

# CHINESE GARDENS

ESPECIALLY IN KIANGSU AND CHEKIANG

By Chuin Tung (童 雋)

## I. *Chinese and Western Gardens Contrasted*

A French poet once declared, "J'aime fort les jardins qui sentent le sauvage." This just hits upon the difference between Western and Chinese gardens, the latter being entirely devoid of the jungle atmosphere. The Chinese garden is primarily not a single wide open space, but is divided into corridors and courts, in which buildings, and not plant life, dominate. But garden architecture in China is so delightfully informal and playful that even without flowers and trees it would still make a garden.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Western gardens consist much more of landscape than of architecture.<sup>2</sup> The buildings, if any, stand in solitary splendour. Foliage, flowers and fountains are much more akin to one another than to the buildings, in spite of the effort to arrange them architecturally, even to the extent of laying them out symmetrically and axially.

The first European who seriously studied Chinese gardens was Sir William Chambers who, in his *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*, tried to prove the superiority of Chinese gardens. He had the good fortune of coming to China during the reign of the Manchu Emperor Kao Tsung,<sup>3</sup> the golden age of the art of Chinese garden-

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<sup>1</sup> This is especially true of the Japanese garden, which is modelled after the Chinese. In the Ryōan-ji Garden, Kyoto, there is absolutely no plant life, only stone and sand being employed. Its saving grace lies in the thick grove immediately surrounding it.

<sup>2</sup> Sir William Chambers called them cities of verdure.

<sup>3</sup> Ch'ien-lung, 乾隆 (1736-1795).

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ing. It is, however, futile to debate upon the relative merits of Chinese and European gardens. So long as each is harmonious with the art, philosophy, and life of its respective world, each is as great as the other.

Standing halfway between the East and West is the Alhambra of Granada. Here one finds a series of courts very similar to those in a Chinese garden, while verdure and water are laid out geometrically and axially in European style. Although symmetry is strongly evident, it has nevertheless none of the rigidity and monotony of Western gardens.

Roman gardens, inspiring the whole of Europe and America, excel especially in terracing and exuberant vegetation provided generously by topography and climate. Parterres, marbles, staircases and cascades are arranged in strong formality. Tall cypresses stand in formidable rows. But with all its axes and repetitions, the Italian garden, by virtue of its successive terraces, does achieve one object—to surprise, which is one of the reasons for which the Chinese garden exists. Entering Villa d'Este at Tivoli, one encounters dull corridors and gloomy halls until one suddenly comes upon that superb view which is incomparable. In almost all Chinese gardens the visitor has a similar experience. But instead of a panorama he sees a mere fraction of the whole enchantment, only to be surprised again and again as he wanders on. Terraces in Roman villas, while leading to one elevation after another, have similar spaces, but not different worlds. This element of surprise is completely absent from gardens on a flat ground, such as those in France for instance, where monotony is heightened by an increase in size.

The Chinese garden is never meant to be monumental. The art of gardening in China is an intimate, human and sophisticated thing, and Chinese gardens seldom have that awe-inspiring but desolate spectacle one usually finds in Western gardens. Even when on a palatial scale a Chinese garden does not lose that intimate quality. On the other hand, Versailles is only saved from looking like a wild desert on crowded Sundays. Symmetry, while observed in monumental and even domestic architecture, is completely dis-

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regarded in the lay-out of a Chinese garden, where relaxation, and not reason, rules.<sup>4</sup>

In all Western gardens, symmetry is indeed carried to such silly extremes that, as Le Nôtre observed, only the nurse on the second floor could appreciate it from the window. But even Le Nôtre himself could not entirely break away from its fetters.

The Chinese garden is not built as a playground for a multitude of people. Problems of circulation, which in Western gardens are admirably solved by axes and cross-roads, are no problems when men *wander* in the garden, and not *walk through* it. The long corridors, narrow doorways and curved paths in a Chinese garden are not meant for a crowd. The stairs, bridges and rockery are never designed to please children. It is not a place for recreation. It is essentially for contemplation and solitude.

Although the Chinese garden is a product of sophisticated art, the plant life in it is usually free from any appearance of artifice. Here you find neither trimmed hedges in straight lines, nor flowers arranged in geometrical patterns. Whatever fantasies the European landscape architect lavishes upon plants, the Chinese reserves for his garden buildings. Nature is let alone, and yet the Chinese garden never appears *botanical*. Most conspicuous is the absence of the mown and bordered lawn, which, though attractive to the cow, has but little appeal to the human intellect. The planting of majestic cypresses to make an avenue, the clipping of boxwood to shapes like birds and animals, the control of water to jet forth to a certain height, all these seem to be, to borrow a phrase from Wilde, "two touches of Nature". But in spite of these "touches", the Western garden never succeeds in ridding itself of the look of a wilderness.

The aim of the Chinese garden is "to charm, to delight, and to give pleasure," and illustrates what may be called the art of deception. I would not go so far as to say that the visitor knows perfectly well he is deceived. The question of reality does not bother him, as soon as he ceases to be in the *garden*, and begins to live in the

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<sup>4</sup> This of course does not apply to individual buildings themselves in the garden.

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*picture.* Worlds open out to him; verses and inscriptions carry away his imagination; vistas tempt his curiosity. Every object, in fact, is just as it should appear in a painting. A Chinese garden is indeed a landscape painting in three dimensions, but like Chinese painting, it is subjective.

For one who has seen both Western and Chinese gardens, their effect on the emotions is quite opposite. Who leaves Frascati and Tivoli but must be inspired by the vitality, splendour, and monumentality of those Italian gardens. The Chinese garden does not awe the visitor. It embraces him in its soft charms and intricacies. After the gate is closed behind him, he wakes up from a pleasant dream.

Gardens in Japan, though of Chinese parentage, have more conventions and less complexities in lay-out than the Chinese. The Japanese gardener rarely employs a piece of rock without an eye to its symbolic meaning. He even goes so far as to fashion cascades and pools without using water. Plants are sometimes dwarfed or clipped. But on the whole, the Japanese garden, although it manages to have closed-in vistas, is very much open; and unlike its Chinese prototype, it is not cut up into a maze of courts and corridors. In fact, the Japanese garden resembles the Western in looking like the "forest primeval",—with this difference, that the Japanese attach to it a mystic significance and have succeeded in it to reduce the Universe into a miniature world.

### II. *The Design of Chinese Gardens*

The horticulturist has no place in designing a Chinese garden. Neither has the "landscape architect" (a term of purely Western invention), who is concerned with much landscape but little architecture. The poet, the scholar and the monk have in the past shared equal honours in this branch of Chinese art; but above all, to be a good garden-architect one must be a great painter.

Chinese garden-design is primarily a branch of pictorial art. It has neither reason, logic, nor formula.<sup>5</sup> No explanation, for

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<sup>5</sup> Not so with the Japanese, who classify gardens into the formal and the informal, which are again divided into the hilly and the flat.

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instance, could be offered for paths,<sup>6</sup> verandahs, and bridges planned in zigzag fashion, except that they are picturesque. This oftentimes gives a rococo look to a Chinese garden. But it is also responsible for the exquisite wall tracery and window grille, fantastic doorways and kaleidoscopic pavement patterns. In this respect, the Japanese garden, in its sylvan simplicity, stands in sharp contrast.

The Chinese garden is usually enclosed in high walls. Its different courts, too, are divided by walls sometimes with porches running along one or both sides. Except where sloping ground does not permit, the wall is vitally necessary for isolating the garden from the rest of the world. In most cases the blank surface of the wall is relieved by a series of tracteries, patterned with thin brick or tile, and white-washed. The beauty of the tracery is greatly enhanced by its depth, which, when light plays on it, presents the most sparkling spectacle. The same tracery may look entirely different under light coming from different angles. The variety of tracery design has no limit. In the same garden one seldom finds it repeated.

The garden wall in South China is invariably white-washed.<sup>7</sup> It lends itself admirably to bamboo shadows thrown on it by sunlight or moonlight. White, with green foliage and black roof-tiles and wood-work, forms one of the dominating colours in the Chinese garden. The top of the wall is usually undulated, and relieved of its heaviness by tile-tracery. This idea is sometimes carried too far when head and tail are added to make it look like a dragon.

The wall is seldom straight. Winding and creeping, it may terminate either in a pavilion or a hill. It can stop gracefully in curves or further continue itself with a screen of rockery.

Since the Chinese garden is not a showy art, it depends largely upon the wall to conceal its beauty, beckoning the wanderer on with a glimpse through the doorway or the grille. In the blank wall there also lies a religious significance.<sup>8</sup> To the Zen Buddhist it

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<sup>6</sup> Oswald Spengler, in his *The Decline of the West*, identifies the mazy path in Chinese gardens with *tao* (道). But *tao* in the classics means straightforwardness, or as Confucius said, "acting straight" (直道而行).

<sup>7</sup> In the North the garden wall is usually built of rubble stone.

<sup>8</sup> Bodhidharma, the first Zen priest, sat facing a stone wall for nine years.

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means the end, the ultimate. The entire garden is a retreat for meditation. The Japanese garden, in this respect, has many religious conventions derived from Zen philosophy.

Doorways and window grilles are designed in various ways and are characteristic of the Chinese garden. The doorway is shaped like a moon, a vase or a flower petal. No picture-frame is more attractive than one of these doorways through which a vista arrests the eye. Window grilles, the closeness of whose pattern is necessitated by the rather small size of the translucent sea-shells that serve as panes, assume innumerable forms. The best designs, however, are those strong and simple forms which exclude intricacy.

The pavement in Chinese garden design is made doubly interesting by the employment of insignificant, or even waste, material. Chips of stone, broken tiles, pebbles and fragments of porcelain could make mosaics inexhaustible in pattern and colour. Usually the design is symmetrical, in the form of combinations of polygons or quatrefoils. Of the asymmetrical forms the most common is the "broken-ice" pattern. It is, however, to border on vulgarity to make such realistic designs as fish, deer, lotus or crane.

Another unique feature is the rockery, on which half of the charm of Chinese gardens usually depends. Nowhere in the whole world is there such a craze for artificial hills. It is true that in the Western garden one often finds rocks and grottos, and in the Japanese garden, rock-hills and sometimes "suti-ishi" which means random stones. But in all these cases the stone suffers no hydraulic transformation. Even in the Ryoan-ji Garden, Kyoto, where fifteen pieces of rock symbolizing tigers and cubs are to be seen, the stones look no less natural than those in the mountains. Chinese rockery, on the other hand, is in most cases composed of that kind of limestone which derives its fantastic shape through the action of water. "Lake rock",<sup>9</sup> as it is usually called, is quarried from the bottom of lakes where after centuries of washing and scouring it becomes porous, spare and grotesque. One seldom enters a Chinese garden

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<sup>9</sup> This is confined to T'ai Hu (lake) alone. Stones in other regions are also employed.

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without seeing rockery, either in the form of peaks, embankments, hills, or grottos. Sometimes the rock-hill dominates the entire garden.

Chinese artists are passionately in love with rockery, not only on account of its attractive form, but also because stone in general has that quality of unchangeable solidity which the human character too often lacks. Many celebrated individuals throughout Chinese history are known to be devoted to, or even to worship, rockery. The famous calligraphist and painter Mi Fei (米芾) of the Sung Dynasty went to the extent of hailing one stone as his "big brother". Another Yuan (元) painter, Ko Chiu-ssü (柯九思), paid homage to a strange looking rock.<sup>10</sup> When stone is endowed with personality, one can find it delightful company.

The first extensive rock garden was built by Emperor Hui Tsung (徽宗, 1101-1125) of the Sung Dynasty (宋), although records date its appearance as early as Han (漢).<sup>11</sup> The Emperor himself being an inimitable painter lavished his attention much more on rockery than on statecraft.<sup>12</sup> Barges swarmed on the canals, loaded with stones from T'ai Hu Lake (太湖). Lake rock was then much treasured, rocks in other localities being much less valued. This tempted people to make lake rock artificially, by laying under turbulent water ordinary rocks carved in the desired shapes for a certain length of time. The craze for genuine T'ai Hu rock was at its height during the latter part of the Ming Dynasty (明). Connoisseurs paid fabulous prices for such pieces reputed to have been authenticated by experts.

During the latter part of the Sung Dynasty, the scholar Yeh Meng-teh (葉夢得) of Huchow (湖州) built an estate almost entirely of rockery, which he poetically called the "Stone Groove" (石林). But it was pointed out that a good many of the rocks

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<sup>10</sup> This rock now stands in the garden called the "Half-Cocoon" (半繭園) at Quinsan (崑山).

<sup>11</sup> Liang Hsiao Wang (梁孝王) and Yuan Kuang-han (袁廣漢) both had gardens in the Han Dynasty.

<sup>12</sup> The Emperor built the "Ken Yü" (艮嶽), a rock-hill in the North-east of the capital Kaifeng (封閉), between 1117 and 1122.

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he found *in situ*, and all he did was to bring them to light by removing the earth around them.

Of all the famous rock-gardens in history, only one has survived. This is the so called "Lion Garden" (獅子林) in Soochow (蘇州). The rockery dates back to 1342 A.D., its creator being an abbot.

Rockery, besides being that part of nature which appeals to the cave-man as well as the poet, is indispensable in Chinese garden design. It links admirably plant life and water with the multitude of buildings. Standing halfway between nature and human creation, rockery carries over gracefully the life impulse of the former into the cold artificiality of the latter. The cypresses in an Italian garden, it may be observed, serve a similar purpose, acting as transition from the boxwood to the casino; and they go well with formal architecture, just as rockery does with the informal.

There are several theories about designing the rock-hill. Some strive for magnitude, a mazy stretch of peaks, valleys and grottos. Others concentrate on one small hill only. One man, Chang Nan-yüan (張南垣) during the early Manchu Dynasty, looked down upon the idea of imitating a real hill with a heap of stones. He cared primarily for the casual, the irregular, in nature, and succeeded in emphasizing the essentials or suggesting the existence of a hill, with a minimum amount of rockery. Ko Yü-liang (戈裕良), usually confining his labour to making one hill in a garden and making it well, later improved the construction of grottos. Grottos, it should be noted, had hitherto been customarily made by having the top spanned with slabs of stone. Ko scorned this method, his innovation being a dome top made of converging stones, much resembling a genuine cave.

Both Chi Ch'eng (計成)<sup>13</sup> and Li Yü (李漁)<sup>14</sup> gave lengthy accounts of the art of rockery. To be a master designer of it one must be a good landscape painter. It is almost impossible to design an extensive rock-hill well. A hill small but exquisite is much more preferable. For this reason the famed "Lion Garden"

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<sup>13</sup> b. 1582.

<sup>14</sup> Li Yü, who called himself Li Li-weng (李笠翁), lived in the seventeenth century.

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in Soochow had once the misfortune of being called "a stupendous heap of slag."<sup>15</sup>

Few Chinese gardens are designed as living quarters. Usually the garden is entirely separated from the house, and seldom visited by its owner. Indeed, some garden-gates are known to be bolted all the year round. This is one of the reasons why Chinese gardens go to decay so easily.

Garden buildings are mostly constructed of wood, open on one or more sides, so as to command favourable views. Things are done differently in Italy: in the casinos of Italian villas, windows are as rare as in a fortress.

One form of playful architecture is to build a pavilion in the manner of a house-boat, standing near the water. Sometimes temporary architectural expedients are devised to meet emergencies, as in the case of a royal prince at the end of the fifth century who had a weakness for gardens. Lest his pleasure ground be observed from his father's palace higher up, he invented folding walls which could screen his earthly paradise at short notice.

There is another instance of a display of ingenuity. Ni Ts'an (倪瓚), a Yuan Dynasty (元) painter, was once invited by his friend to see lotus flowers. Upon his arrival he saw nothing but an empty courtyard. His astonishment, however, was as great as his disappointment when, returning to the same courtyard after the feast, he saw a pond full of lotus. The magic was a simple one. Hundreds of pots of lotus flowers were swiftly placed in the courtyard, which, being slightly sunk, became a pool when a water reservoir discharged just enough water to submerge the pots.

Scholars, when they write about gardens, seldom give adequate accounts of plant life. We may say that plant life is used in the Chinese garden mainly to hide the buildings. Flowers are often mentioned because, besides giving perfume, they are invaluable to poetry, the most aristocratic being peony and *paeonia albiflora*. Lotus, wistaria, plum, laurel, begonia, jasmin and chrysanthemum are common to all gardens. No garden is complete, of course, without the bamboo. The usual evergreens are pine, juniper,

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<sup>15</sup> See "Six Chapters of A Floating Life" (浮生六記), by Shen Fu (沈復).

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and cedar. There is an almost endless variety of trees—willow, maple, *sterculia platanifolia*, palm, musa, elm, and so on. Well known is the ingenuity of the Chinese gardener in transplanting and cross-breeding flowers and trees. Plant life in Chinese gardens deserves a separate treatise by the botanist.

### III. *Chinese Gardens: Past and Present.*

#### A. PAST.

The crude beginning from which has been developed the Chinese garden such as we see today may be dated at about 1800 B.C. when King Chieh (桀) of Hsia (夏) built for pleasure his "Jade Terrace" (玉臺). More than seven hundred years later, the first ruler of Chou (周), Wen Wang (文王), had, in addition to his "Divine Terrace" (靈臺), the "Divine Pond" (靈沼) and the "Divine Menagerie" (靈囿), as recorded in the *Book of Songs* (詩經). The same book also alludes to orchards, vegetable gardens and bamboo grooves. The germ of the idea of a garden undoubtedly found fertile ground when the nomads had adopted the more stable occupation of agriculture.

During the reign of Shih Huang-ti (始皇帝, 246-210 B.C.) of Ch'in (秦), imperial gardens for the first time were built on a grand scale, combining "Terraces" and "Ponds" with woods and menagerie into one pleasure hunting ground. The park known as "Shang Lin" (上林) was much enlarged by Emperor Wu-ti (武帝, 140-87 B.C.) of the Han Dynasty (漢), and with other parks and villas formed the metropolis of Ch'angan (長安).<sup>16</sup> The limited span of an emperor's life, unfortunately not different from that of any common man, greatly distressed the monarch. He therefore erected artificial hills in water, symbolizing the Heavenly Paradise where he hoped to attain immortality. From this theme sprang the pool-and-island element in Chinese as well as Japanese garden design.

The garden by then, however, was no longer the sole plaything of the son of Heaven. The princely garden of Liang Hsiao Wang

<sup>16</sup> Now Sian (西安), the capital of Shensi Province.

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(梁孝王) in the province now known as Honan (河南) boasted of the employment of rockery which, according to records, was his invention. In the same period a multi-millionaire named Yuan Kuang-han (袁廣漢) indulged in similar pleasures, his garden being near Loyang (洛陽), also in Honan. The reign of Wu-ti, too, witnessed the scholar's garden of Tung Chung-shu (董仲舒),<sup>17</sup> who, it was said, in order to concentrate his mind, pulled down the curtains for three years, so as not to be distracted by the garden view. The scholar's garden in those days, being modest, could not have meant more than planting a few trees in the courtyard, similar, perhaps, to the medieval cloister in Europe.

The Tsin Dynasty (晉, 265-420 A.D.) first saw the popularity of private gardens. Shih Chung (石崇), a shipping magnate as well as a scholar, built his "Golden Valley" (金谷園) in Hoyang (河陽).<sup>18</sup> Here his extravagances knew no bounds. One of his favourite pastimes was to make fair ladies walk over aloes powder. If any one left so much as a slight foot print, she was considered too plump and was at once ordered to diet. Here his beloved mistress, "Green Pearl" (綠珠), like Messalina, paid for her passions with her life. According to Shih Chung's own account, his "Valley" consisted of trees, lakes, pavilions and towers. Birds and fish abounded. He was entirely occupied with fishing, music and reading. More than half a century later, Ku P'i-chiang (顧辟疆), as scholarly as he was aristocratic, had a garden in Soochow (蘇州). It was the envy of all who saw it. Once he had a violent quarrel with an intruder as arrogant as himself, the undesirable visitor being no less a person than the son of Wang Hsi-chih (王羲之).<sup>19</sup> This garden was the earliest of its kind known in Soochow. Its site has been disputed ever since the Sung (宋) Dynasty.

During the golden age of T'ang (唐), gardens and villas crowded the capital Ch'angan (長安) and its suburbs. Thither politicians repaired to escape the summer heat. Gardens of scholars and artists were numerous, the most celebrated one being the Wang

<sup>17</sup> Tung Chung-shu was a native of Kuangchuan (廣川), in the province now known as Hopei (河北).

<sup>18</sup> In Honan.

<sup>19</sup> The great calligraphist of the Tsin Dynasty.



LATTICED WINDOW IN CHIU KUO YUAN (九果園), SHANGHAI



A CORNER IN YEH YUAN (亦園), TAICHANG, KIANGSU



WALL ENDS WHERE ROCKERY BEGINS: YEE YUAN (宜園), NANZING,  
CHEKIANG



COVERED TERRACE IN HSIEN YUAN (羨園), SOOCHOW



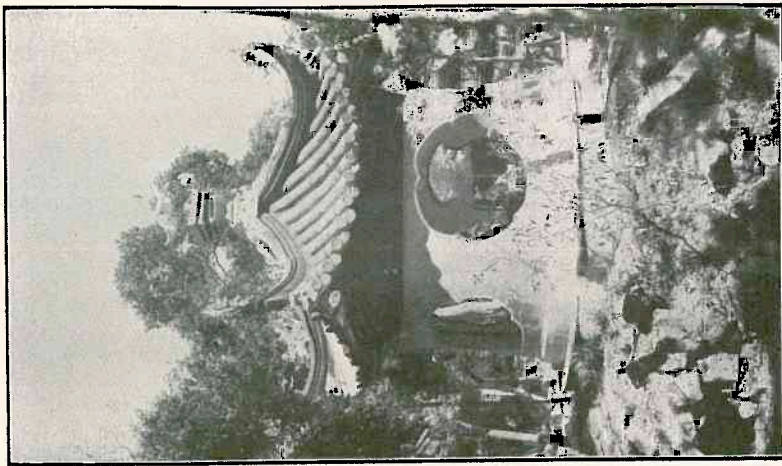
COVERED CORRIDOR IN WENG'S GARDEN (翁氏九曲園), CHANGSHU,  
KIANGSU



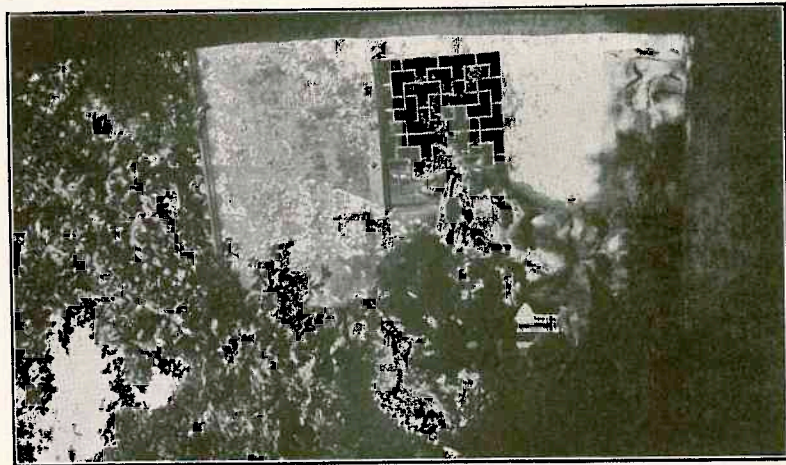
CHIANG'S VILLA (蔣莊) MIRRORED IN WEST LAKE, HANGCHOW



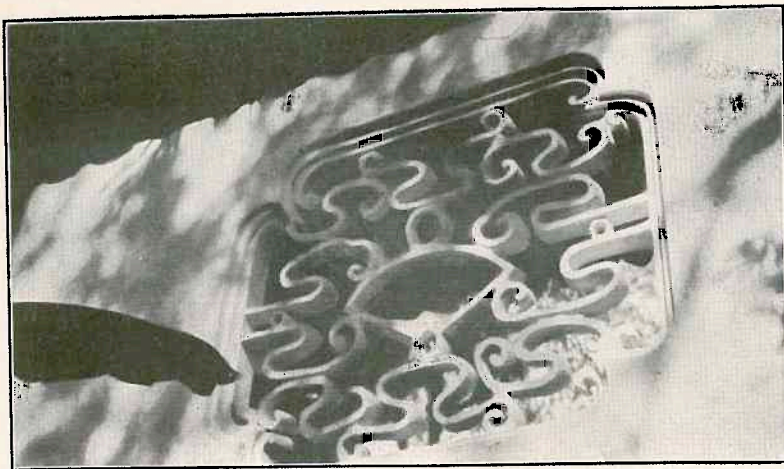
A PAVILION IN THE "LION GARDEN" (獅子林),  
SOOCHOW



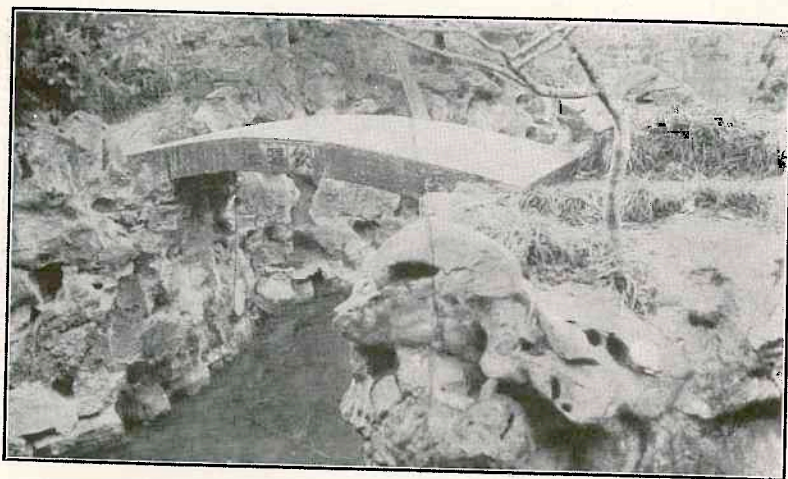
A PAVILION IN CHI YUAN (綺園), NANZIANG  
KIANGSU



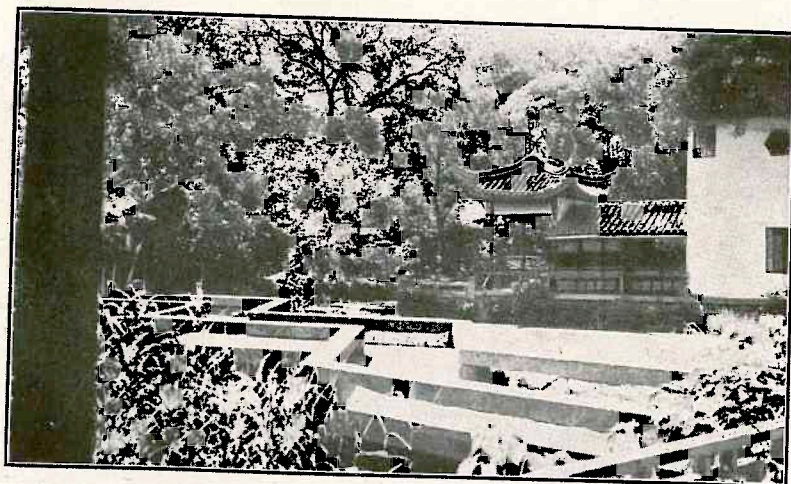
GRILLE IN HUI YING YUAN (惠蔭園),  
SOOCHOW



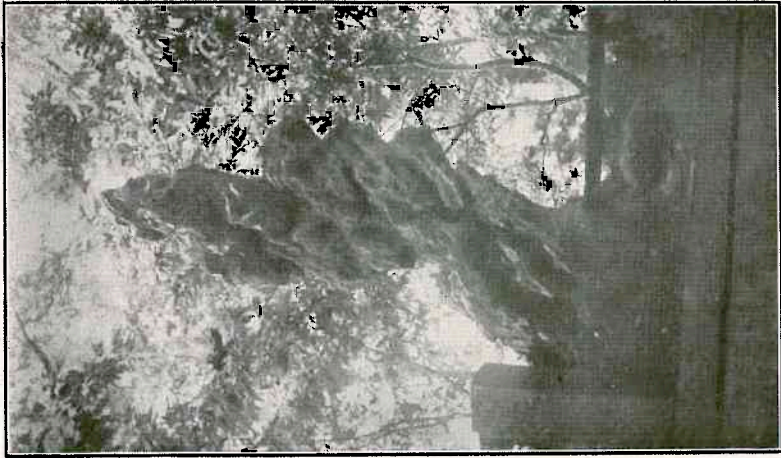
GRILLE IN TSANG LANG T'ING (滄浪亭),  
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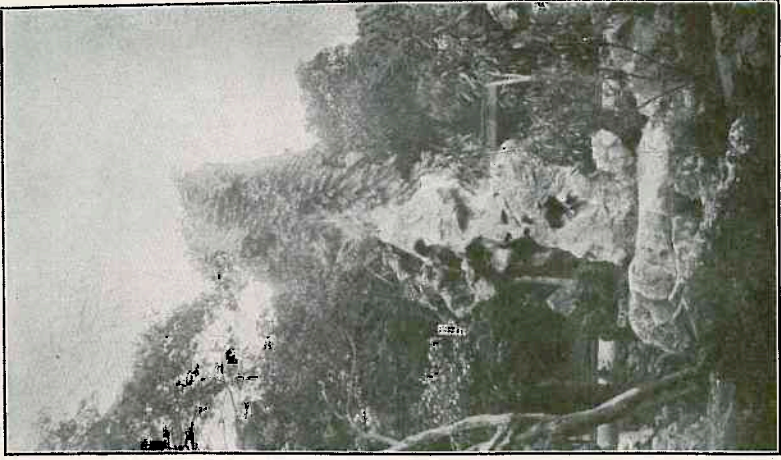
A RUSTIC BRIDGE IN SHIH YUAN (適園), NANZING, CHEKIANG



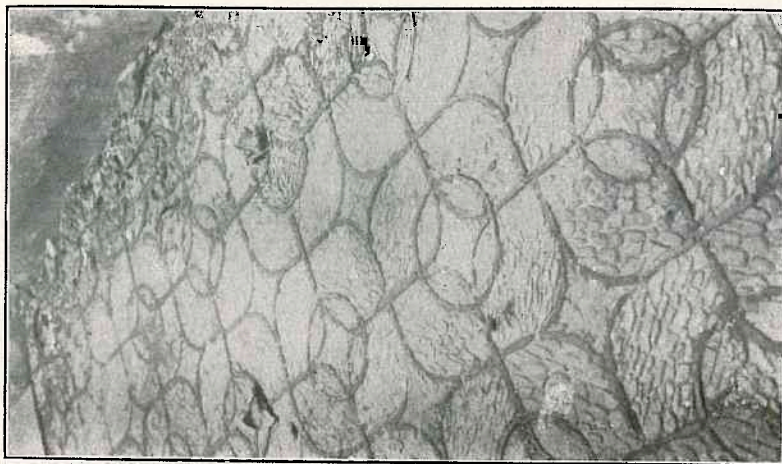
A BRIDGE OF NINE BENDS IN CHUEH CHENG YUAN (拙政園), SOOCHOW



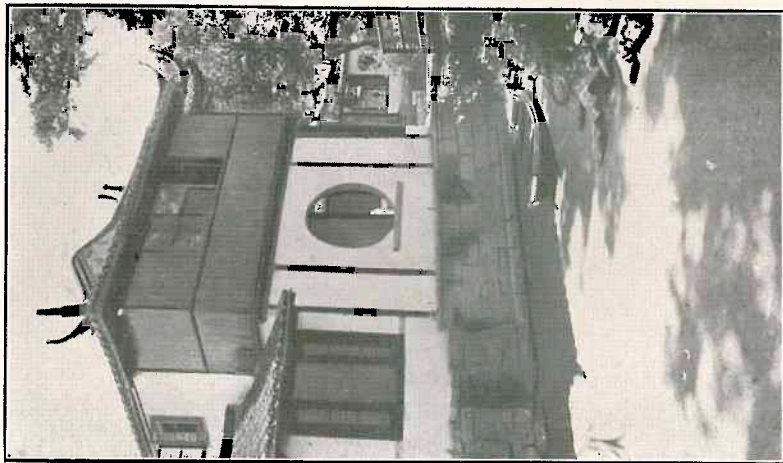
RUFFLED-CLOUDS PEAK (縐雲峯) IN A TEMPLE  
GARDEN, SHIH MEN (石門), CHEKIANG



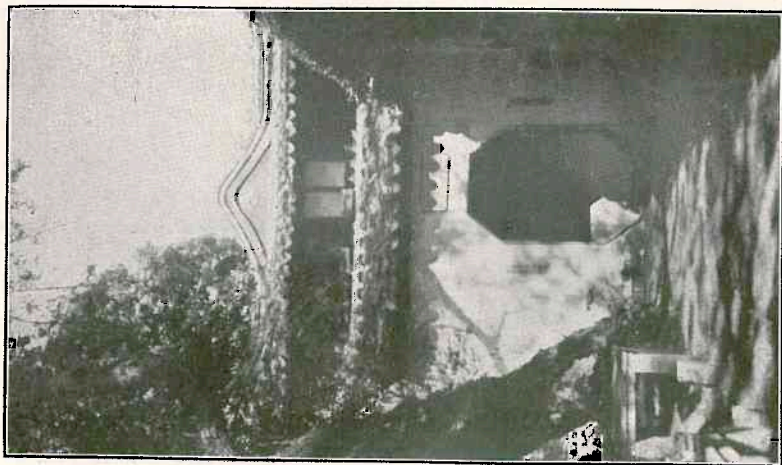
CLOUD-CAPPED PEAK (冠雲峯) IN LIU YUAN  
(留園), SOOCHOW



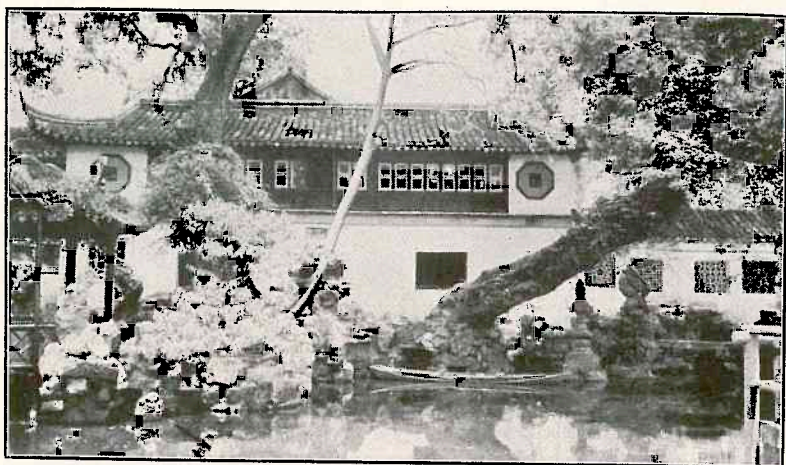
PAVEMENT IN LIU YUAN (留園), SOOCHOW



A MOON WINDOW IN CHI YUAN (猗園),  
NANZIANG, KIANGSU



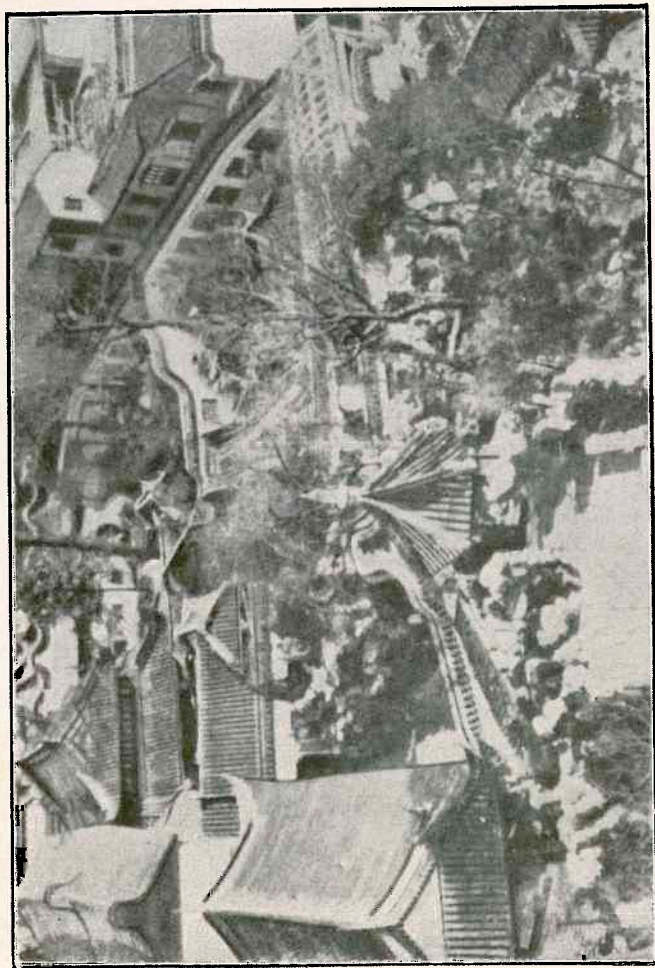
ENTRANCE TO CHUEH CHENG YUAN (拙政園),  
SOOCHOW



ART AND NATURE IN HARMONY, LIU YUAN (留園), SOOCHOW



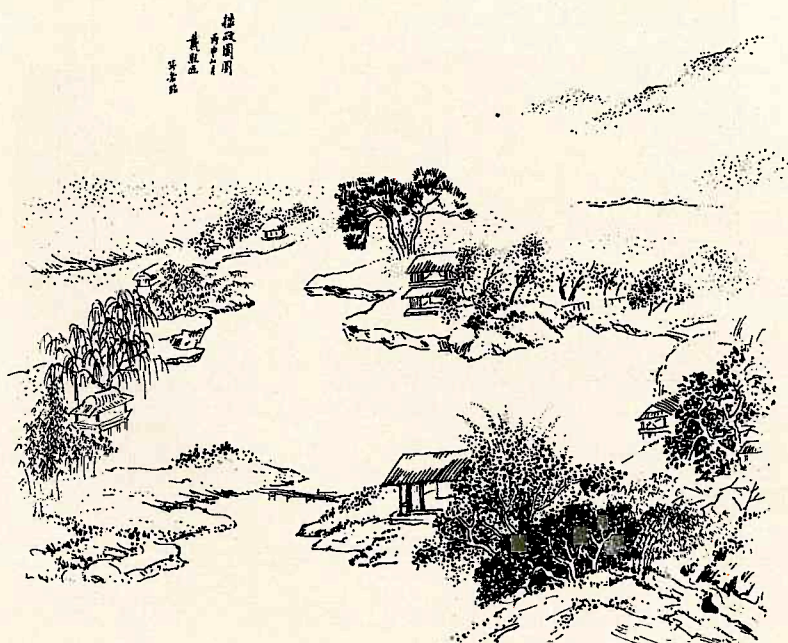
LOTUS POND IN HSU KUO CHU (虛郭居), CHANGSHU, KIANGSU



BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF YU YUAN (豫園), SHANGHAI



YEN YU LOU (KASHING, CHEKIANG) IN THE EARLY CH'ING DYNASTY



PANORAMA OF CHUEH CHENG YUAN (SOOCHOW), COPY FROM PAINTING  
BY TAI HSI (戴熙) IN 1836

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Ch'uan (輞川) of Wang Wei (王維), poet and painter. His estate, vast in extent, depended much on natural scenery. Its renown was augmented by his painting of the entire lay-out, which was religiously copied by later artists. Another T'ang poet, Po Chü-yi (白居易), acquired the habit of building gardens wherever he stayed, even when his sojourn was of short duration. The fruit of his labour was not very elaborate, but it was enough for him to have a hill and a small pond in order to feel the nearness of Nature.

Many private gardens were built in Loyang (洛陽) in the Northern Sung Dynasty (北宋, 960-1127 A.D.). Li Kê-fei (李格非) gave an admirable account of them in his *Celebrated gardens of Loyang* (洛陽名園記), in which over twenty-five gardens were mentioned. Several of these dated from the T'ang period. Kaifeng (開封), the capital city, was also famed for its gardens and was lorded over by the imperial rock park, the Ken Yü (艮嶽).<sup>20</sup>

There were two garden cities in the Southern Sung Dynasty (南宋, 1127-1276), Hangchow (杭州) and Huchow (湖州). Hangchow, then the capital, besides having numerous private villas was adorned with many imperial parks. The incomparable beauty of this city lies in the famous lake "Hsi Hu", made doubly beautiful by the surrounding hills. Huchow<sup>21</sup> possessed no less than thirty gardens, none of which are now traceable. Instead, we find today only mediocre gardens wholly unworthy of the city's past glory. In Soochow two gardens are especially well known. Chu Mien (朱勔), the rockery-commissioner for Ken Yü, exhausted his talent on the extensive villa which he named "Green Water Garden" (綠水園). Another garden was the "Happiness Orchard" (樂圃), built by Chu Peh-yuan (朱伯原), and though altered many times beyond redemption, it still stands today.<sup>22</sup>

Private gardens flourished in full glory in the Ming Dynasty (明,

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<sup>20</sup> The Emperor Hui Tsung (徽宗, 1101-1125) began the construction of the imperial rock park in A.D. 1117. Chu Mien, who was dispatched south to hunt for material, literally left no stone unturned to please his sovereign.

<sup>21</sup> Now Wuhsing (吳興).

<sup>22</sup> Huan Hsiu San Chuang (環秀山莊).

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1368-1643), chiefly in Kiangsu (江蘇) and Chekiang (浙江) Provinces. Notable centres were Nanking, Taichang (太倉), Soochow, Hangchow and Shanghai. Quite a few of the Ming gardens, after many vicissitudes, have survived to this day. Garden-making became an organized knowledge and was dealt with in the treatise titled *Yuan Yeh* (園冶), published in about 1634, by Chi Ch'eng (計成). In this unique book, he described the various branches of landscape architecture with illustrations, which form an interesting comparison with what we see today. A contemporary of his, Chu Shun-shui (朱舜水), seeking safety in Japan during the Manchu conquest, did much to leave a strong Chinese influence on Japanese gardens. His accomplishment can still be witnessed in "Koraku-en" (後樂園), Tokyo.

In the early Ch'ing or Manchu Dynasty (清, 1644-1911), Yangchow (揚州) was transformed into the most stupendous Garden City history ever saw. The Emperor K'ang Hsi (康熙) and his grandson, the Emperor Ch'ien-lung (乾隆) visited the city during many of their southern tours. An artist and a dilettante, the Emperor Ch'ien-lung tarried in the pleasure-gardens, wrote many poems about them, and took away from them the choicest rockery. The unique feature that made Yangchow matchless was the cluster of gardens along the canal, one after another, forming an unbroken chain from the city to the hill. Then was the age when money flowed freely. No effort was spared to satisfy the whim of the Son of Heaven. Most of these gardens were built for the sole purpose of giving pleasure to the Emperor. On one occasion when the Emperor was sailing on the canal he expressed a desire to have a pagoda near a certain temple to make a perfect vista. Lo and behold! the next day Nature was improved by the very presence of a pagoda. Needless to say the August One was greatly amused. Whoever did this hasty job must have regretted it, for today the monument is in danger of collapse.

The Emperor Ch'ien-lung also included Wusih, Soochow and Hangchow in his several itineraries south of the Yangtse River, and graced all the gardens worth his attention. Some of these he duplicated in Peking. One still stands today in the North-eastern corner of

## Chinese Gardens

the Summer Palace (頤和園).<sup>23</sup> Few rulers in any land, except Hadrian of Rome, travelled so extensively in his domain and built so many reproductions of his favourite haunts to preserve pleasant memories. After the death of the Emperor Ch'ien-lung, however, gardens in Yangchow were neglected, decayed, and finally disappeared—of all of them only two or three have survived, notably "Hsiao Chin Shan (小金山), a temple garden, and "P'ing Shan T'ang" (平山堂).<sup>24</sup>

The best known garden in Nanking in the early period of the Manchu Dynasty was the "Sui Yuan" (隋園) of Yuan Mei (袁枚), a poet, scholar and epicure. He purchased a ruined villa on the slope of a hill in 1748, and devoted the rest of his life to building his lovely garden. Like Pliny, he was one of the very few literary men who had the good fortune of owning property for pleasure. After his death the garden, being in constant repair, stood until about 1853, when it was wiped out during the Taiping Rebellion.<sup>25</sup>

Thousands of gardens were destroyed during the Taiping period. But it still remains true that both in quantity and also in quality, before as well as after the Taiping Rebellion, gardens in Kiangsu and Chekiang stand supreme. The extant gardens described in the following section are all in these two provinces.

### B. PRESENT.

When we speak of Sung, Ming or even early Ch'ing gardens, we have usually no evidence of them other than their sites. Insurrection, fire, and the perishable material with which the garden buildings were constructed, accounted for the rapid disappearance of so many celebrated gardens in the past. The Taiping Rebellion gave the last blow. Whatever gardens we see today are but remnants of a by-gone glory. With the introduction of glass and concrete some of the most charming features of the Chinese garden, such as the

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<sup>23</sup> Chi-chang-yuan (寄暢園).

<sup>24</sup> "P'ing Shan T'ang" was first built in the Sung Dynasty by Ouyang Hsiu (歐陽修) in 1048. The adjacent garden was started in 1736.

<sup>25</sup> 1850-1864.

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window grille and the pavement, have vanished. Nowadays attempts are even made to make mock rockery out of cement!

Here is the problem of art *versus* commercialism. Gradually these gardens, too expensive to repair and ever decreasing in number, will be pulled down in the cause of real-estate improvement. The tragedy of progress is the wiping out of these gardens, one of the most artistic achievements of mankind.

### SOOCHOW (蘇州)

Chueh Cheng Yuan or Manchu Garden (拙政園), situated in the North-east part of the city, was built on the site of a temple of the Yuan Dynasty, by the Wang family in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. Shortly after, it came into the hands of Hsü, as payment for a gambling debt. At the beginning of the Ch'ing dynasty, it belonged to the Chen family. When the Manchu garrison was increased, it became the headquarters of the Commander. In 1679 it was occupied by the Civil Administration Office, but soon passed into private possession again. In about 1742 a Chiang family completely restored it and named it "Fu Yuan", meaning the "Revived Garden". In the course of a hundred years following that, it again changed ownership twice. During the Taiping Rebellion it was occupied by one of the insurgent leaders. When the insurrection was suppressed, it was turned into the provincial governor's Yamen, but very soon (1872) became the Manchu Guild. The Manchus, however, were scattered during the Revolution (1911), and part of the garden is now open to the public.

On the east of the Manchu Garden is the Wang garden which also dates back to the Ming Dynasty. On the west is another garden which, being originally part of Chueh Cheng Yuan, belonged to the Yeh Family and then came into the possession of Chang.

Chueh Cheng Yuan was unmolested by the Taipings, but was never thoroughly repaired. Today most of the buildings are in danger of collapse, and are in urgent need of restoration.

Wen Cheng-ming (文徵明) made a series of paintings of the garden in 1533.<sup>26</sup> Later, in 1836, Tai Hsi (戴熙) put them

<sup>26</sup> Now reproduced and published by Chung Hwa Book Co.

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into one drawing, from which it is apparent that this garden since it was originally planned has undergone but little radical change. Shih Tsu Lin or Lion Garden (獅子林) in the neighbourhood of the Manchu Garden was originally part of a monastery. Its celebrated rockery was constructed by Abbot Wei Tse (維則) in 1342, and owes half its fame to Ni Yün-lin (倪雲林), who made a painting of it some forty years later. The garden was separated from the temple probably at the end of the Ming Dynasty. Emperor Kao Tsung (Ch'ien-lung) visited the garden when it belonged to the Huang family, and caused two gardens to be laid out similar to it at Peking<sup>27</sup> and Jehol.<sup>28</sup> There seem to be two explanations as to why it is called the "Lion Garden". One is because there stands a piece of rock which resembles that animal. Some people suggest, however, that the Abbot, who first stayed near the "Lion-Cliff" at T'ien Mu Shan (天目山), employed the same name for his masterpiece to remind himself of the old days. The garden later came into the possession of the Li family. In about the year 1918 it was acquired by its present owner, Mr. Pei. Except the rockery which has changed little, the rest of the garden is all of recent construction.

Liu Yuan (劉園, later 留園), its origin dating back to the middle of the sixteenth century (Ming Dynasty), is located outside of Tsangmen Gate (闔門). In about 1800 it belonged to the Liu family, hence the name (劉園). It was sold to the Sheng family in 1876. It then became known as the "Tarry awhile Garden" (留園), which in Chinese sounds exactly like its former name. The new owner lavished a fortune on the enlargement of the garden. Expansion took place both in the eastern and the western part, the central portion, where the pond and rockery stand, being the original estate. The garden is noted for its size. Numerous courts and corridors form an extraordinary maze. The lay-out, to some, is tight. But the architecture in general is excellent, and stands in fairly good condition. This garden was spared from

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<sup>27</sup> One section of Yuan Ming Yuan.

<sup>28</sup> Wen Yuan (文園).

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destruction during the Taiping Rebellion, but has been mostly rebuilt since.

Huan Hsiu Shan Chuang (環秀山莊) on Ching Teh Road (景德路) owes its origin to a princely garden in the "Five Dynasties" (10th century). In the Sung Dynasty it belonged to Chu Peh-yuan (朱伯原) who called it the "Happiness Orchard" (樂圃). A Chang family came to possess it in the Yuan Dynasty. In about 1470 it was sold to Tu Tung-yuan (杜東原), and later to a statesman named Shen Shih-hsin (申時行). During the reign of Kao Tsung (Ch'ien-lung) of the Ch'ing Dynasty, it passed into the hands of the Chiang family. The rockery with grottos was designed by Ko Yü-liang (戈裕良), and is considered by many to be much superior to the rockery in the "Lion Garden" (獅子林). The chief reason lies in the method employed in building the grottos.

After several shifts of ownership, it was finally acquired by the Wang family, the present owner. The garden suffered some damage during the Taiping Rebellion. Repairs were done in 1898. Recently it was used as garrison quarters. Parts of the buildings have been rented out.

Yi Yuan (怡園) is situated in the centre of the town. On the site of a Ming garden, it was built by Ku Hê-yi (顧鶴逸) late in the Ch'ing Dynasty. The east section is uninteresting; but the central portion, with rockery and fish-pond, is one of the best among Soochow gardens.

Hsi Yuan (西園), a temple garden, is quite close to Liu Yuan. It was originally the West Garden of a certain Hsu family in the sixteenth century, and was later donated to the monastery nearby. Both the garden and the temple were destroyed during the Taiping Rebellion. The temple has been completely rebuilt. But the garden, which is now isolated from the temple, is not yet entirely restored.

Hui Yin Yuan (惠蔭園), in the east section of the town, stands on the site of the Kwei family garden built in the Ming Dynasty. In 1649 it was purchased by the Han family, but was later burnt down. In the year 1751, it was rebuilt. The garden then became the property of the Ni family. After the Taiping Rebellion it was in a

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dilapidated state, and in 1866 it was taken over by the Anhwei Guild (安徽會館). In the following year it was enlarged. The garden, on otherwise perfectly flat ground, is ingeniously arranged in terraces. Large courts with spacious halls are no doubt designed for occasional ceremonial use by its members. This garden, like many others in Soochow, is in need of repair.

Ch'u Yuan (瞿園) is located in the southern part of the city. Its site dates back to the Sung Dynasty, when the garden was called "Wang Shih Yuan" (網師園). During the first part of the eighteenth century *paconia albiflora* flourished in the garden, and rivalled the species in Yangchow (揚州). After several changes of ownership, the garden now belongs to the Chang family. This is one of the few celebrated gardens that are still inhabited. Delightful details that are characteristic of human occupancy lend considerable charm to it. There stands by the lotus pond an exquisite pavilion, a jewel in the entire lay-out, used as the family dining hall. This garden, like others on ancient sites, possesses some fine old trees.

Tsang Lang T'ing (滄浪亭) lies also in the south of the city. A garden was built on this site in the tenth century. One century later the scholar Su Shun-chin (蘇舜欽) bought the property, and raised the celebrated pavilion called Tsang Lang T'ing, which now becomes the name of the garden. During the fourteenth century the property was converted into a temple. In the middle of the sixteenth century the monk Wen Ying (文瑛) again built a pavilion which bore its previous name. In 1697 the property was considerably enlarged. The pavilion was restored in 1827. The entire garden suffered severely during the Taiping Rebellion. Reconstruction work was done in 1873. In the year 1927, the garden was donated to an art school. Although the place is thus saved from becoming a ruin, it is gradually losing its ancient charm, on account of the fact that pseudo-Western buildings have been erected in its grounds by the art school.

The unique feature of this garden is the creek *outside* its gate. Bridge, corridor, and façade of buildings, instead of the usual blank wall, help to omit that sharp division between the garden and the

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outside world. One finds here many beautiful wall trceries of the irregular type.

Hsien Yuan (羨園) is situated about six miles west of Soochow, at Mu Tu (木壢), a small town famed for clever carpenters. This accounts for the fine workmanship in the whole garden, a specimen of late Ch'ing production. It was built in 1828 by the poet Ch'ien Tuan-hsi (錢端溪), and was called Tuan Yuan (端園). During the Taiping Rebellion other fine gardens, like Ch'ien Yuan (潛園) and Hsi Yuan (息園), were wiped out. This alone was untouched. In about 1902 it was bought by the Yen family, the present owner. The garden, excellently planned, is somewhat neglected, and shows signs of decay. The famed Ling Yen Shan (靈巖山), crowned by a temple and pagoda, stands nearby, and affords a superb vista through the northern windows on the second floor of the garden buildings.

Besides many small gardens that have been converted into rentable houses, there are still a few worth mentioning. K'ê Yuan (可園), opposite Tsang Lang T'ing (滄浪亭), rather of the open type, is now the Provincial Library. Ching Yuan (靖園) in the neighbourhood of the Tiger Hill (虎邱) is a temple garden built in memory of Li Hung-chang (李鴻章).

## YANGCHOW (揚州)

Ho-Yuan (何園), located in the southern part of the city, is about the only large garden existing. It was built by the Ho family after the Taiping Rebellion. Here a series of foreign-styled buildings, being isolated from the garden, are not as much an eyesore as in the case of some other gardens, where foreign and Chinese structures stand side by side. The garden is laid out on a grand scale. It was for a time used as offices by a military commissioner, and has since become dilapidated.

P'ing Shan T'ang (平山堂), a pavilion originally built in 1048, stands on a hill in the north of the city. The garden was added to the pavilion in 1736, when the latter was completely rebuilt. After the Taiping Rebellion both were restored, and stand today as major attractions of Yangchow.

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Hsu Yuan (徐園), opposite Hsiao Chin Shan (小金山), is a new garden of about twenty years old. Lack of age and literary association makes the garden much less distinguished. Not far away stands Woo Chuang (鵝莊) on an islet. This garden commands a lovely view, but has gone to complete decay.

### CHANGSHU (常熟)

Yen Yuan (燕園) inside the North Gate was built by the Chiang family early in the Ch'ing Dynasty. During the reign of Emperor Ch'ien-lung the garden was immortalised by Ko Yü-liang's (戈裕良) rockery. In the middle of the eighteenth century the garden was sold to the Kwei family, and was damaged to some extent during the Taiping Rebellion. Thirty years later it became the property of the Chang family, the present owner.

The chief attraction in this garden is of course the rockery. Ko Yü-liang raised two artificial hills. The one in the south court is a masterpiece. It stands in a pool, reached by a covered bridge.

A popular garden in this town is the Hsu Kuo Chu (虛齋居) of the Cheng family. Its dominating feature is the vast pool in the centre, with buildings surrounding it. The garden is, however, somewhat spoiled by the addition of foreign-styled residential quarters. Hu Yin Yuan (壺隱園) was built in 1805 on the site of a Ming Dynasty garden by the Wu family. Its present owner is Ting, who is hastening the destruction of the garden by completely shutting it off. In a similar deplorable condition is the small garden of the Weng family (翁氏九曲園). Outside the North Gate stands Chen Pi Shan Chuang (澄碧山莊) of the Shen family, the garden being of recent construction.

### NANZING (南潯)

Yee Yuan (宜園) stands at the east end of the town, built by Pang Hsu-tsai (龐虛齋) of the late Ch'ing Dynasty. Its shape is a vast rectangle. The south part consists of courtyards with many

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buildings, while the north is dominated by a vast lotus pond. The design is considered the best in Nanzing. In its neighbourhood is the garden of the Chang family.

The other three gardens, Shih Yuan (適園), Chüeh Yuan (覺園) and Hsiao Lien Chuang (小蓮莊) are all designed with the central pool as the dominating feature. Shih Yuan, while consisting of some of the best designed garden buildings, is marred by the existence of some foreign structures. Chüeh Yuan is now in such a ruinous state that it will soon completely disappear.

### KASHING (嘉興)

Yen Yu Lou (煙雨樓), standing on an island in Nan Hu Lake (南湖), was first built in the tenth century. It was rebuilt in the thirteenth century. In the sixteenth century the garden was enlarged. The tower was rebuilt early in the Ch'ing Dynasty. During the Taiping Rebellion the entire group was burnt down. It was not until 1919 that this historical spot was restored again.

This was the Emperor Ch'ien-lung's favourite haunt. The monarch, no doubt, loved its poetic name. Artists prefer to view the tower and its surrounding garden in mist and rain: hence the name.

Lo Fan T'ing (落帆亭), a small garden built near the site of an ancient canal-lock, had its origin in the Sung Dynasty. In the seventeenth century the buildings were restored, and again in 1880, after its ravage by the Taipings. This garden, as well as Yen Yu Lou in the lake, is not private property.

### SHANGHAI (上海)

Both the East (Nei Yuan, 內園) and the West Garden (Yu Yuan, 豫園) are located near the City Temple.<sup>29</sup> The East Garden was built during the reign of the Emperor Ch'ien-lung. In the middle of the nineteenth century it suffered much vandalism but was completely restored in 1920. It stands now as the finest example of the small garden, measuring only one-third of an acre.

The West Garden was built in the middle of the sixteenth century by the Pan family. Its construction took twenty years and it is over

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## Chinese Gardens

seven acres of land. During the reign of Emperor Ch'ien-lung the garden was sold to the Temple. Gradually it became divided up and leased to the temple-fair merchants. Now only a fraction of the garden still remains intact, very different of course from its original lay-out.

Another well known garden is the Hardoon estate consisting of about thirty acres. It is the largest garden existing today. Being of recent construction, it has a heterogeneous mixture of foreign and Chinese buildings. Other gardens in Shanghai, like Hsu Yuan (徐園), Pan Sung Yuan (半淞園) and Chiu Kuo Yuan (九果園), are not worth visiting. Yeh Shih Yuan (也是園) was the South Garden in the Ming Dynasty. What exists today are restorations done in 1876, 1882, and 1893. It has been fast losing its ancient charm, however, since it has been turned into a city government office building.

In other towns near Shanghai one also finds gardens. In Chingpu (清浦), for instance, there is the temple garden, Ch'u Shui Yuan (曲水園). In Wukiang (吳江), there is also a temple garden, Kung Yi Yuan (共怡園). Sungkiang (松江) was adorned with many gardens before the Taiping Rebellion, but now the only one left is the Tsui Pe Chih (醉白池). In Kashan (嘉善) one finds the East Garden (東園). Another temple garden worth mentioning is the Pan Chien Yuan (半藕園) or "Half-Cocoon Garden" at Quinsan (崑山). It is one-half of the original Cocoon Garden in the Ming Dynasty, and had formed part of a temple ever since the reign of the Emperor Ch'ien-Lung. On a small hill stands the historical rock "Han Tsui" (寒翠石), which once received the homage of a Yuan Dynasty painter.

### NANZIANG (南翔)

Chi Yuan (猗園) was originally a Ming Dynasty garden, designed by the artist Chu San-sung (朱三松). It came into the possession of the poet Li Chang-heng (李長蘅). Then in the early part of the Ch'ing Dynasty, the garden was sold to the Yeh family. Soon it was given to a temple. Restoration was done in the early nineteenth century, only to be ruined soon after by the Taipings. In 1868, the place was again restored. Recently it was turned into a public

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recreation ground, with more and more artificiality introduced. The unique feature of this garden is its five-sided arbour, in the shape of a plum flower.

### HANGCHOW (杭州)

Although a peer of Soochow in scenic beauty since olden times, Hangchow has lost its supremacy in garden craft. The invasion of commercialism and civic improvement, which often takes the form of European monstrosity, have quite rapidly destroyed charming old landmarks to which the city owed its fame. Hangchow, regarding gardens, has little to its credit today save quantity. The ever increasing number of villas smacks more of the parvenu than the literary and artistic. Among the comparatively better preserved gardens are Liu Chuang (劉莊), Chiang Chuang (蔣莊) and Kao Chuang (高莊). The Public Park and Hsi Ling Yin Sheh (西泠印社) are interesting examples of lay-out in terraces. Wen Lan Ko (文瀾閣), once a library and now a museum, has in its court a delightful garden with some fine rockery. San Tan Yin Yueh (三潭印月), an island, is a combination of temple and garden. Its unique features are the three-sided and swastika-shaped pavilions. Chi Yuan (漪園), better known as the White Cloud Temple (白雲菴), is in a dilapidated condition.

### WUSIH (無錫)

Chi Chang Yuan (寄暢園) near Hui Shan (惠山) was first laid out in the early sixteenth century by the Chin family, whose descendants are still its owners. The Emperor Ch'ien-lung visited the garden in 1751, and copied it in Ch'ing Chi Yuan (清漪園) outside of Peking, now the Summer Palace (頤和園). This copy, then known as Hui Shan Yuan (惠山園), is the Hsieh Chu Yuan (諧趣園) of today, the latter name being given in 1893, when restoration of this section of the imperial park was completed.

The original garden at Wusih was destroyed during the Taiping Rebellion. The Chi Chang Yuan of today was rebuilt only recently. Nothing is left of the old days save some rockery and the lotus pond, which is the centre of this garden as well as its imperial copy.

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There are several gardens by the T'ai Hu Lake (太湖). All, however, are modern.

### TAICHANG (太倉)

Pan Yuan (半園), meaning "Half Garden", occupies the site of a famous Ming Dynasty garden owned by Wang Shih-chen (王世貞). Little of artistic interest is left, except some rockery.

Nan Yuan (南園), meaning "South Garden", is the site of another Ming Dynasty estate. It was much enlarged in the early Ch'ing Dynasty by the painter Wang Shih-min (王時敏). During the nineteenth century the garden was restored. Then came the ravages of the Taiping Rebellion. Rebuilt again, the garden was turned into an academy. Today the garden is beyond repair.

Yeh Yuan (亦園), of comparatively recent construction, stands as the best designed garden in the town. But since its conversion into a hospital in 1935, awful alterations have already taken place.

### KATING (嘉定)

Ch'iu Hsia Pu (秋霞圃), now in a very much neglected state, has a double ancestry. Half of the garden came from a Ming Dynasty estate first owned by the Kung family and then the Wang family, which latter was instrumental in donating it to the city temple in 1726. The garden then became the temple garden. About forty years later the East Garden of the Shen family was also added to the temple garden, which was then complete. During the Taiping Rebellion the place was rendered desolate, but was restored in 1886.

There are private gardens also, the best known being the Hsueh Yuan (雪園) or Snow Garden. It belongs to the Hu family, and being of recent date, is rather overloaded with artificiality.

### NANKING (南京)

Although Nanking boasted of many fine gardens before the Taiping Rebellion, today none remains. Yü Yuan (愚園), of the Hu family, built after the insurrection, is completely dilapidated and has now become a slum. Chan Yuan (瞻園) dates back to the

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Ming Dynasty. The Emperor Ch'ien-lung made a replica of it in the old Summer Palace. After the Taiping Rebellion it was badly restored. Now the garden is divided up between a school and a Ministry.

Public construction work and real estate improvement have done much to hasten the destruction of fine old gardens. Only recently, what was left of Liu Yuan (劉園), in the south part of Nanking, has been completely razed to the ground on account of railroad construction.