POINT PLEASANT

a Villa
on the banks of the Thames
betwixt Richmond and Kingston
belonging to
The Hon.ble Lieu.t General,
H: S.t John.

Introduction.

Sir,

The following remarks which I have the honour to submit to your perusal might perhaps have been compressed into the form of a letter, but as it was ne=cessary to explain my intentions, both by a map and by some sketches, I have in my usual manner digested the whole in this small volume. The drawings are not flattering portraits of the scenery, because it is such as cannot be flattered: the only merit I assume to myself is the method of displaying it to the greatest advantage, without much expence or sacrifice of land; availing myself of every tree and bush already growing on the premises, rather than expecting during the tedious lapse of years, effects from new plantations. I shall therefore observe (respecting the drawings) that there is not a single tree inserted which is not either growing on the spot, or at least may be as large as there represented in the course of two or three years.

I have the honour to be Sir

Your most obedient humble Servant

H Repton

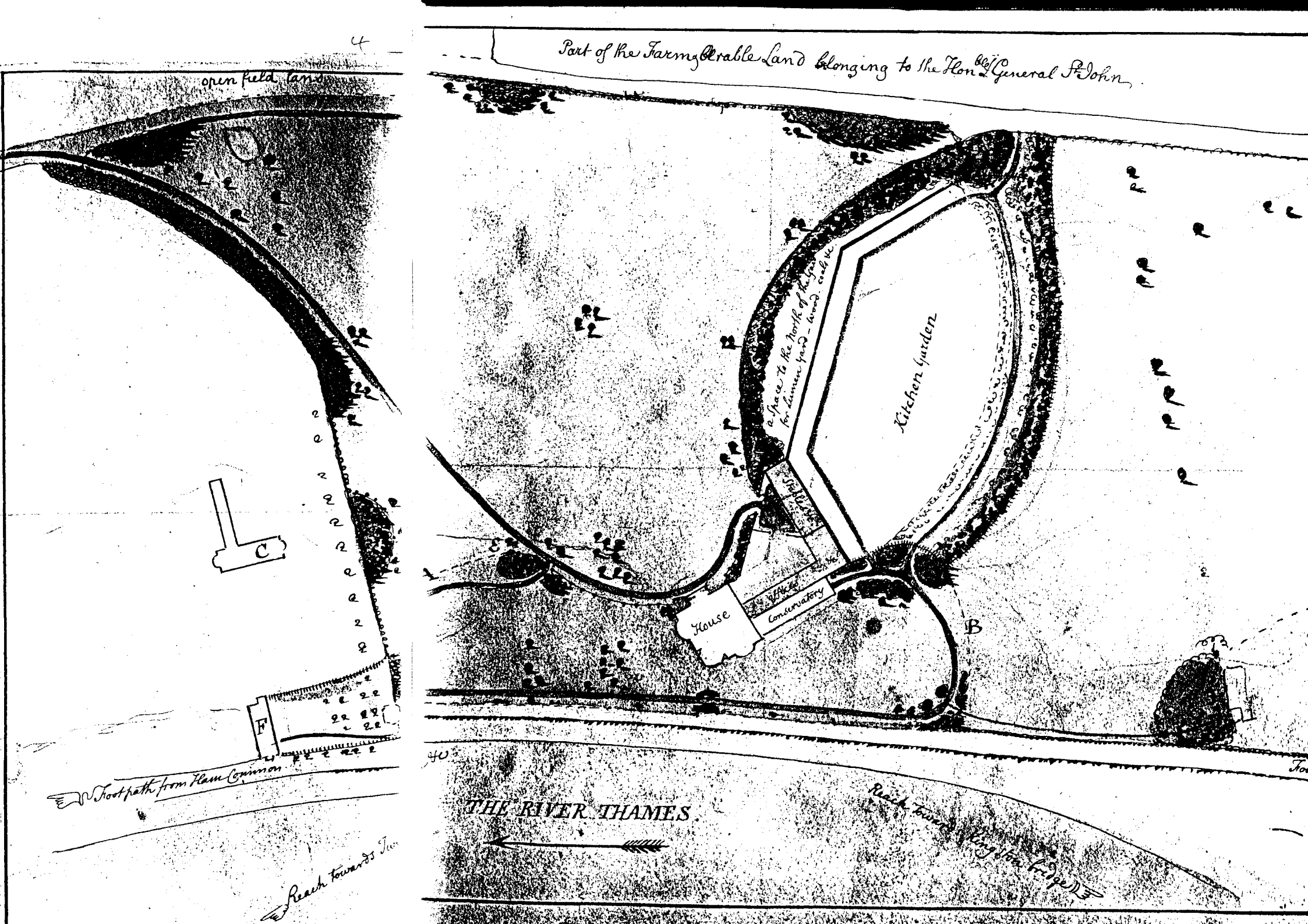
First Visit at Point Pleasant Dec. 9: 1795.
Plan Delivered March. 1796.

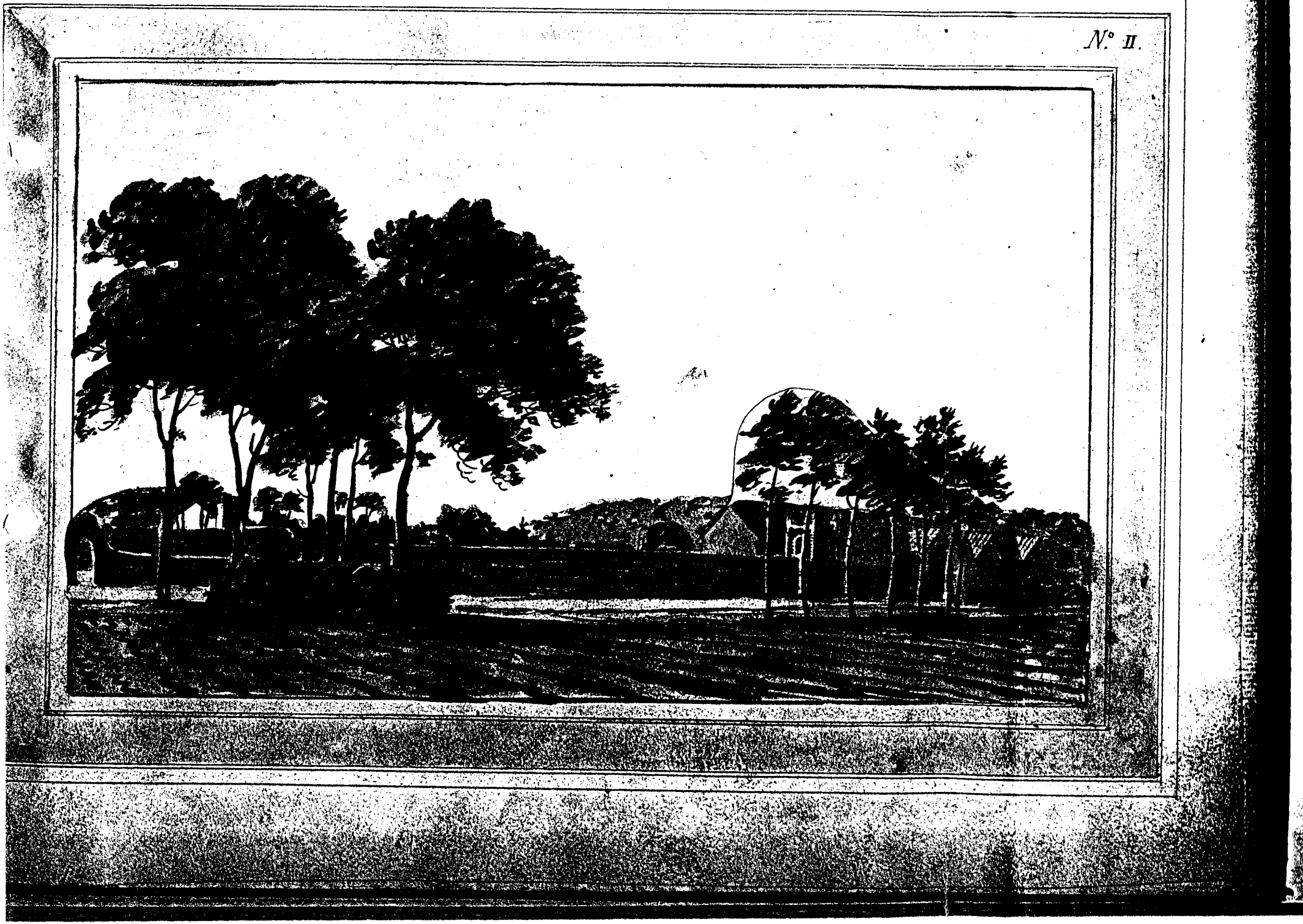
The Character and Situation.

The very singular situation of a field, commanding two reaches of the river, required a peculiar kind of house to take advantage of such views. This has been effected in a manner quite new, and unexampled, by my ingenious friend Mr. Nash; who at the same time that he considered the water as the chief object of a villa on the banks of the Thames has not been unmindful of the land-view towards the vast hanging woods of Richmond-park. The only uninteresting part of the scenery, is that to the east, and therefore he has judiciously attached the offices and stables on East side, availing himself of the same walls for that of the kitchen garden, and instead of waiting till trees should hide the offices, he proposes to mask them immediately, by a long conservatory; which will be one of the most beautiful appendages to the place. The kitchen garden walls will require to be hid by a screen of plantation already made, and thus in the course of two or three seasons, the whole of those conveniencies which are not objects of beauty, will be enveloped by a mass of wood in that direction, where nothing better can be seen beyond it; and where it actually hides a country flat and uninteresting in itself, and still more disfigured by the barbarous custom of shredding or stripping up tall Elms and other hedgerow trees.

The Approach.

The Entrance front of the house, will command the full range of Richmond Hill and woods, ⟨ ⟩ ren the barns are removed which at present obstruct the view but since a plantation along the road side, would very soon conceal the woods beyond, it would be difficult to make an approach from Ham Common immediately in front of the house; because we must see it from the road, and therefore I propose entering at a bend of the road as described on the map, shutting out the premises on the right hand by a shreen of plantation. It may possibly be urged, that these premises ought to be laid together, and form a part of the place to give more extent, but extent of territory is not so essential to the character of a Villa; as to that of a country residence, or the domain of a seat for the purpose of rural sports, and I see no degree of beauty that can be acquired by views towards the north, even if the present houses could be taken down without any sacrifice. . . . . It will be very easy to hide the large house at C, partly by a plantation at D, but more especially by a few large trees at E, to be placed between the windows of the new house and the object to be concealed. The sketch N°II shews the effect of removing the barn, the walls, and all the buildings which now intercept the view: and as a flat lawn never appears large unless cattle are seen at various distances, I have introduced half a dozen cows as a hint of this effect. There are a few inequalities in this lawn, which with little trouble may become rather beauties than deformities. The trees which form the foreground are fortunately so grouped, that the road of approach must sweep round them, and some of the firs may be left to break the line of distant horizon.


Part of the Farm & Arable Land belonging to the Hon.ble General St John
open field land
C
F
Footpath from Ham Common
Reach towards Tw
a Space to the North of the Garden for Lemon yard &c. and &c
Kitchen Garden
Office
Conservatory
House
B
THE RIVER THAMES.
Reach towards Kingston Bridge



River Views.

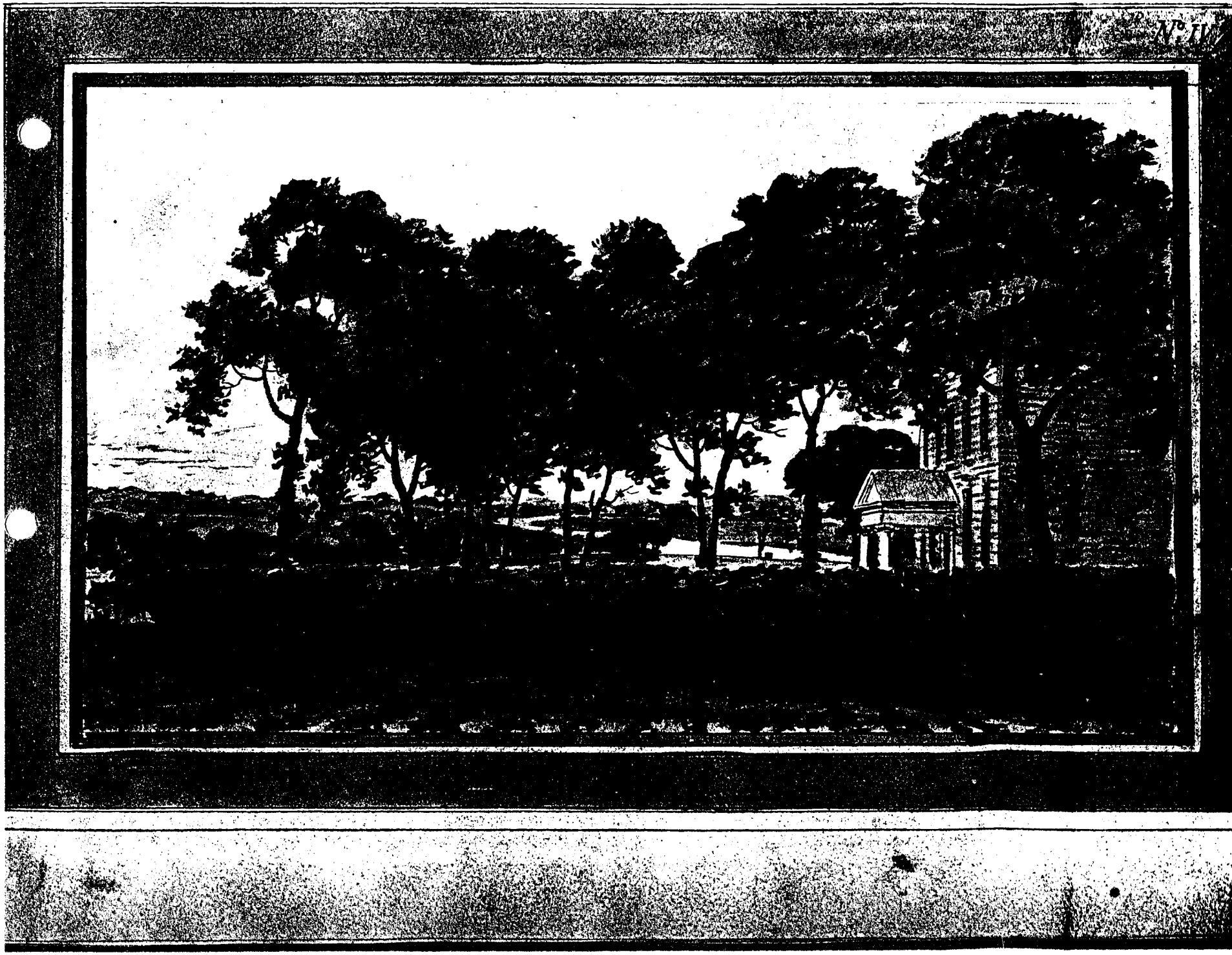
To command the two reaches of the river from two different rooms in the manner
oposed by Mr. Nash's plan; it was found indispensibly necessary to bring the house much nearer
the shore, than was originally intended; because if the house were not placed within a certain
angle (ascertained with great precision on the spot) these two reaches would have been lost to the
eye: besides the distant view of such a river is not sufficient to gratify the mind, it is not
the glitter, or the colour, or the pleasure boats on its surface; it is the vast body of moving element
that distinguishes this magnificent object from the tame pieces of artificial water with which
parks and gardens are frequently ornamented. Art can imitate the beauty, the shape, the
winding, and even the breadth of a natural river, but its <u>motion</u> is beyond the power of Art,
in <u>that</u> alone consists the sublimity and majesty of this river, for that awakens all the asso-
-ciated ideas of its uses to the community. Thus (if I may be allowed the comparison) it
is not the crown, the sceptre, the throne, or the outward trappings of Royalty; but the conscious-
-ness of kingly power that excites the ideas of happiness, of security, and all the blessings of a
well ordered government. I consider therefore, that a <u>Villa</u> on <u>the banks of the Thames</u>, is
only perfect in proportion as it commands the full view of every circumstance, both of the sub-
-lime and beautiful in such an object.

River Views continued.

It is impossible to exhibit the same object with greater contrast of foreground than the different views from this house which are attempted in the two sketches N°. III, and IV, The first is the reach up the river towards Kingston to which no other improvement is requisite (when the path is lowered and the hedge removed) than a few low shrubs over which the river appears in all its breadth and majesty. The other is the reach down the river towards Twickenham, seen under some trees so fortunately grouped, that no plantation of any kind is necessary, except that of leading a woodbine round some of the trees to make a contrast with the other bare stems.

It may perhaps be urged, that as the house is placed so near the site of an old house (called Mrs. Thomas's) to be pulled down, some advantage might have been taken of that building. but a moments consideration will evince, that the trees formally planted in double rows before that house, become carelessly grouped when viewed transversely; and being to the west, they are admirably situated to shelter the new house from the force of winds, and the glare of a setting sun, while they form the most delightful contrast to the open view of the Thames which the other room commands. In both these scenes I have represented the present state of the plowed field, with its hedges, to shew the prodigious effect of such simple improvement as may be readily compleated by the time the house is finished.

N.° III.



The Lawn

It may perhaps appear paradoxical to those who have not considered the subject, that by dividing the ground into two separate lawns, the place will appear larger than if the whole were united; but as great or small are only by comparison, so a very large area may be lessened by shewing its whole surface, and a very small one increased by hiding the boundaries. . . 'tis therefore not only with a view of planting out the uninteresting scenery to the east, but also to increase the imaginary extent of the premises, that I propose the kitchen garden and its surrounding shreen to divide the lawn in the manner described on the map. In the course of feeding it, this will be an object of economy, and as the least expensive plans are generally the most simple and best, I have not lost sight of economy in the mode of keeping up the neatness of the ground, without unnecessarily extending the mowed lawn too far from the house; at the same time the view will be more cheerful and animated, by the appearance of cattle, than if the whole were dressed and swept by hand. This will be effected by the two sunk fences at A, and B, on the map, the first will unite the pleasure ground with the north lawn in appearance, and the other with the south lawn, while the several parts will play round the house in those varied and intricate shapes, which are far more interesting than if the whole were united into one square field.

The Walks.

If the beauty or the importance of a place is to be computed by the length of the walks, I fear my plan will not vie with those which are too often made round the outer verge of an estate, under the name of a belt, and which take their sweeping unmeaning course in a great circle round the premises, without any regard to the beauties of the situation, the lines of communication with different objects, or the expence and trouble employed in making and preserving them. I have on the contrary confined the walks to a very small part of the ground for the sake of including all that is most beautiful, or of leading to such objects as require to be connected.

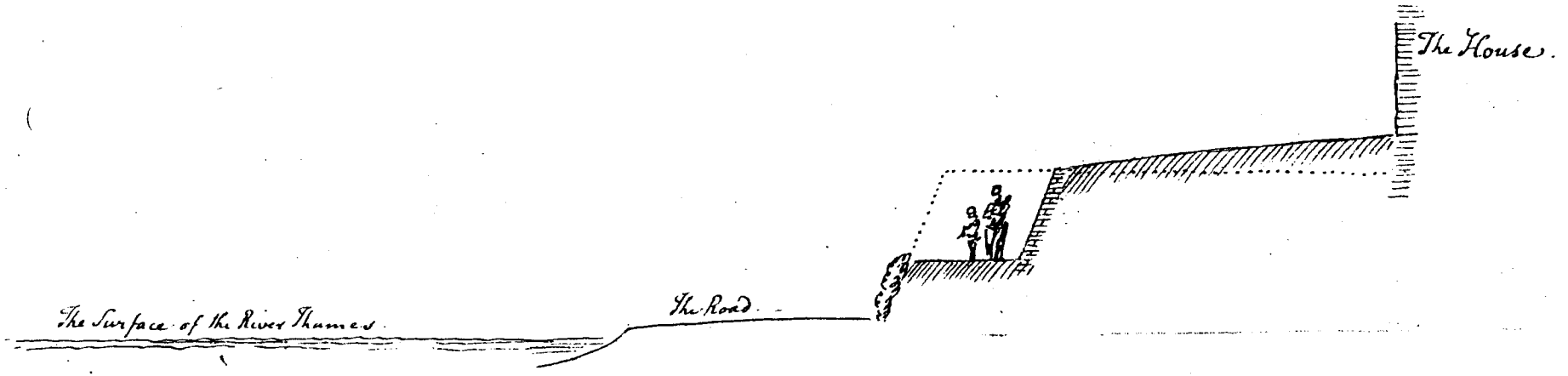
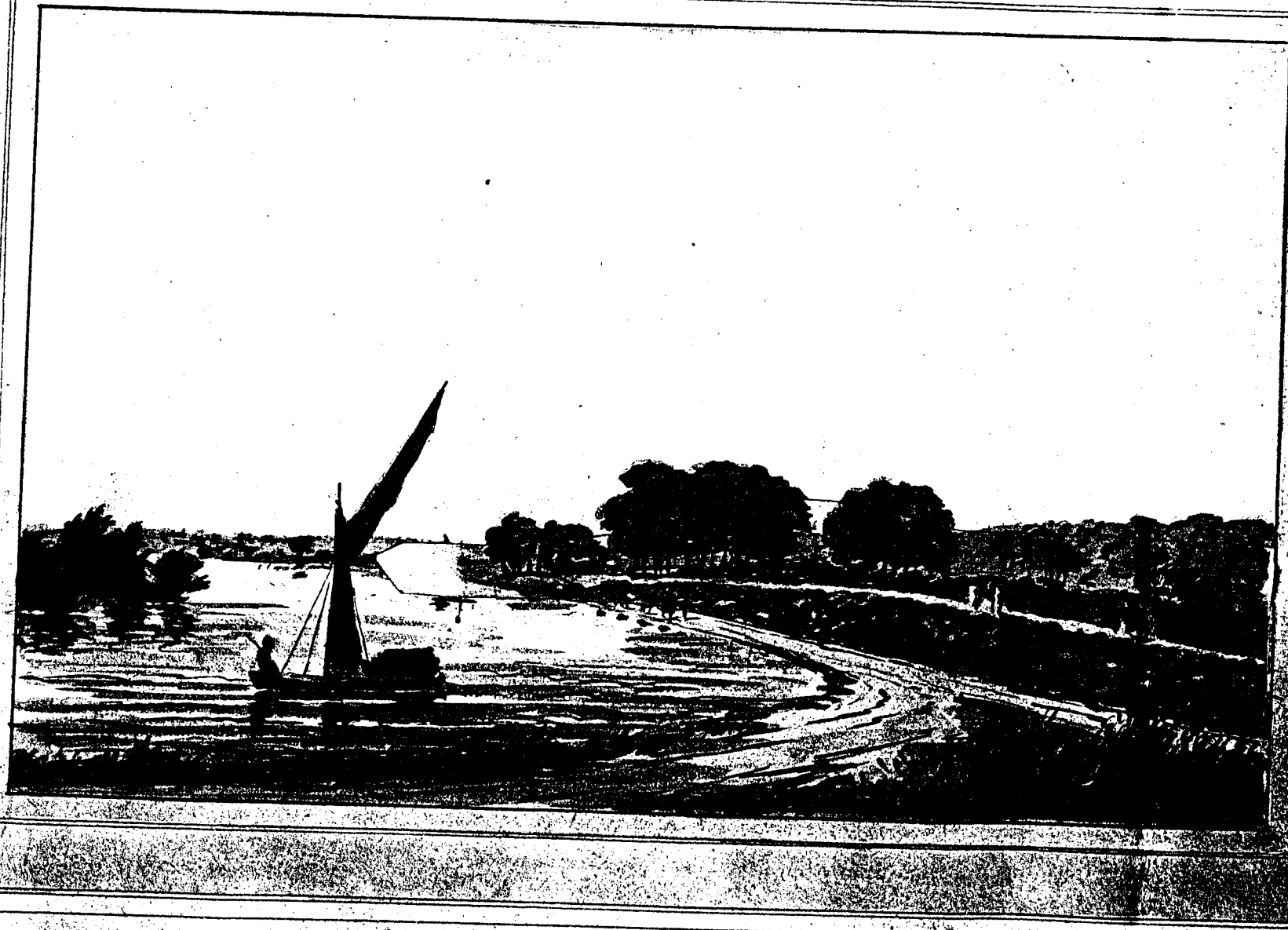
The terrace on the margin of the Thames is doubtless the most interesting feature of the place, and when raised above the footpath as already described, not by bringing so much earth to one, but by lowering the other, the terrace will command the same view of the river, which is now seen from the foot path, a view impossible to be improved. but as the terrace would lose much of its object by being continued to the south end of the field, I propose to finish the pleasure ground by a sunk fence at B. admitting the view of cattle beyond, to animate the scene, yet a path may be continued towards the cottage whenever its lease expires.

Continued.

The north end of the terrace, might be continued to the white cottage or dairy house, but the walk near A which I deem essential to give a circuitous return from that end of the ter=race, would be brought too near the other if they were both extended to the dairy; it would therefore be far more advisable to let the terrace in appearance terminate at a seat or pavilion, and from thence extend a path of a different breadth and character to the dairy house, especially as there will be a certain degree of management necessary in the fences to take full advantage of the large trees near that building: these walks will shew the river under every possible point of view. There is another walk to the south of the garden which will derive all its interest from the power of contrast, being entirely secluded from all outward scenery, and depending alone on the choice, the disposition, the fragrance, and the variety of the flowers and shrubs with which it is accompanied; this walk will form a line of communication from the conservatory to the warm sheltered walk under the south walls of the kitchen garden, and may also hereafter be extended across the road to the farming premises, which may be removed into some of those fields. The road of approach from Richmond will also afford a dry walk, and tho' I do not advise any gravel road from Kingston at present, yet a path will be naturally made along that direction, which may be deemed another way of returning to the house: thus I trust there will be ample provision made for walks, without much sacrifice of feeding lawn, or any great expence in keeping an unnecessary extent of pleasure ground, to shew nothing that may not be seen within the limits I have suggested on the map. I shall conclude these remarks by a view of the house from the banks of the river, to shew the effect of lowering the foot path, and also the difference betwixt the present old house surrounded and hidden by the same trees which form the background of the new Villa.

The foot path.

It has frequentty been aſserted, that there can be no good without some alloy of evil, a(', therefore it is unreasonable to expect all the advantages of a situation near the margin of the Thames, without the intrusion of public rights. The foot path is an inconvenience of this kind, which I propose to remove by lowering the ground in front of the house, that the terrace may overlook it, still keeping the path above the carriage road though on such a level as not to look into the pleasure ground.



In this Section the present foot path is shewn by a dotted line, on the same level with the field in which the House is building.