say perfected, by Clerk Maxwell and others. In point of fact we are gradually being lifted up to a higher level of reasoning power, and we are at last permitted to grasp the wonderful hypothesis of evolution.

And when we contemplate that hypothesis, what a marvellous revelation is laid out before us: We are first confronted with the advent of life upon this earth. How it came we are not as yet permitted to know, but a most ingenious and fascinating hypothesis has been suggested by the distinguished scientist Helmholtz, and it may interest you if I describe it. It is known that through the azure and clear sky—which the people of Vancouver are sometimes permitted to see—there are passing great streams of what in astronomical language is called "dust," which is composed of rocky matter of various sizes, some of them as large and probably a great deal larger than this building. And if it is doubted that such masses could be floating through the sky without being visible to the naked eye, let it be remembered that a large object like a balloon becomes but a mere speck when even a few miles distant. These great streams of gigantic dust which are circling through space are probably débris from other worlds, and their courses have been so accurately defined by astronomers that they can foretell almost to an hour when these streams of dust will come into contact with the atmosphere of the earth at about 18 miles distant, but before that time the attraction of gravity has drawn the nearest rock matter towards the centre of the earth, and the accelerating velocity of falling creates so much friction from the air that the exterior of the meteorite becomes heated to incandescence, and we see what is called a falling star. Helmholtz suggests that there are germs of life from other worlds roaming through space in this etherial dust, and that they may have come to us encased in meteorites. The idea certainly harmonizes with the beautiful legend that when a star falls unto us a child is born—"We have seen His star in the east and have come to worship Him."

Be that as it may, we are able to fix the commencement of life upon earth in the early geological period to which the name of palaeozic has been given, when the atmosphere was far warmer than it is at present and more highly charged with carbonic acid gas—indeed at this period the temperature at the poles was not much less than that at the equator—and scientific research leads us to believe that the medium which surrounds existence has a great influence upon the growth and formation of organisms. We know that a great change has taken place, not only in the atmosphere but also in the composition of the waters of the ocean since the creation of the earth, and that a change is still going on, but so slowly as not to be perceptible to our senses. Evolution may, therefore, be an adaptation of life to the changing medium which surrounds existence.

But before touching upon the spiritual or physical condition of life, it may be well to indicate very briefly a few of the stages of evolution.

It has been divided into three great epochs, namely, the palaeozoic, or period of ancient life, the mesozoic, or the period of middle life, and the cenozoic, or the period of recent life. As far as our powers of observation permit us to go, we find that life commences in the palaeozic period with the protoplasm or first germ, and that these primitive cells arrange themselves into groups to form what are called Protozoa sponge-like and shell-like organisms, which, after great periods of time, are accompanied by Radiates, which we recognize in the present day in our jelly-fish, sea anemonies and star-fish; and these again were followed by Mollusks which were the progenitors of