

CHAPTER VIII.

Abbotsford and the Leasowes. — The one place naturally suggestive of the other. — Shenstone. — The Leasowes his most elaborate Composition. — The English Squire and his Mill. — Hales Owen Abbey ; interesting, as the Subject of one of Shenstone's larger Poems. — The old anti-Popish Feeling of England well exemplified by the Fact. — Its Origin and History. — Decline. — Infidelity naturally favorable to the Resuscitation and Reproduction of Popery. — The two Nailresses. — Cecilia and Delia. — Skeleton Description of the Leasowes. — Poetic filling up. — The Spinster. — The Fountain.

I HAD come to Hales Owen to visit the Leasowes, the patrimony which poor Shenstone converted into an exquisite poem, written on the green face of nature, with groves and thickets, cascades and lakes, urns, temples, and hermitages, for the characters. In passing southwards, I had seen from the coach-top the woods of Abbotsford, with the turrets of the mansion-house peeping over ; and the idea of the trim-kept desolation of the place suggested to me that of the paradise which the poet of Hales Owen had, like Sir Walter, ruined himself to produce, that it, too, might become a melancholy desert. Nor was the association which linked Abbotsford to the Leasowes by any means arbitrary : the one place may be regarded as having in some degree arisen out of the other. "It had been," says Sir Walter, in one of his prefaces, "an early wish of mine to connect myself with my mother earth, and prosecute those experiments by which a species of creative power is exercised over the face of nature. I can trace, even to childhood, a pleasure derived from Dodsley's account of Shenstone's Leasowes ; and I envied the poet much more for the pleasure of accomplishing