

AN
HISTORICAL, GEOGRAPHICAL,
AND
PHILOSOPHICAL
VIEW
OF THE
CHINESE EMPIRE;

COMPREHENDING

A DESCRIPTION OF THE FIFTEEN PROVINCES OF CHINA,
CHINESE TARTARY, TRIBUTARY STATES; NATURAL
HISTORY OF CHINA; GOVERNMENT, RELIGION,
LAWS, MANNERS AND CUSTOMS, LITERA-
TURE, ARTS, SCIENCES, MANU-
FACTURES, &c.

BY
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To which is added,
A COPIOUS ACCOUNT
OF
LORD MACARTNEY'S EMBASSY,
COMPILED FROM ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS.

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Among the animals of this island a curious species of large black apes is found, they have the shape and features of a man; and are said to be very fond of women: among the birds there are crows with a white ring round their necks: starlings with a small crescent on their bills; black-birds of a deep blue colour, with yellow ears rising half an inch, and many other birds, remarkable for their colour or song.

Besides mines of gold and lapis lazuli, which enrich the island of Hai-nan, it produces in abundance various kinds of curious and valuable wood. The predecessor of the present emperor caused some of it to be transported to Pe-kin, at an immense expence, to adorn an edifice which he intended for a mausoleum. The most valuable is called by the natives *hoa-li*, and by the Europeans, rose or violet-wood, from its smell; it is very durable, and of singular beauty; it is therefore reserved for the use of the emperor.

Hai-nan, on account of its situation, riches and extent, deserves to be ranked among the most considerable islands of Asia. Not far from thence is another small island, commonly called San-cian. It is celebrated by the death of St. Francis Xavier, whose tomb is still to be seen on a small hill, at the bottom of which is a plain, covered on one side with wood, and on the other ornamented with several gardens. This island is not a desert, as some travellers have pretended: it contains five villages; the inhabitants of which are poor people, who have nothing to subsist on but rice and the fish which they catch.

THE PROVINCE OF QUANG-SI.

This province is situated between those of Quang-tong, Hou-quang, Koci-tcheou, Yun-nan and the kingdom of Tong-king; it is inferior in extent and commerce to most of the other provinces; however, it is so abundant in rice, that it supplies the province of Quang-tong with a con-

considerable portion of its consumption. The mountains, with which it is covered, especially towards the north, abound with mines of gold, silver, copper and tin. Some years back the governor of one of the cities of the first class presented a memorial to the emperor, in which he proposed a plan for preventing the inconveniencies dreaded from the working of these mines: he stated, among other things, that the people of the country had offered to open them at their own expence, and to admit no one to work in them without a patent from his mandarin, and four sureties to answer for good behaviour.

The emperor having read this memorial, referred it for examination to the *hou-pou*, or court of finances. They approved of the plan, on condition, that, according to what had been practised upon similar occasions, forty per cent should be given to the emperor, and five per cent. to the officers and soldiers who presided over the works: the emperor afterwards took them wholly to himself, and caused them to be opened at his own expence.

There is a very singular tree grows in this province; instead of pith it contains a soft substance, which is a kind of meal, and the bread made of it is said to be exceedingly good. Paroquets, hedge-hogs, the rhinoceros and a prodigious number of other wild animals, curious birds and uncommon insects are found in this province, which contains twelve cities of the first class and eighty of the second and third.

QUEI-LING-FOU.

This city, which is the capital, has its name from a flower called *quei*; it grows on a tree resembling a laurel, and exhales so agreeable an odour, that it perfumes the whole country around.

Quei-ling-fou is situated on the banks of a river, which flows into the *Tu-ho*; but with such rapidity, and amidst valleys so narrow that it is neither navigable nor of any utility to commerce. This city is large, and partly built

tation, it contains nothing hurtful, and has no need of any corrective. They recommend it in diseases of the liver and breast, for the asthma, dropsy, suppression of urine, for flatulencies, and for dissolving phlegm. They assert that it stops vomitings, prevents convulsions in children, and that, by strengthening the reins, it procures females a safe and easy delivery. As the *fou-lin* grows always in the neighbourhood of pines, it might probably be found in Europe, were proper search made for it.

TI-HOANG. The Chinese give this name to the root of the large comfrey: the best of which is found in *Honan*, in the neighbourhood of the city Hoai-king. The roots of this plant, when dried, are about the size of a finger, but much longer. The Chinese physicians ascribe to them many salutary properties; and the use of them has become very common in all the provinces of the empire. Rich people take pills of *ti-hoang* every morning, as people in Europe drink tea, coffee and chocolate. Some cut it into thin slices, and use it in decoction, or when baked in the steam of boiling water: others pound it, and form it into boluses, which they swallow with warm water. Five other kinds of plants, or ingredients, are commonly added to it, which are aromatic, cordial, diuretic, acid and a little soporific; but the *ti-hoang* is always the basis of these pills.

We have now mentioned the most particular of the trees, plants, shrubs, &c. that ornament the Chinese gardens, or are used in the *Materia Medica*; these countries are, however, a world of which we are too ignorant, and which some very fortunate event can alone bring us acquainted with.

QUADRUPEDS, BIRDS, BUTTERFLIES AND FISHES.

The mountains and vast forests of China abound with every species of wild animals, such as the rhinoceros, ele-

phants, leopards, tygers, bears, wolves, foxes, buffaloes, camels, horses, wild mules, &c. Beavers, fables and ermines are also found in the northern provinces; but the skins which they furnish are much inferior to those procured from Siberia.

Game is common in China. The squares of Pe-kin, in winter, are filled with different heaps of volatile, terrestrial and aquatic animals, hardened by cold and perfectly secure against all corruption. Prodigious quantities of elks, stags, deer, goats, wild boars, hares, rabbits, squirrels and wild rats, geese, ducks, partridges, pheasants and quails are seen there, as are also several kinds of game, not to be found in Europe.

The Chinese horses have neither the strength, beauty, nor swiftness of ours; and the inhabitants of the country have not the art of breaking them properly: those in the military service are said to be so timid, that they betake themselves to flight whenever they hear the neighing of the Tartar horses: besides, as they are not shod, their hoofs are soon destroyed; so that, in six years, the best horse becomes unfit for service.

Camels, both wild and domestic, are found in the north east part of China, and the fat found in the bunches of the wild camels, which is named *bunch-oil*, is much used in the Chinese medicine.

There are several species of apes in China. A species named *sin-sin*, differ from the rest in their size, being equal to that of an ordinary man. They walk with facility on their hind legs; and all their actions have a singular conformity to those of the human species.

The most beautiful quadruped of China is a stag, which is about the size of our middle-sized dogs. The princes and mandarins buy them at an excessive price, and keep them as curiosities in their gardens. They have also