

ANNUAL ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN,

The close of another year in the life of our Society brings with it the occasion of recalling briefly the events which have marked its progress and the subjects which have engaged its attention ; and it presents also an opportunity of casting a glance at the objects for which it was originally established, and the measure of success with which those objects have been prosecuted.

The wide field which expands before a Society of this nature, in prospect, presents much to delight the eye and gratify refined taste—much to interest and stimulate the powers of thought : History unfolding her ample page, and courting enquiry into the customs and usages of distant ages—the origin of nations—the distinctive characters which diversify the mind and genius no less than the features of differing races of men—the various problems which are connected with the early settlement of countries—the impelling causes which have determined the migrations of the human family and fixed the bounds of their habitation ; all these hold out subjects innumerable for careful research and curious investigation. The all but hopeless obscurity with which in many instances the subject is enshrouded, so far from discouraging enquiry, is but the tempting veil which we long to draw aside, and the attempt, though often baffled, is still eagerly renewed.

The vast domain of animated nature which the great author of the universe has subjected to man spreads before the eye—nature, irrational, as we call it, but in many of its forms endowed with an instinct more accurate than reason. Science, in her different spheres and with her countless developments, points to the paths she has trodden, and the fields she has won—her progress, slow and painful at first, gradually but surely