

of it ; but the term *Laurentian* having been already applied to rocks of this age in North America by our distinguished associate, Sir Wm. Logan, I adhere to that name, the more so as it is derived from a very extensive region of a great British Colony."

Thus geology is pointing with accumulating proofs to the beginnings of terrestrial life ; while we are reminded by familiar evidence around us in many of the Canadian rocks, that at the commencement of those fossil records in the Laurentian strata, trilobites, and other crustacea abound ; and we are now assured, by the most recent disclosures of science, that the bed of the present ocean is the arena of many inferior forms of organic life. Here therefore the accumulating evidence seems to force upon us the adoption, or rather the firmer retention, of opinions altogether at variance with those novel views on the nature and origin of species, to which I had occasion to refer when last addressing you from this Chair. But the questions in relation to the origin of species, which were then beginning to attract the attention of men of science, have during the past year excited a more general interest than any other purely scientific inquiry.

When the views of DeMaillet, Oken, and Lamarck were reproduced in a popular form, it was not altogether without reason that the argument was affirmed to place science in conflict with religion. It seemed like an attempt, if not to dispense entirely with a supreme creative power and divine first cause, at least to reduce to the smallest conceivable minimum the controlling government of an ever-present, overruling providence ; and to demonstrate a universe which having been constructed like some ingenious piece of mechanism, wound up, and set agoing, was thenceforth capable of working out its results without further oversight, until the term of its mechanical forces was exhausted, and the finger, stopping of itself on the great dial, declared that time shall be no more. The theories of spontaneous generation and the modification of organized beings by external physical agents, or by the direct operation of their own voluntary acts, have indeed found advocates among those honestly in search of guiding lights towards the hidden laws and truths of nature ; but they have maintained but a feeble hold on the earnest students of science, and have for the most part been diluted into popular forms of scepticism in which all recognition of a providential government of the universe has been ignored. But the novel and highly suggestive views on the origin of species by means of natural selection, are presented to us