

MY LORD AND GENTLEMEN,

APPOINTED to address a Society, distinguished, in its origin, by the rank and character of its noble Founder, and, in the first stage of its progress, by the respectability and talents of its numerous Members ; whose high and meritorious purpose is, to extend more amply the advantages of Science and Literature to a remote, but rising portion of the Great Empire to which we belong, and the beneficial effects of its disinterested labours to future times, I am anxious to devote the period, in which I hope to be honored with your attention, to a subject which, corresponding with the views of your Institution, and involving matter interesting to Science, may, in some degree, be worthy of your notice.

CONFINING myself, therefore, to the more immediate object of the Society—Historical Research—I shall offer to your consideration an Essay upon the Juridical History of France, antecedent to the erection of the Sovereign Council of Quebec, in the year 1663 ; the Law, as it was then administered in France, in the Tribunals of the Vicomté of Paris, being, in fact, the Common Law of the division of Canada which we now inhabit (1).

THE study of the Municipal Law of every country requires some previous knowledge of its rise and progress.—The obsolete principles of former ages are, most commonly, the foundations of what we possess ; and, in many instances, the true object and intent of modern Institutions, can only be known by reference to the history of their origin and gradual improvement. And as I feel assured, that, to persons of liberal education, knowledge of the Law which constitutes the rule of their civil conduct, must at all times be desirable, I cannot but hope that what I am about to offer, upon the peculiar Municipal Law by which *we* are governed, (though, I am conscious, it will be found imperfect,) will

(1) *Edits et Ordonnances*, vol. 1. p. 21.