

years ago, when "The Origin of Species" was but two years old, and had still a great deal of opposition to encounter even from men of science, before even the term Evolution had any currency in the special sense it now bears, a leading prelate of the Church of England, Bishop Wilberforce, discerned a sceptical movement "too wide-spread and connecting itself with far too general conditions" to be explained otherwise than as "the first stealing over the sky of the lurid lights which shall be shed profusely around the great Antichrist." * To charge the present intellectual state of the world therefore on the doctrine of Evolution is to ignore that general movement of thought which, before the idea of evolution was a factor of any importance in modern speculation, had already, as the Bishop of Oxford testified, carried thousands away from their old theological habitations, and which, with or without the theory of evolution, was quite adapted to produce the state of things which we see to-day in the intellectual world.

The doctrine of evolution is simply the form in which the dominant scientific thought of the day is cast. As a working hypothesis it presents very great advantages; and the thinkers of to-day would find it hard to dispense with the aid it affords. But supposing it could be shown that the doctrine, as at present conceived, was untenable—what then? Would men of science at once abandon their belief in the invariability of natural law and fly back to mediæval superstitions? By no means. If there is any class of men who have learnt the lesson that the spider taught to Bruce, it is the class of scientific workers. Destroy one of their constructions and they set to work again, with unconquerable industry, to build another. In fact they are always testing and trying their own construc-

*Vide Preface to "Replies to Essays and Reviews,"