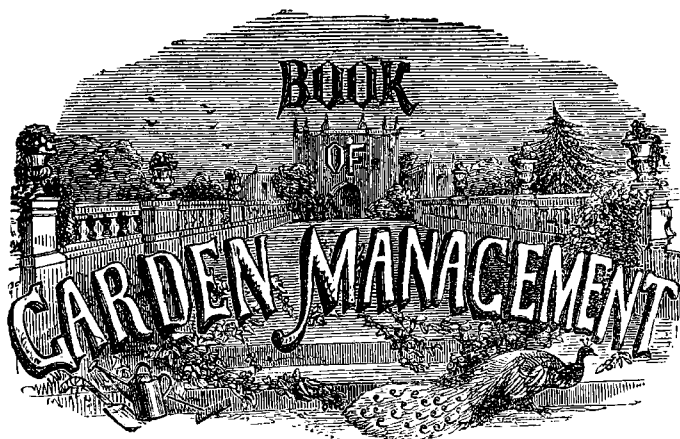


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Excerpt

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CHAPTER I.

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF GARDENING.

1. GARDENING, as an industrial art, existed in very remote antiquity. Not to speak of the fabled gardens of Hesperides and of Alcinous, each of them—

“Four acres the allotted space of ground,
Fenced with a green inclosure all around;”

or the hanging gardens of Babylon, by which the Babylonian monarch sought to reconcile his Median queen to the flat and naked country of her adoption, and banish from her memory the regretted Median hills and forests, we find among the Romans not only traces of extensive garden cultivation, but a garden literature, which has probably not a little influenced our own. The kings of Rome seem, indeed, to have been their own gardeners; for Pliny tells us that Tarquin the Superb sent a certain cruel and sanguinary message from the garden which he was then cultivating with his own hands, to his son; and he adds, “At the present day,” that is, about the year 80 or 90 of the Christian era, “under the general name of Hortorum, we have pleasure-grounds situated in the very heart of the city, as well as extensive fields and villas. The garden constitutes the poor man’s field,” he proceeds to say,—“from it the lower classes procure their daily food;” and after a sneer at the disciple of Epicurus, who risks the peril of shipwreck in seeking for oysters in the abysses of the deep, or who searches for bird

beyond the river Phasis at the risk of being eaten up himself while battling with wild beasts and trying to take a pheasant, he exclaims, "And yet, by Hercules! how little do the productions of the garden cost in comparison with these!" Pliny goes on to utter bitter complaints that these cheap and simple luxuries are being placed beyond the reach of the poor by the luxurious demands of the rich for monstrosities of high cultivation. "We might be contented to allow of fruits being grown of exquisite flavour. We might allow wines being kept till they were mellowed with age, or enfeebled by being passed through cloth strainers; but do we not find that these refined distinctions are extended to the very herbs? The cabbages are pampered to such an extent, that the poor man's table is not large enough to hold them. Asparagus Nature intended to grow wild, so that all might gather it; but, lo and behold! we find it in such a state of cultivation that Ravenna produces heads weighing as much as three to the pound. Alas! for the monstrous gluttony."

2. After an exordium deprecating such high cultivation as a direct means of depriving the poor of their natural food, in the course of which we learn that the women were the chief cultivators of the kitchen-garden among the Romans; that its appearance in the days of Cato the Censor was considered as the test of a good or careless housewife; and that the lower classes in Rome had their mimic gardens in the windows, as we have our window gardening; he concludes thus: "Let the garden, then, have its due meed of honour; let not its products, because they are common, be deprived of a due share of our consideration; for have not men of the highest rank been content to borrow their surnames from it? Have the Lactucini thought themselves disgraced by taking their name from the Lettuce, or the Fabii and Lentilii from the Bean and the Lentils? But we are ready to admit, with Virgil, that it is difficult by language to ennoble a subject, so humble in itself,—

"In tenui, at tenuis non gloria."

3. It thus appears that early in Roman history, garden cultivation had not only made considerable progress, but that it had a tolerably extensive literature. Cæsar had his—

"Private arbours and new planted orchards
 On this side Tiber."

Cicero had his villa and gardens, in which flowers were one of his delights, and—

"The Pæstan roses, with their double spring,"

were as celebrated as the fruits from the garden of Lucullus.

4. The Italian style of gardening is probably a perfected continuation of that of the Romans, with whom it was an amplification of the house itself.

“A pillar'd shade,
 With echoing walks beneath,”

Broad paved and sunny terraces and shady colonnades connected in their style with the house. Marble fountains, statuary, and vases, and other vestiges of ancient art found in the ruins, out of which they have been raised, are the chief characteristics of the magnificent gardens of modern Italy, and nothing can be nobler than this style when the accessories are all in keeping. “In spite of Walpole's sneer,” says Mr. Bellenden Kerr, “about walking up and down stairs in the open air, there are few things so beautiful in art as stately terraces, tier above tier, and bold flights of stone steps, now stretching forward in a broad, unbroken course; now winding round the angle of the terrace in short steep descents; each landing affording some new scene, some change of sun or shade—a genial basking-place or cool retreat,—here the rich perfume of an ancestral orange-tree, which may have been in the family three hundred years,—there the bright blossoms of some sunny creeper,—while at another time a balcony juts out to catch some distant view, or a recess is formed with seats for the loitering party to ‘rest and be thankful.’ Let all this be connected, by means of colonnades, with the architecture of the mansion, and you have a far more rational appendage to its incessantly artificial character than the petty wildernesses and picturesque *abandon*, which have not been without advocates, even on an insignificant scale.”

5. The French and the Dutch have each their distinct styles of gardening,—the French generally theatrical and affected, straining after effect with spectacle and display. Even at Versailles, which represents two hundred acres and eight millions sterling, the geometric style of Le Notre differs in little from its predecessors or its fellows, except in its extent and magnificence. Here, as elsewhere, in the production of his school,—

“Grove nods at grove, each alley has its brother,
 And half the garden just reflects the other.”

Its wonder was the labyrinth in which thirty-nine of Æsop's fables were represented by means of copper figures of birds and beasts, each group being connected with a separate fountain, and all spouting water.

6. In the Dutch style, there is a great profusion of ornament on a small scale:—

“Trees cut to statues, statues thick as trees;”

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canals and ditches made to accommodate the bridges thrown across them ; caves, waterworks, banqueting-houses, and the never-failing *lust-haus* (summer-house) with a profusion of trellis-work and green paint, furnished, as Evelyn has it, "with whatever may render the place agreeable, melancholy, and country-like," but abounding also in beautiful grassy banks and green slopes, unknown in French gardens.

7. In our own country, gardening, as an art, much less as a science, is of comparatively modern date, but in no other country has it made such progress. The universal aspiration, "Give me but a garden," pervades young and old of our race. Our travellers ransack the Old World and the New for new plants with which to beautify our gardens. The footsore and weary and rather eccentric Australian traveller in Leichhardt's "Overland Expedition" erected his tent, generally at a distance from the rest under a shady tree or in a green bower of shrubs, where he made himself as comfortable as the place would allow by spreading branches and grass under his couch, and covering his tent with them to keep it shady and cool, *even planting lilies in blossom before his tent*, in order that he might enjoy their sight during his short stay. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that our garden literature should be extremely copious. For this taste, as well as the early rudiments of gardening, we are probably indebted to the Romans ; for Strabo, writing in the first century, tells us that the people of Britain were ignorant of the art of cultivating gardens. The continual wars in which Britain was engaged from the fifth century, when the Romans vacated the island, probably rooted out all traces of an art so civilizing as gardening, although there are indications that vineyards planted in the third century, under the Emperor Proteus, existed in the eighth century, when they are mentioned by the Venerable Bede ; while William of Malmesbury, writing in the twelfth century, commends the vineyards of the county of Gloucester ; and Pliny tells us that cherries, which Lucullus had introduced into Italy about a century before, were grown in Britain in the first century. Throughout the transition period which succeeded the Roman conquest, the warlike barons and discontented people were probably too much occupied in looking to their personal safety to think much of gardening. The opulent earls of Northumberland, whose household consisted, in 1512, of a hundred and sixty persons, had but one gardener, who, according to the "Household Book," attended "hourly in the garden for setting of erbes, and clipping of knottis, and sweeping the said garden clene." In Scotland—if we may trust to the authority of the royal poet James I.—that poor country had already established some claims to the reputation which has since carried so

many of her sons over the world as gardeners. In his poem of the "Quair," written early in the fifteenth century, the poet speaks of—

"A garden fair, and in the corneris set,
 Ane herbere green with wandes long and small,
 Railit about, and so with treeis set
 Was all the place, and hawthorn hedges knet,
 That lyfe was non, walkyng there forbye
 That might within scarce any wight espye,
 So thicke the bewis and the leves grene."

8. Toward the end of the fifteenth and in the early part of the sixteenth century, the wise and politic Henry VII. had nearly succeeded in rooting out the feuds of the Roses red and white, and a long reign of comparative repose had no doubt prepared the people for the revival of gardening with the other arts of civilization, which took place in the succeeding reign of Henry VIII. The royal gardens of Nonsuch were laid out by this monarch with the greatest magnificence. "Nonsuch," says its historian Hentzner, "is so encompassed with parks, delicious gardens, groves ornamented with trellis-work, cabinets of verdure, and walks so embowered by trees, that it seems to be a place pitched upon by Pleasure herself to dwell in along with Health. In the pleasure and artificial gardens are many columns and pyramids of marble; two fountains spout water one round the other like a pyramid, upon which are perched small birds that stream water out of their bills. In the grove of Diana is a very agreeable fountain, with Actæon turned into a stag as he was sprinkled by the goddess and her nymphs. There is besides another pyramid of marble with concealed pipes, which spirt upon all who come within their reach;" so that it may well claim pre-eminence, and justify the poet, who tells us—

"This, which no equal hath in art or fame,
 Britons deservedly do Nonsuch name."

9. During Elizabeth's reign, Holland and Hatfield House were both laid out. Of the former, part of the original plan still remains; of Hatfield, Hentzner says, "the gardens are surrounded by a piece of water with boats rowing through the alleys of well-cut trees and labyrinths made with great labour." Mazes and labyrinths and concealed pipes, by means of which visitors might find themselves lost one minute, and deluged with water at the next, seems, indeed, to have been the taste of that day—a jocular sort of hospitality more honoured in the breach than the observance."

10. During the reign of James I., Theobalds was laid out. "A large

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square, having all its walls covered with phillyrea, and a beautiful *jet d'eau* in the centre, the parterre having many pleasant walks, part of which are planted on the sides with espaliers, and others arched all over. At the end is a small mount, called the Mount of Venus, placed in the midst of a labyrinth, and which is, upon the whole, the most beautiful spot in the world." During this reign, the subject engaged the comprehensive mind of Bacon, with little immediate result; but the contempt he expresses for "images cut out of juniper and other garden stuff" was not without its weight a few generations later, when a purer taste came to prevail. Hampton Court, Chatsworth, and Wooton, and many other of the finest gardens in England, were laid out in Charles II.'s reign; garden structures also began to be erected. Le Notre planted Greenwich and St. James's parks, under the immediate directions of Charles, Versailles being the model, although only at a humble distance. Clipped yew-trees and other Dutch tendencies, scarcely redeemed by the magnificent gates and iron railings, now introduced, became the rage in the reign of William and Mary,—"terraced walks, hedges of evergreens, shorn shrubs in boxes, orange and myrtle trees in tubs, being the chief excellences." In 1696 an orangery with a glass roof was erected at Wollaton Hall, Nottinghamshire, said to have been the first structure of the kind in England. These gardens were laid out in the Italian style, with terraces, statues, fountains, and urns, and, next to Chatsworth, they seem to have been the finest in England. With Powis Castle, and some other fine old terraced gardens, they were sacrificed to the rage for improvement ushered in a century later by Kent and Brown, and their followers.

11. The time was, indeed, fast approaching when an entirely new school of art in gardening and laying out grounds was to be initiated. Bacon's criticisms had paved the way, Milton's gorgeous descriptions helped to bring the stiff formality of the French and Dutch styles into disfavour; Addison and Pope, by their ridicule, completed their overthrow. Addison compared your makers of parterres and flower-gardens to epigrammatists and sonneteers; contrivers of bowers and grottos, treillages and cascades, to romance writers; while the gravel-pits at Kensington, then just laid out, were the writers of heroic verse. This ridicule had a very happy effect, and when combined with the imaginings of Milton, and the natural descriptions of scenery by Thompson and Shenstone, and the refined criticism of Pope, Gray, Warton, Whately, and Walpole, and the practical application of the poet's visions by Kent and Mason and their immediate predecessors, had a wonderful effect on English gardens and parks. The gardens of Paradise, as described by

Milton, became the germ of many a palatial garden given up to the tender mercies of the artist. Many a garden emulated that of Eden, which

“Crowns with its enclosure green,
 As with a rural mound the champaign head
 Of a steep wilderness, whose hairy sides
 With thicket overgrown, grotesque and wild,
 Access denied * * * * *

12. Nor is it at all surprising that this gorgeous picture seized upon the imagination of the more enthusiastic landscape gardeners, roused to exertion by the mixed criticism and ridicule of the leading spirits of the age. The result was the establishment of a new school in art, which, in course of time, came to be recognized as the English style, and which, according to Gray, “is the only taste we can call our own, the only proof we can give of original talent in matters of pleasure.”

13. Loudon and Wise were among the earliest innovators, and are highly praised in the “Spectator” for the manner in which they laid out Kensington Gardens. Bridgman followed, hewing down many a verdurous peacock and juniper lion. Kent, the inventor of the ha-ha, followed, and broke up the distinction of garden and park; and Brown (Capability Brown, as he was called) succeeded him with round clumps and boundary belts, artificially winding rivers and lakes, with broad drives terminating in summer-houses. Brown is admitted to have been a man of genius, and astonished the gardening world by the skilful manner in which he arrested the river and formed the beautiful lake at Blenheim; but he could not be everywhere, and he found many ignorant imitators. Sir Walter Scott tells an amusing story of one of these conceited pretenders who was employed by Lord Abercorn in laying out the grounds at Duddingston. The house embraces noble views of Craigmillar Castle on the one side, backed by the Pentlands; on the other, by Arthur’s Seat and the Salisbury Crags; and on a third the eye is carried past the precipitous rocks on which stands the Castle of Edinburgh, across the rich plains of Midlothian: the improver conceived it to be his duty to block out every glimpse of this noble landscape. Duddingston Loch is a beautiful piece of water, lying at the foot of Arthur’s Seat: he shut out the lake also, and would have done as much for the surrounding hills, but they were too grand objects to be so treated. Lord Abercorn laughed at his absurdities, but was too indolent to interrupt his vagaries.

14. It is not surprising, perhaps, that the opponents of the old style rushed, at a very early period to the opposite extreme; fine old gardeners

were recklessly pulled to pieces; in the words of Sir Walter Scott, "Down went many a trophy of old magnificence—court-yard, ornamented enclosure, fosse, avenue, barbican, and every extensive monument of battled wall and flanking tower." Sir Uvedale Price, who went a certain length with the prevailing mania, which he afterwards was still more active in arresting, expresses bitter regret for the destruction of an ancestral garden on the old system which he condemned to destruction before he found out his error. He was afterwards led to write strongly in favour of the preservation of the remains of ancient magnificence still untouched, with modifications calculated to redeem them from the charge of barbarism.

15. "It was, indeed, high time that some one should interfere," continues Sir Walter Scott. "The garden, artificial in its structure, its shelter, its climate, and its soil, which every consideration of taste, beauty, and convenience recommended to be kept near to the mansion, and maintained as its appendage, has by a strange and sweeping sentence of exile been condemned to wear the coarsest and most humbling form." Sir Uvedale Price soon recognized a threefold division of the domain. For the architectural terrace and flower garden, in the direction of the house, he admits the formal style; for the shrubbery or pleasure-ground, a transition between flowers and trees, which he is willing to hand over to the improver; but for the park, which belongs to the picturesque—his own subject—he gives full scope to the most picturesque disposition, provided it is not frittered away in trifling details. This style of laying out, in which the lawn is imperceptibly lost in the distant park, has been called the English style. "Nothing," says Scott, "is more completely the child of art than a garden." Who would clothe such a child in the gipsy garb, however picturesque it may be?

16. Nor was the revolution in gardens confined to this country. The rage for English—or, as the style was sometimes called, the "natural"—style, spread rapidly on the Continent, and especially in France,—of course with variations and individual as well as national idiosyncracies: thus at Ermonville, the seat of Vicomte Girardin, a garden in ruins was considered not out of place with an accompanying band of music, while madame and her daughters walked about as Amazons in black hats, and the young men of the family dressed in imitation of the country people. Another proprietor, M. Watelet, who had written a system of gardening on strictly utilitarian principles, while he adopted the system so far as to erect temples and altars about his grounds, felt himself bound, in consistency, to employ a body of worshippers; to which the Prince de Ligne gave ridiculous *éclat* when he said, in a fit of

enthusiasm, "Go thither, meditate over the inscriptions dictated by taste, meditate there with the wise, sigh with the lover, and bless Watelet."

17. During the present century, this question, which at its commencement was one of chaos, has acquired form and consistency. The distinction which Sir U. Price, Whately, and a host of writers sought to establish and simplify, has been ably continued by Sir Walter Scott, Sir Henry Stewart, Sir Thomas Dick Lauder—the able editor of the last edition of Price's work,—Gilpin, and a host of writers, ably seconded by Repton, and another Gilpin—a professional landscape gardener,—Sir Joseph Paxton, and other well-known practical gardeners; and it is now universally admitted that the garden surrounding the house, whether an architectural terrace or bedded lawn, must of necessity possess uniformity; that the shrubbery immediately adjoining must partake of the same character, somewhat modified; while the more distant portions and the park are willingly abandoned to the landscape gardener—a term, however, to which Sir Walter Scott takes exception.

18. Such is a very brief sketch of Palatial Gardening, which is necessarily the parent of all other styles worthy of name. The extent, however, to which the humbler class of gardens have been carried bears testimony how deeply rooted is the taste for flowers and gardening pursuits. While the higher order of gardening was settling down into the refined taste which has produced the ornamental gardens of Chatsworth, Trentham, Alton Towers, and Dalkeith Palace, suburban gardening was also undergoing its own transition. The undoubted taste of Kent, Brown, and Repton was some protection to the places of which they had the immediate charge; but the humbler gardens, brought into form by their ignorant and careless imitators, had no such protection: with them a taste for the fantastic occupied the place which in a previous age had been devoted to the formal; beds of bizarre forms and irregular outline—lady's tresses *en papillotes*, as they have been called—disfigured many a lawn, where—

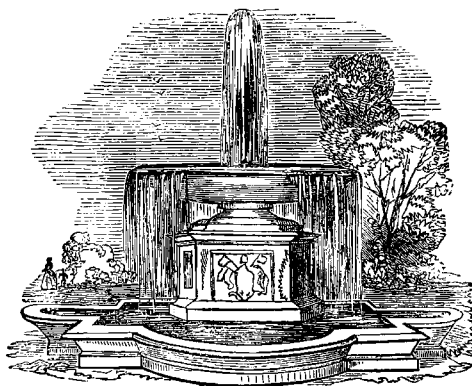
"Up and down, carved like an apple tart,
 Here snip, and trip, and cut, and slish and slash,
 Like to a censor in a barber's shop."

This style of arrangement, though still occasionally seen, has given place, like the same evil in more important places, to a purer and more simple style of arranging garden grounds. The kitchen garden is now no longer looked upon as a place forbidden, even to the females of the family, and the beautifully-arranged kitchen gardens at Frogmore,

where royalty does not refuse to visit, are proofs that utility is not necessarily unornamental. The cabbage and the onion were not excluded from "the little garden of our ancestors, where they knew every flower because they were few, and every name because they were simple. Their rose-bushes and gilliflowers were dear to them, because themselves pruned, watered, and watched them—had marked from day to day their opening buds, and removed their fading blossoms."

19. Gardens, as we have seen, were carefully cultivated by the Romans; the cottager's garden was the test of his worth as a member of the community; and we shall not be far wrong if we apply a similar test to our own rural population. The garden of the English cottager is, indeed, already remarked as one of our national distinctions; even in the midst of squalor and misery we find an occasional Spitalfields weaver growing auriculas and carnations in the greatest perfection, evincing the universal interest taken in the subject; and it is well-remarked by a Quarterly reviewer, "that when we see a plot set apart for a rose-bush, and a gilliflower, and a carnation, it is enough for us: if the jessamine and the honeysuckle embower the porch without, we may be sure that there is the potato, the cabbage, and the onion for the pot within: if there be not plenty there, at least there is no want; if not happiness, there is the nearest approach to it in this world—content.

" Yes ! in the poor man's garden grow
 Far more than herbs and flowers,—
 Kind thoughts, contentment, peace of mind,
 And joy for many hours ! "



FOUNTAIN OF THE BELVIDERE COURT OF THE VATICAN.