

his first introduction to business, he would have been, what no Scotchman ever was, lord mayor of London.'” I need hardly add that the remark is at least half a century old.

The town of Cromarty, at the time of Mr. Forsyth's settlement in it, was no longer the scene of busy trade which it had been twenty years before. The herring-fishery of the place, at one time the most lucrative on the eastern coast of Scotland, had totally failed, and the great bulk of the inhabitants, who had owed to it their chief means of subsistence, had fallen into abject poverty. They seemed fast sinking, too, into that first state of society in which there is scarce any division of labor. The mechanics in the town caught their own fish, raised their own corn, tanned their own leather, and wore clothes which had employed no other manufacturers than their own families and their neighbor the weaver. There was scarce any money in the district. Even the neighboring proprietors paid their tradesmen in kind; and a few bolls of malt or barley, or a few stones of flax or wool, settled the yearly account. There could not, therefore, be a worse or more hopeless scene for the shopkeeper; and had William Forsyth restricted himself to the trade of his father, he must inevitably have sunk with the sinking fortunes of the place. Young as he was, however, he had sagacity enough to perceive that Cromarty, though a bad field for the retail trader, might prove a very excellent one for the merchant. Its valuable, though at this time neglected harbor, seemed suited to render it, what it afterwards became, the key of the adjacent country. The neighboring friths, too, — those of Dingwall, Dornoch, and Beaully, which wind far into the Highlands of Ross and Sutherland, — formed so many broad pathways leading into districts which had no