, is dismal; the animals that feed upon it, are half-famished to the artist's hands; and the cottagers, with the huts in which they dwell, want no

additional touches, to indicate their misery: a few uncouth straggling trees, some ruins, caverns, rocks, torrents, abandoned villages, in part consumed by fire, solitary hermitages, and other similar objects, artfully introduced and blended with gloomy plantations, would compleat the aspect of desolation, and serve to fill the mind, where there was no possibility of gratifying the senses.

In prosecuting a plan of this extensive nature, many other opportunities would present themselves to the able artist, of dignifying nature, and of heightening his compositions with all the force of novelty and grandeur; stone quarries, chalk pits, mines, might as easily be framed into vast amphitheatres, rustic arcades and perystiles, extensive subterraneous habitations, grottos, vaulted roads, and passages, as into other shapes; hills might, without much difficulty, be transformed into stupendous rocks, by partial incrustations of stone, judiciously mixed with turf, fern, wild shrubs and forest trees; gravel pits, or other similar excavations, might be converted into the most romantic scenery imaginable, by the addition of some planting, intermixed with ruins, fragments of sculpture, inscriptions, or any other little embellishments; and, in short, there would be no deviation, however trifling, from the usual march of nature, but what would suggest, to a fruitful imagination, some extraordinary arrangement, something to disguise her vulgarity, to rouse the attention of the spectator, and to excite in his mind a succession of strong and opposite sensations.

[Pg 132]

It is thus that far the noblest part of our Chinese Gardens, and those which at first sight appear most impracticable, may be obtained even amongst the common dispositions of English nature; and the great might thus have pleasure-grounds, extensive and extraordinary as those of the East, without any very considerable expence: men of less note would naturally imitate their superiors, by embellishing their possessions in the same manner; and instead of spending large sums to fence and to lard a little field with twigs, to give it the name of a Garden, they would beautify their whole estate; which, by a proper attention to the œconomical precepts of our Chinese Gardeners, might be done in such a manner as to encrease its value, as well as improve its appearance.

[Pg 133]

By these means this whole kingdom might soon become one magnificent vast Garden, bounded only by the sea; the many noble seats and villas with which it abounds, would give uncommon consequence to the scenery; and it might still be rendered more splendid, if, instead of disfiguring your churches with monuments, our Chinese manner of erecting mausoleums by the sides of the roads was introduced amongst you; and if all your public bridges were adorned with triumphal arches, rostral pillars, bas-reliefs, statues, and other indications of victory, and glorious achievements in war: an empire transformed into a splendid Garden, with the imperial mansion towering on an eminence in the center,^[23] and the palaces of the nobles scattered like pleasure-pavilions amongst the plantations, infinitely surpasses any thing that even the Chinese ever attempted: yet vast as the design appears, the execution is certainly within your reach.

[Pg 134]

Such, as far as I am able to judge, continued our Orator, is the true application of nature to horticulture; perhaps the only one that can be attempted with success: wherever she is made in little, or introduced upon a confined plan, the effect is always trifling and bad, as will appear to any man of real taste, who inspects the artificial scenery even of your most approved gardens: Nature admits of no reduction in her dimensions; trees will not grow in miniature; nor are her bold movements to be expressed upon the surface of a few acres: and not to mention any of your performances, it is scarcely in the power of the most consummate art, to imitate nature perfectly; nor were it possible, could the most skilful arrangements acquire their true effect, till after the expiration of many years: our children may see the perfection of what we plant; we never can.

[Pg 135]

Our eastern artists, therefore, seldom attempt to create, but rather imitate the tonsor, the habit-maker, the posture-master, and all the other polishers of man; who dispose, decorate, cleanse, clip, and add grace to what is already formed to their hands: to make nature, they say, is tedious and difficult beyond conception; but she may soon be embellished, her redundancys suppressed, her faults corrected, her wants supplied, her beauties improved, and set to view.

The truth of these assertions is, I think, apparent in many of your famous plantations; but the beauties of improved natural scenery, the defects of artificial, are no where so strongly marked as at B—m, the most magnificent seat I have yet seen in Europe. On our entrance into the Park, we were astonished at the sight of a stupendous palace, surrounded with one of the noblest scenes of nature that can be imagined; the extent is vast, the parts uncommonly large, the grounds naturally well contrasted, the transitions bold, the plantations in perfect maturity: what assistance was necessary from art, has hitherto been judiciously administered; the removal of some trees, has exposed to view beauties that seem before to have been concealed; the addition of some others, has enriched parts that were bare; and the trifling, though very judicious circumstance of raising a head at the end of a valley, has obtained a very considerable lake of water, which enriches and enlivens all the prospects; and which, by following the natural bent or windings of the valley, has taken, without any assistance from art, the most picturesque forms that could be desired: in short, the whole is now admirable; and, when improved to the utmost, according to the design of the munificent owner, will yet be more so. Ornaments to characterize the Garden more strongly, are yet wanting, and some masterly finishing touches still very necessary: one only little twining path, within ten cubits of the fence, is certainly not in character with the grandeur of the place; but the fence may be removed; and there is room, even now, on the declivity of the banks, and by the sides of the lake, for more considerable walks, with many recesses, which, when made and decorated, will add variety to grandeur, and render the whole as entertaining and splendid, as it is now great.

[Pg 136]

[Pg 137]

You enjoy the sight of this noble prospect for more than a mile; when the little path is suddenly turned into a little wood, whence, after having advanced a few paces, you behold a piece of scenery, all artificial, which I cannot venture to describe in this presence: some of you, Gentlemen, have seen what it is; and, with all your national partiality, must allow, either that it proves the impossibility of creating nature with any degree of success; or, that the ablest of your countrymen have no talent that way; to create, or to improve, are indeed very different operations; the former of which requires infinitely the most skill: it is ten times more difficult to paint a picture, than to judge, or suggest improvements, in one already painted.

[Pg 138]

Hitherto I have only described of B——m, what strangers usually see; but the whole park, above twelve miles in circumference, and several farms adjoining to it, are uncommonly beautiful, rich in old planting, in water, and in a great variety of picturesque sites and points of view; so that, with a very little dressing, with some assistance from the sister arts of architecture and sculpture, the whole might easily be converted into one large magnificent Garden.

And give me leave to observe, that these advantages are by no means peculiar to B——m; England boasts at least a hundred other places, many as extensive, most of them as capable of improvement, in various ways; which, under the management of true artists, might soon be made to rival the Tse-hiu and Chang-lin^[24] of ancient days, the Yven ming, the Tchang tchun yven,^[25] or any of the present splendid pleasure Gardens of our sublime Emperor, Kieng-long; the torch of the east, and true descendant of Tay-tsoy, the providence of Heaven, whom Joss^[26] preserve in flesh and good spirits.

[Pg 139]

It must, however, be confessed, that there is an inconveniency subsisting amongst you, which will always retard, and often prevent the execution of this extensive plan of Gardening; it is the licentiousness of your youth and common people, who delight in destroying every extraordinary thing that comes in their way: if a great man plants trees to shade and beautify a road, the people cut them down; if statues, or other pieces of sculpture, are set to adorn places of public resort, the boys pelt at them with stones, till all their extremities are demolished: wherever there are buildings, or seats, even in your Royal Gardens, we see them constantly disfigured with scurrilous inscriptions, or obscene rhimes; and where there are any uncommon trees, they are divested of every branch within reach; the shrubs are robbed of their blossom; the flowers are trodden under foot; the birds and animals are destroyed: in short, no mischief, that drunken mirth or deliberate malevolence can suggest, is left undone. What pity that such destructive brutality should exist in a country so particularly favoured by Nature, and so capable of improvement in the highest degree; whilst, in every other part of the world, it is unknown, almost unheard of!

[Pg 140]

But there is a strong tincture of the rhubarb in all human competitions; and liberty, which has so many advantages, is, nevertheless, attended with some inconveniencies, of a very serious nature; amongst which, the ferocity of its lowest votaries is none of the least formidable. Since our arrival here last July, I have seen at least twenty of their boisterous pranks; in which, not to enumerate the broken windows, the bloody noses, the kicks, and the bastinadoes of other gentlemen, I have myself been a melancholy sufferer upon various occasions; particularly at Portsmouth, where I was thrown into the sea, and narrowly escaped drowning, for the diversion of the company. Would to Heaven!—as I say to the mistress Chet-quas in a morning—would to Heaven, my ducks, we were well at Quang-chew-fu again, with all our long nails, and all our whiskers about us! The rigours of an Emperor are less frightful to me, than the frolics of a savage mob, elevated to madness with songs of freedom, and tons of strong beer: it is easier to please a man with one good head, than a monster with ten thousand, all bad ones.

[Pg 141]

Miao kao faan-qua^[27]
Tsat paat quai-tsai

Pardon this digression, which the terrors of a disturbed imagination have drawn me into; and permit your servant to re-assume the thread of his Discourse.

Wherever the extent is considerable, and the lands properly formed for the purpose, the mode of natural Gardening, just recommended, ought certainly to be employed in preference to any other, as it surpasses all others in perfection, and is yet most easily executed: but in or near great cities, where property is much divided, on flats, where nature has no play, in all tame situations; the richer and more artificial manner of our Gardening is preferable: because it may contain much variety in a small compass, and corrects the natural defects of the ground more speedily, more effectually, with less charge than any other.

[Pg 142]

This manner is also properest for grounds that immediately surround elegant structures, where order and symmetry are absolutely necessary; and for many little enclosures, or resting-places of various kinds, that must always be dispersed in different parts of extensive plantations; where nicety of dress, and excessive decoration are in character; and where they may be conveniently secured with stronger fences, to guard them from public intrusion.

These choice pieces of cultivation are appropriated to the owner and his select friends; set aside for convivial pleasures, and enjoyments that can only be tasted in private: they may be considered as more spacious apartments, as habitations adapted to the milder seasons of the year, in which Art and Nature unite to furnish a variety of whatever is beautiful, elegant, extraordinary or entertaining; whilst the larger improvements are suited to the more open amusements of the owner, contrived upon a bolder system, for a more distant and cursory inspection: they are a noble indication of his consequence; a benevolent, as well as artful tribute

[Pg 143]

to the community; which, whilst it serves to multiply the conveniencys, or promote the innocent amusements of the public, secures the popularity of the benefactor, and marks, in the strongest colours, his power, wealth and munificence. How these considerations operate in England, I, who am a stranger, cannot determine; but in the kingdoms of the East they have great weight.

Your connoisseurs will, I know, object to our artificial scenery; which they consider as unnatural, and represent as too expensive for imitation. On the former of these points you have already heard my sentiments; I need not now repeat them: those who are not yet convinced, may still feed on crabs, and leave ananas to better heads.

[Pg 144]

Till my arrival in England, I never doubted but the appearance of art was admissible, even necessary to the essence of a splendid Garden: and I am more firmly of that opinion, after having seen your English Gardens; though the contrary is so violently maintained by your countrymen, in opposition to the rest of the world, to the practice of all other polished nations, all enlightened ages; and, as far as I am able to judge, in opposition to reason. But your people delight in extremes; and, whenever they get upon a new scent, pursue it with such rage, that they always overshoot the bounds. We admire Nature as much as you do; but being of a more phlegmatick disposition, our affections are somewhat better regulated: we consider how she may be employed, upon every occasion, to most advantage; and do not always introduce her in the same garb; but show her in a variety of forms; sometimes naked, as you attempt to do; sometimes disguised; sometimes decorated, or assisted by art; scrupulously avoiding, in our most artless dispositions, all resemblance to the common face of the country, with which the Garden is immediately surrounded; being convinced, that a removal from one field to another, of the same appearance, can never afford any particular pleasure, nor ever excite powerful sensations of any kind.

[Pg 145]

If I must tell you my mind freely, Gentlemen, both your artists and connoisseurs seem to lay too much stress on nature and simplicity; they are the constant cry of every half-witted dabbler, the burthen of every song, the tune by which you are insensibly lulled into dullness and insipidity. If resemblance to nature were the measure of perfection, the waxen figures in Fleet-street, would be superior to all the works of the divine Buonarotti; the trouts and wood-cocks of Elmer, preferable to the cartoons of Raphael: but, believe me, too much nature is often as bad as too little, as may be deduced from many examples, obvious to every man conversant in polite knowledge. Whatever is familiar, is by no means calculated to excite the strongest feelings; and though a close resemblance to familiar objects may delight the ignorant, yet, to the skilful, it has but few charms, never any of the most elevated sort; and is sometimes even disgusting: without a little assistance from art, nature is seldom tolerable; she may be compared to certain viands, either tasteless, or unpleasant in themselves: which, nevertheless, with some seasoning, become palatable; or, when properly prepared, compose a most exquisite dish.

[Pg 146]

And with respect to simplicity, wherever more is admitted than may be requisite to constitute grandeur, or necessary to facilitate conception, it is always a fault. To the human mind, some exertion is always necessary: it must be occupied to be pleased; and is more satisfied with a treat, than with a frugal repast: for though it doth not delight in intricacies, yet, without a certain, even a considerable degree of complication, no grateful sensations can ever be excited. Excessive simplicity can only please the ignorant or weak, whose comprehensions are slow, and whose powers of combination are confined.

[Pg 147]

Simplicity must therefore be used with discretion, and the dose be adapted to the constitution of the patients, amongst savages and Hottentots; where arts are unknown, refinements unheard of, an abundant portion may be necessary; but wherever civilization has improved the mental faculties, a little, with proper management, will go a very great way: need I prove what the music, poetry, language, arts and manners, of every nation demonstrate, beyond the possibility of a doubt.

Another favourite word of your virtuosi, is purity; a word of which, being a stranger, I do not perhaps know the full value; nor exactly in what sense it is applied to the art in question. We are told, that in the purity of Gardening, you were never equalled by any nation; even that this boasted purity never appeared in any country but England: it may be so; your Gardens have certainly been purged to the quick, freed of every encumbrance, and cleansed of every extrinsick redundancy; so that nothing now remains but the genuine carcass, in its native purity: yet whether this quality, which I apprehend is the only one that can positively be implied, is a perfection or a blemish, will always be disputed; for though pure wine^[28] is, without doubt, a delicious beverage, and preferable to that which is mixed, yet pure water is very insipid, and may be much mended, by the additions of arrack, lemon and sugar, to turn it into punch; and ninety-nine persons in a hundred will maintain, that your pure Gardens might be much improved by the addition of embellishments proper to produce variety, and set off the vegetation to advantage: for vary your trees and shrubs as much as possible, combine them in every imaginable arrangement, they are still but trees and shrubs; they can impress but a very few images upon the mind of the spectator, and only affect his senses with very slight perceptions.

[Pg 148]

[Pg 149]

That our artificial stile of Gardening is expensive, is doubtless true; yet certainly not ruinously so. In my former voyage, I knew an unfortunate prince, who, on a very moderate allowance from his relations, supported a court in splendour; and, with the surplus, formed one of the most extraordinary, as well as magnificent artificial Gardens I ever saw. It is surprizing what good management will do, where management is necessary; but you are too rich ever to need it in any thing. I have seen more money expended here, in digging an ugly pond, than would have completed a whole Garden elsewhere; yet, after all, the pond would never hold water. But, to

proceed—You have all seen what the French have done at Versailles, Marli, Trianon, Saint Cloud, Liancourt, and Chanilly; the Italians near Rome, at Tivoli, at Frascati, and in many other parts of Italy: I do not here enter into the merit of these works; but they are certainly as costly, perhaps more so, than any of ours; yet these were done by foreigners, of different denominations; all without the least help of magick: you are richer than they; you may, with some trouble, acquire their skill; it is hoped you have already more than their spirit: be not, therefore, afraid to attempt, what they have already long since accomplished.

[Pg 150]

I have formerly told you what sort of art we employ in our Chinese Gardening; I now recommend it to your imitation; and though in general your European artificial manner appears not to me perfect, yet doth it contain many things highly deserving notice, which you have imprudently laid aside, without substituting any equivalent.

To instance the Gardens of France; they are, I will allow, sufficiently extravagant: you hear of nothing but islands of love, or halls of festivity; every recess is the retreat of a God, every prospect a scene of enchantment: like their petit maitres, they are all out of nature, all affectation; yet it is an affectation often delightful, and absurdity generally overflowing with taste and fancy: in their best works there is such a mysterious, pleasing intricacy in the disposition, such variety in the objects, so much splendour and animation in the scenery, and so much skill apparent in the execution of every part, that the attention of the spectator never flags; the succession is so rapid, that he is hurried on from one exhibition to another, with his mind constantly upon the stretch: he has only time to be pleased; there is no leisure to reflect, none to be disgusted with the extravagance of what he sees. If their Gardens are less rational than yours, they are certainly much more entertaining; and though, upon the whole, they can by no means be proposed as models for imitation, yet are there many things to be borrowed from them, which might be adopted by you with considerable advantage.

[Pg 151]

I may say the same with regard to the Italian Gardens, of which the style is less affected, less extravagant than in those of France: the heat of the climate obliges the inhabitants to seek for shade; the walks are sheltered, the plantations close, whence their compositions have a gloom, and an air of solitude that are exceedingly awful. There is a grandeur of manner in all their works, seldom to be met with elsewhere; which, about Rome, and in some other parts of Italy, is greatly heightened by the majestic face of Nature, framed upon a larger scale, and broken into nobler forms, than in most other countries. Their vegetation too is uncommonly picturesque; the abundance of water with which they are every where supplied, enables them to form a thousand pleasing combinations; and the venerable vestiges of ancient structures, which rear their decaying heads above the plantations, add surprizingly to the dignity of the scenery.

[Pg 152]

At every step, the admiration of the spectator is excited by statues, therms, bas-reliefs, sarcophagi urns, vases, and other remains of ancient splendour; or he is delighted with the productions of modern artists, ingeniously imagined, well executed, and skilfully disposed. It is not easy to conceive any thing more entertaining, to a man of taste, than an Italian Garden; in which, amidst a profusion of pleasing objects, the same elegance of choice, the same elevation of style so conspicuous in the sculpture and painting of the great Italian schools, is every where prevalent.

[Pg 153]

To branch out into farther descriptions of your continental Gardens, is perhaps superfluous, and may be thought foreign to the present purpose; as some of them differ very little from those just mentioned; and others are too trifling, or imperfect, to deserve any notice: yet permit me, before I finish, to give a slight sketch of the Dutch Gardening; from which I am apt to believe your ideas of the artificial style are chiefly collected, and your extraordinary aversion to it principally owing.

In Holland, parterres, embroidered in box, brick-dust, sea-coal, and broken porcelain, are every where admired. No Garden is perfect, that is not surrounded with a wet ditch, and many *luthouses* hanging over it, for smoking tobacco; nor is there any elegance, without some tons of lead, transformed into skating Dutchmen, Harlequins, and fluting Shepherdesses, all richly painted, in proper colours: azure flower-pots, with gilt handles, are seen in every corner; and golden mercury are perched, like birds, upon every pinnacle: every pass is guarded by pasteboard Grenadiers; and Fame, straddling over the entrance, displays a Dutch label to the passenger, telling the name and beauties of the place, the virtues and moral opinions of the proprietor. These particularities, with all the formal absurd parts of the French Gardening, make an Eden in Holland; a thing too ridiculous to be out of humour with any where; 'tis a pity it has had so serious an effect upon you. You are a wise people; yet, in the reformation of Gardening, you have followed the beaten road of ignorance: to avoid one fault, you have run headlong into another, its opposite: because, in the Old Gardening, art, order and variety, were carried to an extravagant excess, you have, in the New, almost totally excluded them all three: to mend an exuberant, fantastick dress, you have stripped stark naked: and, to heal a distempered limb, you have, like some famous surgeons of our day, chopped it entirely off.

[Pg 154]

[Pg 155]

All connoisseurs amongst you, and even amongst us, agree in despising our enchanted, or supernatural scenery; which, they say, is trifling, absurd, extravagant, abounding in conceits and boyish tricks; that operating chiefly by surprize, it has little or no effect, after a first or second inspection, and consequently can afford no pleasure to the owner: yet our best Artists, who have no excessive reverence for the decrees of connoisseurs^[29], and who think the owner is not the only person to be entertained, often introduce it; either where the plan is extensive, and admits of many changes; or, where the ground is barren of natural varieties: saying, in their vindication, that it serves as an interlude between more serious expositions; that, at a treat, there should be meats for every palate; in a shop of general resort, goods for every fancy; in a Garden, designed

[Pg 156]

for publick inspection, exhibitions of every kind; that all may find something to their liking, and none go away disappointed or dissatisfied: and, as at a feast, men eat of what they best relish, without mumbling the rest of the dishes, but leave them untainted for others to feed upon, so, in a Garden, if a man be too wise to laugh, or be pleased with trifles, he may pass them over unnoticed: amongst the multitude, there are many fancies to gratify; children, old women, eunuchs, and pleasure-misses, ought to be diverted, as well as sages, mandarines, or connoisseurs. It is not every one, say they, that enjoys the force or fierceness of grand compositions; to some they are even terrifying: weak minds delight in little objects, which are easiest adapted to their confined comprehensions; as children are better pleased with a puppet-show, than with more serious or noble performances.

Thus they reason; and say moreover, that, as the principal parts of this supernatural Gardening consists in a display of many surprizing phenomena, and extraordinary effects, produced by air, fire, water, motion, light, and gravitation, they may be considered at a collection of philosophical experiments, exhibited in a better manner, upon a larger scale, and more forcibly than is common: in that light they think, even men of sense may venture to look at them, without impeachment of their understanding; to admire what is ingenious, new or extraordinary; and stare at what they do not comprehend. Whether the connoisseurs or the artists are most in the wrong, I will not decide; you, Gentlemen, must determine for yourselves.

[Pg 157]

Some free expressions, relative to your Gardeners, constitute a heavy part of the charge exhibited against me: it seems therefore necessary, in alleviation of this high offence, to declare, that whatever has been said on that subject, was with an eye to the general character of the fraternity; and by no means levelled at yon stately gentleman in the black perriwig, as he has been pleased to maintain. It could not be my business to mark out individuals, either by excessive praise, which was perhaps expected, or by more poignant censure: such conduct must have been fawning in one in instance, invidious in both; for there is no exalting one phœnomenon, without proportionably degrading the rest: as in a draw-well, one bucket can never rise, but when the other sinks. If a man far outstrips his brothers, he will of course be distinguished; if only a little, his safest station is in the croud. And really it is odd that any one should officiously have stepped out of the ranks, insisting, like master Dogberry in the play, upon his exclusive title; where nothing partial was even distantly hinted at, no names mentioned, nor any thing said, that was not full as applicable to the brotherhood in general, as to the sagacious claimant in particular: but

[Pg 158]

Man lup jao kai
Tai kup tao bai.

There is reason to believe, from various hints which have been dropped by Gentlemen here present, that the veracity of Chet-qua's description is doubted; nay, that the Gardens described, are supposed to have no existence but in Chet-qua's brain: be it so, my friends; I shall not seek to refute what you seem so strongly disposed to believe; it is not at present material: for the end of all that I have said, was rather as an Artist, to set before you a new style of Gardening; than as a Traveller, to relate what I have really seen: and, notwithstanding your strictures, you all seemed satisfied, even entertained with the description: there is no doubt, but the reality, like all other realities, would affect you still more strongly than the picture. I have endeavoured to shew, how that may be obtained: the rest is left to those it most concerns; the ingenious, the wealthy, and the great; who have power and inclinations to execute what I attempt to plan: my part is done, as far as I am able to do it; theirs may begin when they think fit.

[Pg 159]

And although they may at first be embarrassed in the execution of a system so much more complicated and dependant on genius, on skill, and on nice judgement, than that which has hitherto been pursued; yet there is no doubt, but practice and perseverance will, by degrees, dispel every difficulty: it is at least glorious to hazard arduous attempts; and more honourable even to fail in manly pursuits, than to succeed in trifling, childish enterprizes. Let the timid or the feeble meanly creep upon the earth, with uniform, sluggard pace; but the towering spirit must attempt a nobler flight, and climb the paths that lead to fame: now gayly sporting on the slippery surface, as doth the gentle, graceful lizard; now thundering up the precipice, with the tremendous dragon's stride; now soaring to the top, stately and splendid as the imperial bird;^[30] when, with his glittering crest and twelve irradiant wings, he comes upon the morning's light, while myriads of the warbling tribes, at awful distance, crowd the vaulted air, adore their King, and, with loud songs of frantick joy, shake the firm earth, and all yon starry heaven.

[Pg 160]

From the whole tenour of this Discourse, and indeed from the substance of the first Dissertation, it is evident, Gentlemen, that your servant Chet-qua has no aversion to natural Gardening; but is, on the contrary, a zealous advocate in its favour, wherever there is room to expand, and work upon a great scale, or where it can conveniently, and with propriety be introduced. The style which in England has been adopted, preferable to others, is not what appears to him reprehensible; but he laments the little use you have made of your adoption, and apprehends your partiality is too excessive, while you obstinately refuse the assistance of almost every extraneous embellishment, and persist in an indiscriminate application of the same manner, upon all occasions, however opposite, or ill adapted; and often where no probability of success appears. Natural Gardening, when treated upon an extensive plan, when employed with judgement, and conducted with art, is perhaps as superior to all other sorts of culture, as heroick verse is to every other species of writing; but there are many occasions, where neither the one nor the other can, with the least propriety, be employed; where they would only serve to give a ridicule to the whole composition; and where different or less elevated modes of expression are,

[Pg 161]

[Pg 162]

on all accounts, preferable. Artists of other professions, vary their manners of applying to the human affections; suiting them to the circumstances or nature of the subjects before them; and they are oftenest indebted to these variations for their success; why then should Gardeners always confine themselves to the same tract, and torture all dispositions to adapt them to the same method, like that tyrant of old, who stretched or mutilated every guest, till he fitted a particular bed? Can they hope to succeed by means, which others have found ineffectual; or is it reasonable to suppose, that Nature will change her course to please their fancy? Variety is a powerful agent, without the assistance of which, little can be effected; it captivates even with trifles; and, when united to perfection, has charms which nothing can resist: the most exquisite pictures of nature, receive additional beauties from a judicious opposition of art; and the confined, uniform, tasteless walk of imitation, which you have unfortunately fallen into, must have many helps to make it even tolerable; a thousand enlivening additions, to animate its native dulness.

Thus I have considered every part of my first Discourse, and offered in its vindication, what immediately occurs to me: perhaps, with more leisure, I might have contrived a better Speech, and a stronger Defence; but the hurry of Face-making^[31] is such, that there is scarcely time to eat rice, or drink brandy,^[32] much less to think: I never frequent my wives but by night; I have only heard one of them scold, and seen the others by twilight, these six months: judge then, what can be expected from Chet-qua; the little knowledge he has, or thinks he has, is freely communicated to his neighbours; he wishes it were more and better; yet such as it is, he flatters himself it will be kindly received; and that his neighbours will use what may be useful, without kicking too violently at the rest.

[Pg 163]

F I N I S .

FOOTNOTES:

- [20] *Quang-chew-fu*—Canton. *For she was a virago, and had large feet*—Both which are accounted great defects in China. *Nine whiskers, &c.*—All beaus wear whiskers in China; and all gentlemen long nails, to shew that they are idle. *Kyang-ning, or Nang-king*—Capital of *Kyang-nang. Shun-tien-fu*—Peking.
- [21] *Tan lou ty tchan yué, &c.*—The motto which Chet-qua has made choice of, is part of a poem written by Kien-long, reigning emperor of China, in praise of drinking tea: and published, by his imperial edict, bearing date the twelfth day, of the ninth moon, of the thirteenth year of his reign; in thirty-two different types, or characters; under the inspection of Yun-lou, and Houng-yen, princes, by the title of Tsin-ouang; Fouheng, grandee, by the title of Taypao; Count, by the title of Valiant; and first president of almost all the great tribunals of the empire: whose deputies were Akdoun and Tsing-pou, grandees, by the title of Tay-tsee Chaopao; and these were again assisted by Isan, Fouki, Elguingue, Tetchi, Mingté, Tsoungmin, Tchangyu, Tounmin, and about a dozen other mandarines of rank and reputation; so that there is no doubt but the work is perfectly correct. Here follows the exact copy of it, with an English translation, for the entertainment and instruction of the curious in poetry. There is a French translation of the same work, by Father Amiot, published at Paris, in 1770, from which the present Publication is in a great measure taken; the Editor having found it easier to translate from the French copy, than from the Chinese original.

Mei-hoa ché pou yao
Fo-cheou hiang tsie kié,
Soung-che ouei fang ny;
San pin tchou tsing kûé;
Pong y tché kio tang,
Ou tché tcheng koang hiué
Houo heou pien yu hié,
Ting yen y cheng mié.

Yué ngueou po sien jou,
Tan lou ty tchan yué,
Ou yun king tai pan
Ko ou, pou ko choué.
Fou fou teou lo ty
Ho ho yun kiang tché
Ou-tsuen y ko tsan
Lin-fou chang ché pié.

Lan ku Tchao-tcheou ngan
Pó siao Yu-tchouan kiu
Han siao ting sing leou
Kou yué kan hiuen tsué,
Joan pao tchen ki yu
Tsiao king sing ou kié,
Kien-long ping-yn
Siao, tchun yu ty.

The colours of the Mei hoa are never brilliant, yet is the flower always pleasing: in fragrance or neatness the fo-cheou has no equal: the fruit of the pine is aromatick, its odour inviting. In gratifying at once the sight, the smell and the taste, nothing exceeds these three things: and if, at the same time, you put, upon a gentle fire, an old pot, with three legs, grown black and battered with length of service, after having first filled it with the limpid water of melted snow; and if, when the water is heated to a degree that will boil a fish, or redden a lobster, you pour it directly into a cup made of the earth of yué, upon the tender leaves of superfine tea; and if you let it rest there, till the vapours which rises at first in great abundance, forming thick clouds, dissipate by degrees, and at last appear merely as a slight mist upon the surface; and if then you gently sip this delicious beverage, it is labouring effectually to remove the five causes of discontent which usually disturb our quiet: you may feel, you may taste, but it is impossible to describe the sweet tranquillity which a liquor, thus prepared, procures.

Retired, for some space of time, from the tumults of business, I sit alone in my tent, at liberty to enjoy myself unmolested: in one hand holding a fo-cheou, which I bring nearer to my nose, or put it farther off, at pleasure; in the other hand holding my dish of tea, upon which some pretty curling vapours still appear: I taste, by intervals the liquor; by intervals, I consider the mei-hoa—I give a fillip to my imagination, and my thoughts are naturally turned towards the sages of antiquity.—I figure to myself the famous Ou-tsuen, whose only nourishment was the fruit of the pine; he enjoyed himself in quiet, amidst this rigid frugality! I envy, and wish to imitate him.—I put a few of the kernels into my mouth; I find them delicious.

Sometimes, methinks, I see the virtuous Lin-fou, bending into form, with his own hands, the branches of the mei-hoa-chou. It was thus, say I to myself, that he relieved his mind, after the fatigues of profound meditation, on the most interesting subjects. Then I take a look at my shrub, and it seems as if I were assisting Lin-fou, in bending its branches into a new form.—I skip from Lin-fou to Tchao-tcheon, or to Yu-tchouan; and see the first in the middle of a vast many tea-cups, filled with all kinds of tea, of which he sometimes tastes one, sometimes another; thus varying incessantly his potation: while the second drinks, with the profoundest indifference, the best tea, and scarcely distinguishes it from the vilest stuff.—My taste is not their's; why should I attempt to imitate them?—

But I hear the sound of the evening bell; the freshness of the night is augmented; already the rays of the moon strike through the windows of my tent, and with their lustre brighten the few moveables with which it is adorned. I find myself neither uneasy nor fatigued; my stomach is empty, and I may, without fear, go to rest.—It is thus that, with my poor abilities, I have made these verses, in the little spring of the tenth moon of the year Ping-yn, of my reign Kien-long.

- [22] *Fo-hii, Shing-tong, or Whoang-tii*—Some of the first emperors of China; who invented the eight qua's, together with the kay-tse, and created colsus.
- [23] *An eminence in the center*—Meaning Windsor, probably.
- [24] *Tse-hiu and Chang-lin*—Two celebrated parks, which belonged to the emperors of the Ty.
- [25] *Yven-ming-yven, and Tchang-tchun-yven*—Are Gardens near Pe-king, belonging to the present Emperors of China.
- [26] *Joss*—A corruption of Dios, God.
- [27] *Miao kao, etc.*—Muttering expressions from Hoang-fou-tse, or Confucius.
- [28] *For though pure wine, etc.*—It is remarkable, that our Orator draws most of his similes and allusions either from the kitchen or the cellar; whether this particularity proceeded from any skill of his in the culenary art, from his affection for good living, or from any other hidden motive; or whether it was merely accidental, the Editor never could learn with any degree of certainty.
- [29] In China they have an innumerable multitude of connoisseurs and criticks; who, with a very superficial knowledge, a few general maxims, and some hard words, boldly decide on subjects they do not understand: hence the whole fraternity is fallen into disrepute. They have, indeed, like us, some real connoisseurs amongst them; but these are very rare in China.
- [30] *The imperial bird, or foug hoang*, is a fabulous being, of the nature of the phœnix, by the Chinese poets, accounted the emperor of birds, as the dragon is of all the scaly tribe: he is said never to appear, but in great pomp, attended by a numerous train of all the most brilliant and extraordinary of the volatile race.
- [31] *Hurry of face-making*—The Chinese call portrait painting, or modelling portraits in coloured clay, which was Chet-qua's particular profession, face-making.
- [32] *Eat rice or drink brandy*—The Chinese call dining, eating rice; and their common liquors, at meals, are spirits, of various sorts.

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