

are all in deep black, and the lettering in gold ; the stones rise thick around the gray old church, half-concealing the sward ; and the sun, gleaming partially through openings in the tall trees, that run hedge-like round the whole, glistens here and there with a very agreeable effect on the bright letters. It would seem as if the tomb, less gloomy here than elsewhere, was smiling in hope, amid the general quiet. I had come down on the left-hand side of the valley to visit the village, which I now quitted by ascending the hill on the right, through long hollow lanes, rich in blackberries and ivy, and over which aged trees shoot out their gnarled branches, roughly bearded with moss. The hill-top I found occupied, like that on the other side of the valley, by an uneven plain, covered by a short sward, and thinly mottled with sheep ; and all around to the dim horizon lay, spread out as in a map, the central districts of England.

One half the prospect from this hill-top is identically that which Thomson described from the eminence over Hagley. There stretches away along the horizon a blue line of hills, from the Wrekin and the Welsh mountains on the north, to the steep Malverns and the hills that surround Worcester on the south. The other half of the prospect embraces the iron and coal districts, with their many towns and villages, their smelting furnaces, forges, steam-engines, tall chimneys, and pit-fires innumerable ; and beyond the whole lies the huge Birmingham, that covers its four square miles of surface with brick. No day, however bright and clear, gives a distinct landscape in this direction ; all is dingy and dark ; the iron furnaces vomit smoke night and noon, Sabbath-day and week-day ; and the thick reek rises ceaselessly to heaven, league beyond league, like the sulphurous cloud of some never-ending battle. The local antiquary can point out, amid the haze, a