

than a century and a half before. Times had altered, however; and, though still the best possible, perhaps, for minds of a superior order, it was no longer the best for intellects of the commoner class. The scheme drawn up by our first reformers was stamped by the liberality of men who had learned from experience that tyranny and superstition derive their chief support from ignorance. Almost all the knowledge which books could supply at the time was locked up in the learned languages. It was appointed, therefore, "that young men who purposed to travill in some handicraft or other profitable exercise for the good of the commonwealth, should first devote ane certain time to grammar and the Latin tongue, and ane certain time to the other tongues and the study of philosophy." But what may have been a wise and considerate act on the part of the ancestor, may degenerate into merely a foolish custom on the part of the descendant. Ere the times of Mr. M'Culloch, we had got a literature of our own; and if useful knowledge be learning, men might have become learned through an acquaintance with English reading alone. Our fathers, however, pursued the course which circumstances had rendered imperative in the days of their great-grandfathers, merely because their great-grandfathers had pursued it; and the few years which were spent in school by the poorer pupils of ordinary capacity, were absurdly frittered away in acquiring a little bad Latin and a very little worse Greek. So strange did the half-learning of our common people, derived in this way, appear to our southern neighbors, that there are writers of the last century who, in describing a Scotch footman or mechanic, rarely omit making his knowledge of the classics an essential part of the character. The barber in "Roderick Random" quotes Horace in the original; and Foote, in one of his