

notions of what ought to be attempted and may be accomplished by such means as are in our power, as well as to estimate our actual state, our prospects, and our just claims upon the public.

Since man is a social being, it is natural that he should seek aid from his fellow-creatures in most of his objects, and should be disposed to combine with some of them in most of his plans and labours. Civilization increases mutual dependence, and draws closer the social bond, thus disposing us the more to that association, of which it greatly increases the power to secure advantages and facilities. Where population, wealth and high cultivation most abound, we are astonished at the multitude of distinct objects for which men have combined together in special societies. Every where they find this the means both for improving in and enjoying their pursuits, with most economy as well as the greatest success. Hence Religion, the most important of the pursuits of an intelligent and accountable being, extends and strengthens its influences by association; and this method, though felt by all to be natural and almost necessary, was not left to be adopted by our own choice, but was from the first provided as part of a divine system, fitted to meet human wants. At the other extreme we see mere amusements cultivated by means of societies, and even the convenient supply of ordinary wants creating a demand for clubs, whilst every needed form of charity, every section of party politics, we may almost say every distinct profession or pursuit in life, has its own society.

Is it then to be wondered at that the lovers of knowledge, which, next to religion, is the noblest and the most valuable of the pursuits of man, should also be disposed to enter into combinations, and should find in them both mutual encouragement and entertainment, and a most efficient means of extending scientific tastes, calling forth in this direction the energies of those who needed only a slight stimulus to enlist them in a glorious service, increasing the variety of rational and innocent pleasures, which are so much needed amidst the labours of active life; and pointing attention to those practical applications of science which are of daily utility, and often of national importance? It would be wasting words to defend the principle or prove the value of scientific societies, but it unfortunately happens that in a complicated social state there are so many interfering objects that it is a real difficulty to fix the proper position and establish the just claims of each.

Our Society takes the highest ground which can be occupied by such a body, in its aspiration to represent in some degree to the world the