

The feeling for nature manifested by the early cultivated East Asiatic nations, in the choice and the careful attention of sacred objects chosen from the vegetable kingdom, was most strongly and variously exhibited in their cultivation of parks. In the remotest parts of the Old Continent the Chinese gardens appear to have approached most nearly to what we are now accustomed to regard as English parks. Under the victorious dynasty of Han, gardens were so frequently extended over a circuit of many miles that agriculture was injured by them, and the people excited to revolt.* "What is it that we seek in the possession of a pleasure garden?" asks an ancient Chinese writer, Lieu-tscheu. It has been universally admitted, throughout all ages, that plantations should compensate to man for the loss of those charms of which he is deprived by his removal from a free communion with nature, his proper and most delightful place of abode. "The art of laying out gardens consists in an endeavor to combine cheerfulness of aspect, luxuriance of growth, shade, solitude, and repose, in such a manner that the senses may be deluded by an imitation of rural nature. Diversity, which is the main advantage of free landscape, must therefore be sought in a judicious choice of soil, an alternation of chains of hills and valleys, gorges, brooks, and lakes covered with aquatic plants. Symmetry is wearying, and ennui and disgust will soon be excited in a garden where every part betrays constraint and art."† The description given by Sir George Staunton of the great imperial garden of Zhe-hol,‡ north of the Chinese wall, corresponds with these precepts of Lieu-tscheu—precepts to which our ingenious cotemporary, who formed the charming park of Muskau,§ will not refuse his approval.

In the great descriptive poem written in the middle of the last century by the Emperor Kien-long, in praise of the former Mantchou capital, Mukden, and of the graves of his ancestors, the most ardent admiration is expressed for free nature, when but little embellished by art. The poetic prince shows a happy power in fusing the cheerful images of the luxuriant

* *Notice Historique sur les Jardins des Chinois*, in the *Mémoires concernant les Chinois*, t. viii., p. 309.

† See the work last quoted, p. 318-320.

‡ Sir George Staunton, *Account of the Embassy of the Earl of Macartney to China*, vol. ii., p. 245.

§ Prince Pückler-Muskau, *Andeutungen über Landschaftsgärtnerei*, 1834. Compare, also, his Picturesque Descriptions of the Old and New English Parks, as well as that of the Egyptian Gardens of Schubra.