



CHAPTER II.

RICHARD AND RUTH ASHTON.

RICHARD ASHTON was a native of the town of G—, in the county of B—, England. His father, who was a draper in good circumstances, had given his son a liberal education and had brought him up to his own calling. The son, a young man of quick parts, took advantage of the opportunities so generously offered to him and prosecuted his studies with commendable success, and by the time he was a stripling of sixteen was possessed of knowledge that few of his years could boast.

Richard was also an omniverous reader, and, as his father possessed a good library, he, from a very early period had literally devoured the contents of the books which lined its shelves, and thus became well versed in history, both ancient and modern, in the biographies of most of the celebrated men of all ages, and was also well acquainted with the most eminent poets, from Chaucer to Tennyson, ever having an apt quotation at his command to fasten home a maxim or make