

THE  
CANADIAN NATURALIST

AND

Quarterly Journal of Science.

---

---

MODERN IDEAS OF DERIVATION.

Address of Principal DAWSON, as President of the Natural History Society of Montreal. Read at the Annual Meeting, May 18th, 1869

The sphere of this Society as a modest collector and preserver of local facts in Natural History, does not preclude its glancing at the more difficult and abstruse questions which agitate Naturalists elsewhere; and perhaps no place is more fitting for this than the annual address of the President. I propose, therefore, on the présent occasion, to direct your attention to the present state of those exciting questions agitated in our day by Geologists, Zoologists and Botanists, as to the origin of Species and Genera, and the law of their creation.

Time was when Naturalists were content to take nature as they found it, without any over curious inquiries as to the origin of its several parts, or the changes of which they might be susceptible in time. Geology first removed this pleasant state of repose, by showing that all our present species had a beginning, and were preceded by others, and these again by others. Geologists were, however, too much occupied with the facts of their science to speculate on the ultimate causes of the appearance and disappearance of species, and it remained for Zoologists and Botanists, or as some prefer to call themselves, Biologists, to construct hypothesis or theories to account for the ascertained fact that successive dynasties of species have succeeded each