

## CHAPTER IX.

Detour. — The Leasowes deteriorated wherever the Poet had built, and improved wherever he had planted. — View from the Hanging Wood. — Stratagem of the Island Screen. — Virgil's Grave. — Mound of the Hales Owen and Birmingham Canal; its sad Interference with Shenstone's Poetic Description of the Infancy of the Stour. — Vanished Cascade and Root-house. — Somerville's Urn. — "To all Friends round the Wrekin." — *River Scenery* of the Leasowes; their great Variety. — Peculiar Arts of the Poet; his Vistas, when seen from the wrong end, Realizations of Hogarth's Caricature. — Shenstone the greatest of Landscape Gardeners. — Estimate of Johnson. — Goldsmith's History of the Leasowes; their after History.

THE water creeps downwards from where it leaps from the rock, to form a chain of artificial lakes, with which the bottom of the dell is occupied, and which are threaded by the water-course, like a necklace of birds' eggs strung upon a cord. Ere I struck down on the upper lake, however, I had to make a detour of a few hundred yards to the right, to see what Dodsley describes as one of the finest scenes furnished by the Leasowes, — a steep terrace, commanding a noble prospect, — a hanging wood, — an undulating pathway over uneven ground, that rises and falls like a snake in motion, — a monumental tablet, — three rustic seats, — and a temple dedicated to Pan. The happy corner which the poet had thus stuck over with so much bravery is naturally a very pretty one. The hill-side, so gentle in most of its slopes, descends for about eighty feet, — nearly at right angles with the forked valley, and nearly parallel to the great valley in front, — as if it were a giant wave on the eve of breaking; and it is on this steep rampart-like declivity, —