

means of expression, either by a new adaptation of former words, or by the arbitrary or even accidental formation of new ones. Nor is this process yet finished. In modern times, I am inclined to think instances might be found of new meanings attached to old words, or even of the coinage of new words to describe new objects and ideas. If it be said, that to adopt an explanation so simple is unphilosophical—" *Nec Deus intersit nisi dignus vindice nodus inciderit*"—may we not say the problem is worthy of such a solution. We cannot doubt that the Almighty created man as the highest of earthly beings, and gave him power over the other inhabitants of the earth, not by superior physical strength, in which he is far inferior to many of them, but by superior reason, which, unlike the stationary instinct of animals, has been susceptible of progress and improvement. Without language—the handmaid of reason—the vehicle by which that progress has been carried on—man's reason would not have given him that complete superiority which he has ever had, and the wise and benevolent intentions of his creation might not have been effected. To suppose, therefore, that language was the immediate gift of God to man is only to suppose what was a necessary part of the scheme of an all-wise Creator, and a theory to which we may safely give our grateful and humble assent.

I have thus endeavoured to bring to your recollection the different subjects which have occupied our attention during the past year, and on some of them to state my own opinions, and the reasons on which I found them. In these opinions I do not look for agreement among all who hear me ; but, in another opinion which I propound, that the subjects of discussion have been happily chosen and ably treated, I do look for assent from all who hear me. Every one who has prepared a paper for the Society, will admit, I think, that the labour has been improving to himself. The research which is necessary will have given him more knowledge of the subject than he had before, and the exercise of thought in forming and arranging his ideas, he will have found useful and wholesome ; and those who have listened will also allow that they have sometimes gained information altogether new, at other times found knowledge previously possessed, placed in a different light, or, if fading from their memories, brightened and refreshed. One object of our Association—mutual amusement and instruction—has been, I