

men to which the capital of Scotland owed its glory was thus, chronologically, nearly a middle place, and the best conceivable for observation. He was in time too to see, at least as a boy, most of the earlier group. The greatest of their number, Hume, had, indeed, passed from off the stage ; but almost all the others still lived. Home, Robertson, Blair, Henry, were flourishing in green old age, at a time when he had shot up into curious observant boyhood ; and Mackenzie and Dugald Stewart were still in but middle life. It is perhaps beyond the reach of philosophy to assign adequate reasons for the appearance at one period rather than another of groupes of great men. We know not why the reign of Elizabeth should have had its family of giants,—its Shakespeare, Spencer, Raleigh, and Bacon ; or why a Milton, Hampden, and Cromwell should have arisen together during the middle of the following century ; and that after their time, only men of a lower stature, though of exquisite proportions, should have come into existence, to flourish as the wits of Queen Anne. Nor can it be told why the Humes, Robertsons, and Adam Smiths should have appeared in Scotland together in one splendid group, to give place to another group scarce less brilliant, though in a different way. We only know, that among a people of such intellectual activity as the Scotch, a literary development of the national mind might have been expected much about the earlier time. The persecutions and troubles of the seventeenth century had terminated with the Revolution ; the intellect of the country, overlaid for nearly a hundred years, had been set free, and required only a fitting vehicle in which to address that extended public to which the Union had taught our countrymen to look ; but for more than thirty years the necessary vehicle was wanting. Scotchmen bred in Scotland had great difficulty in mastering that essentially foreign language the English ; and not until the appearance of Hume's first work