

CHAPTER XIV.

Drive from Birmingham to Stratford rather tame. — Ancient Building in a modern-looking Street; of rude and humble Appearance. — “The Immortal Shakspeare born in this House.” — Description of the Interior. — The Walls and Ceiling covered with Names. — Albums. — Shakspeare, Scott, Dickens; greatly different in their Intellectual Stature, but yet all of one Family. — Principle by which to take their Measure. — No Dramatist ever draws an Intellect taller than his own. — Imitative Faculty. — The *Reports* of Dickens. — Learning of Shakspeare. — New Place. — The Rev. Francis Gastrall. — Stratford Church. — The Poet's Grave; his Bust; far superior to the idealized Representations. — The Avon. — The Jubilee, and Cowper's Description of it. — The true Hero Worship. — Quit Stratford for Olney. — Get into bad Company by the way. — Gentlemen of the Fancy. — Adventure.

THE drive from Birmingham, for the greater part of the way, is rather tame. There is no lack of fields and hedge-rows, houses and trees; but, from the great flatness of the country, they are doled out to the eye in niggardly detail, at the rate of about two fields and three hedge-rows at a time. Within a few miles of Stratford-on-Avon, however, the scenery improves. We are still on the Upper New Red Sandstone, and on this formation the town is built: but the Lias beyond shoots out, just in the line of our route, into a long promontory, capped by two insulated outliers, that, projected far in advance, form the outer piquets of the newer and higher system; and for some four or five miles ere we enter the place, we coast along the tree-mottled shores of this green headland and its terminal islands. A scattered suburb introduces us to a rather commonplace-looking street of homely brick houses, that seem as if they had all been reared within the last half century; all, at least,