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THE EARLY SURROUNDINGS OF LIFE¹

THE American Association in its Plattsburg meeting is close to the shore lines of the first ocean that seems to have contained organic life in variety, or rather a life that had such hard parts that a tolerably complete record of the main groups and families has come down to us. It is then natural to consider what the conditions may have been under which this so varied and complex life had developed, without leaving more trace of its existence.

Reading over Darwin's "Origin of Species," one can readily see that of all the objections to his theory which he so fully and fairly presented, that which he deemed the most serious was the lack of connecting links in the geological record, and in particular the sudden appearance of the varied primordial life.

He conceded that this latter objection was valid so far as one then knew, and ventured only to suggest that while the continents and oceans had been in grand outline fairly permanent since early Paleozoic, during longer eons previous, which he felt must have elapsed, conditions might have been reversed, and the sediments then laid down have been buried beneath the oceans or altered with their life beyond recognition.

At about the same time that Darwin

¹ Vice-presidential address before Section E of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, also complimentary to the Catholic Summer School at the Champlain Assembly near Plattsburg, N. Y.