

adoption of any general terminology that would involve assumptions as to their definite place and sequence in the geological record, their mode of origin, their relation to the history of plant and animal life, or their identification in different countries.

As an illustration of the danger of such assumptions, I may refer to the history of the investigation of the Laurentian rocks of Canada. From the early observations of Sir W. Logan and Mr. Alexander Murray these rocks came to be regarded as types of the oldest gneisses of the globe. They were looked upon as probably metamorphosed marine sediments that had formed the solid platform on which the whole series of fossiliferous systems of North America had been deposited. The name Laurentian applied to them was transferred to similar rock-masses in other parts of the globe, and came to be accepted as the designation of the oldest known zone in the crust of the earth. But eventually it was discovered by Mr. Lawson that some part, at least, of the Laurentian gneiss is essentially of igneous not of sedimentary origin, and is actually intrusive into what are undoubtedly sedimentary strata. It could not, therefore, itself as a whole be the oldest rock; and all the generalizations and identifications founded on its supposed position fell to the ground. The term Laurentian cannot henceforth have more than a local significance. It serves to designate certain ancient crystalline rocks of Canada, but a geologist would not now employ it to denote any of the rocks of another region, even though they might present similar general lithological characters. We must in the meanwhile be content to restrict the application of such names to the regions in which they originated. There will be much less impediment to the progress of investi-