

times succeed in doing harm, all unwittingly, not to the science which they oppose, but to the religion which they profess to defend. I was not a little struck lately by finding, in a religious periodical of the United States, a worthy Episcopalian clergyman bitterly complaining, that whenever his sense of duty led him to denounce from his pulpit the gross infidelity of modern geology, he could see an unbelieving grin rising on the faces of not a few of his congregation. Alas! who can doubt that such ecclesiastics as this good clergyman must virtually be powerful preachers on the sceptical side, to all among their people who, with intelligence enough to appreciate the geologic evidence, are still unsettled in their minds respecting that of the Christian faith. And so on this consideration alone it may be found not uninteresting to devote the address of the present evening to an exposure of the errors and nonsense of our modern anti-geologists,—the true successors and representatives, in the passing age, of the Franciscan and Salamanca doctors of the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Let me first remark, that no one need expect to be original simply by being absurd. There is a cycle in nonsense, as certainly as in opinion of a more solid kind, which ever and anon brings back the delusions and errors of an earlier time: the follies of the present day are transcripts, unwittingly produced, and with of course a few variations, of follies which existed centuries ago; and it seems to be on this principle,—a consequence, mayhap, of the limited range of the human mind, not only in its elucidations of truth, but also in its forms of error,—that scarce an explanation of geologic phenomena has been given by the anti-geologists of our own times, that was not anticipated by writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was held, for instance, —in opposition to the great painter, Leonardo da Vinci, who flourished early in the sixteenth century, and was one of the