

CULTIVATION OF TROPICAL PLANTS—CONTRAST AND ASSEMBLAGE OF VEGETABLE FORMS.—IMPRESSIONS INDUCED BY THE PHYSIOGNOMY AND CHARACTER OF THE VEGETATION.

LANDSCAPE painting, notwithstanding the multiplication of its productions by engravings, and by the recent improvements in lithography, is still productive of a less powerful effect than that excited in minds susceptible of natural beauty by the immediate aspect of groups of exotic plants in hot-houses or in gardens. I have already alluded to the subject of my own youthful experience, and mentioned that the sight of a colossal dragon-tree and of a fan palm in an old tower of the botanical garden at Berlin implanted in my mind the seeds of an irresistible desire to undertake distant travels. He who is able to trace through the whole course of his impressions that which gave the first leading direction to his whole career, will not deny the influence of such a power.

I would here consider the different impression produced by the picturesque arrangement of plants, and their association for the purposes of botanical exposition; in the first place, by groups distinguished for their size and mass, as *Musacæ* and *Heliconiæ*, growing in thick clumps, and alternating with *Corypha* palms, *Araucariæ*, and *Mimosæ*, and moss-covered trunks, from which shoot forth *Dracontia*, delicately-leaved Ferns, and richly-blossoming *Orchideæ*; and, in the next, by an abundance of separate lowly plants, classed and cultivated in rows for the purpose of affording instruction in descriptive and systematic botany. In the first case, our attention is challenged by the luxuriant development of vegetation in *Cecropiæ*, *Carolinæ*, and light, feathery *Bamboos*; by the picturesque association of the grand and noble forms which embellish the shores of the Upper Orinoco, the wooded banks of the Amazon, or of the Huallaga, so vividly and admirably described by Martius and Edward Pöppig; and by the sentiment of longing for the lands in which the current of life flows more abundantly and richly, and of whose beauty a faint but still pleasing image is reflected to the mind by means of our hot-houses, which originally served as mere nurseries for sickly plants.

It undoubtedly enters within the compass of landscape painting to afford a richer and more complete picture of nature than the most skillfully-arranged grouping of cultivated plants is able to present, since this branch of art exercises an almost magical command over masses and forms. Almost