

Re Prof Kemp

Olivet College
Olivet Mich
26th Dec 1871

My Dear Dr Dawson,

I received ~~your~~
the copy of your report on the
Fossil plants and thank you
for being so prompt. It appears
to me to be a publication of singular
excellence. It is just the kind of
book that is wanted. Your method
of treating the subject is in advance
of most of the other Decades of the
Canadian survey. The lithographs
are remarkably good and much
superior to any of the other litho-
graphic prints that have been done
heretofore in Canada. Your views
of the Flora of the Silurian & Lower
periods command themselves to my obser-
vations & judgment. They are the opinions
I have taught to my students. Their

Complete verification may be
anticipated some day. Now that we
have got the tracks new discoveries
are likely soon to be made.

Would it not pay to give a similar
report on the Carboniferous plants of ~~the~~
Dumfries on the same place? You must
have abundance of materials for such
a work and your intimate acquaintance
with the Coal fields of Nova Scotia give
you an advantage possessed by few others.
I hope the Survey will Commission you
to do this also. I read also your paper
in Silliman's Journal on the bearing of
these Devonian plants on the origin of
Species and like it much. You are very
Cautious. Of course this is right. But it
is more than the other side are. They don't
profess or confess ignorance or entertain doubt
about anything that strikes their fancy.
Cautious is however the true method of Science
and Science will yet be justified of her children.
By the bye, if you think it well

to give up the few resonant term Devonian
for Erian, why clip Eric short of an "e"?
At first when I saw the word in Silliman I
could not think what in the world it meant
I conjectured that it had possibly something
to do with "Erim" & wondered what right the
Geologist had to displace the old English. For
purposes of identification it will, as it strikes
me, be better to keep the "e" & write Erian.

I have been greatly pleased with Hunt's
elaborate address before the American Association.
His two extended and matured thoughts, I pre-
sume, on that question. It is true I think
that the notion of a molten centre of the earth,
as a cause of any existing geological
phenomena, was given up. It is a reproach to
the Science to find new eminent in Knowledge having
recourse to such a pure Conjecture (for with there
is not so far as I can see a particle of evidence)
to account for inexplicable phenomena. If
men would only consent to be ignorant, of what
is beyond their reach for the present, discovery's
progress would be more rapid —

I would with great pleasure have
used your excellent Text Book in Zoology
had it been suited to the habits of American
Colleges. We do all our work here by
recitation. For this purpose your book is too
brief in its treatment of the subject. Had it
contained a synopsis of the vertebrates as of
the invertebrates we could have used it.

I do a good deal in the lecture room & am
attempting gradually to change the system
of science for instruction here but I find
I must move slowly. The evil habit of
reciting from a book is inveterate and
can only be modified by degrees.

I worked much at the fossil tree but
could find only the slightest traces of structure
& nothing to justify determination. From the
whole aspect of the tree "in situ" I am however
satisfied that it is a Conifer. When Spring
comes I shall visit the regions around
& if anything worth while turns up I shall
send you specimens.

I see the British chemists are not
forming to give you undisputed possession of the
Opson. I hope the fossil will be amply
verified. With the compliments of the
Season & many thanks for the Lyell.
I am sincerely yours A. A. Kemp