

hypotheses of to-day may be the parents of investigations which will become real science to-morrow. In the meantime it is safe to affirm that whatever amount of truth there may be in the several hypotheses which have engaged our attention, there is a creative force above and beyond them, and to the threshold of which we shall inevitably be brought after all their capabilities have been exhausted by rigid investigation of facts. It is also consolatory to know that species, in so far as the Modern period, or any one past Geological period may be concerned, are so fixed that for all practical purposes they may be regarded as unchanging. They are to us what the planets in their orbits are to the Astronomer, and speculations as to origin of species are merely our nebular hypotheses as to the possible origin of worlds and systems.

One word, in conclusion, with reference to our own work here as a Society, and as individual collectors of facts. We may not be in a position to take any leading place in the agitation of the questions to which I have referred; but we are well situated for the useful task of accumulating the necessary data for their settlement. The broad area of the American continent, the wide space occupied by its geological formations, the completeness of the series of its palæozoic rocks, the unbroken connection of its post-pliocene and modern fauna and flora, the meeting on this continent within recent times of multitudes of indigenous and exotic species of plants and animals, the existence up to our own time of feral and aboriginal conditions which are pre-historic in the Eastern continent,—these are all points of vantage on which we can seize in dealing with these questions; and if we properly inform ourselves as to what is being done elsewhere, and diligently improve our own opportunities, I see nothing to prevent us from taking the lead of those who in the Old World are pursuing such enquiries in a comparatively narrow field, and under conditions in many respects less favourable. I must insist, however, that this is not to be done by vieing with them in crude speculations and hypotheses, or in building up specious fabrics of conjecture to dazzle the popular eye, but in patient, honest, and careful accumulation of facts.

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