

**A CONCLUSION WITHOUT PREMISES.**—In the course of his introductory lecture to the Natural History Class in the University of Edinburgh on Monday, Professor Sir Wyville Thomson made reference to the evolution hypothesis. He said that the great stumbling-block, from the natural history side of the question, in the way of our at once accepting the evolution hypothesis, was that any such passage from one species to anything but that was entirely outside our experience. The horse had evidently been the horse since the earliest hieroglyphs were engraved upon Assyrian monuments and tombs ; and the same held for all living creatures. There was not a shadow of evidence of one species having passed into another during the period of human record or tradition. Nor was this all ; we had, in the fossil remains contained in the rocks, a sculptured record of the inhabitants of this world, running back incalculably further than the earliest chisel-mark inscribed by man—incalculably further than man's existence on this planet ; and although we found from that record that thousands of species had passed away, and thousands had appeared, in no single case had we yet found the series of transitional forms imperceptibly gliding into one another and uniting two clearly distinct species by a continuous bridge, which could be cited as an undoubted instance of the origin of a species. Profound mystery still involved the birth of the new specific forms. Mr. Darwin's magnificent theory of "natural selection" and the "survival of the fittest," had undoubtedly shaken the veil by pointing out a path by which it was conceivable that such an end might be attained ; but it had by no means raised it, for every new instance which he produced and developed with such eloquence and skill of the marvellous changes which animals underwent under varying conditions, somehow always appeared to emphasize the fact that, however far variations might be carried, the limit of specific identity was in our experience never overpassed. Still, even if we never found out the precise mode in which one species gave rise to another there could, he believed, be no further hesitation in accepting generally a hypothesis of evolution, and in regarding our present living races as the ultimate twigs of a great genealogical tree whose gradually coalescing branches we could trace, if our information were complete, to the dawn of geological time.