

that better enabled me to realize the luxuriant aquatic vegetation of the Coal Measures. The unbroken stream dimples amid the rushes; in the opener depths we may mark, as some burnished fly flutters along the surface, the sullen plunge of the carp; the eel, startled by the passing shadow, wriggles outward from its bank of mud; while scores of careless gudgeons, and countless shoals of happy minnows, dart hither and thither, like the congregated midges that dance unceasingly in the upper element, but a few inches over them. For the first mile or so, the trees which line the banks are chiefly old willow pollards, with stiff rough stems and huge bunchy heads. Shrubs of various kinds, chiefly, however, the bramble and the woody nightshade, have struck root atop into their decayed trunks, as if these formed so many tall flower-pots; and we may catch, in consequence, the unwonted glitter of glossy black and crimson berries from amid the silvery leaves. The scenery improves as we ascend the stream. The willow pollards give place to forest trees, carelessly grouped, that preserve, unlopped and un mutilated, their proper proportions. But the main features of the landscape remain what they were. A placid stream, broadly befringed with sedges, winds in tortuous reaches through rich meadows; and now it sparkles in open sunlight, for the trees recede; and anon it steals away, scarce seen, amid the gloom of bosky thickets. And such is the Avon,—Shakspeare's own river. Here must he have wandered in his boyhood, times unnumbered. That stream, with its sedges, and its quick glancing fins,—those dewy banks, with their cowslips and daffodils,—trees chance-grouped, exactly such as these, and to which these have succeeded,—must all have stamped their deep impress on his mind; and, when an unsettled adventurer in London, they must have risen before him in all their sunshiny peacefulness, to inspire feelings of sadness