

cools into a cloud of visible mist. An intelligence located upon our earth at this epoch would have seen the dusky atmosphere begin to thicken. In the far-off regions, wisps of vapor crept along the sky, as cirrhi in our day foretoken the gathering storm. They grew, and thickened, and darkened till a pall of impending clouds enwrapped the earth, and the light of sun, and moon, and star was shut out for a geological age.

Particle drew particle to itself, and rain-drops began to precipitate themselves through the lower strata of the fervid atmosphere. In their descent they were scorched to evaporation, as the meteor's light vanishes in mid-heaven. The vapors, hurrying back to the bosom of the cloud, were again sent forth, again to be consumed. At length they reached the fervid crust, but only to be exploded into vapor and driven back to the overburdened cloud, which had an ocean to transfer to the earth. The clouds poured the ocean continually forth, and the seething crust continually rejected the offering. The field between the cloud and the earth was one stupendous scene of ebullition.\*

But the descent of rains and the ascent of vapors disturbed the electricities of the elements. In the midst of this cosmical contest between fire and water, the voices of heaven's artillery were heard. Lightnings darted through the Cimmerian gloom, and world-convulsing thunders echoed through the universe.

“The sky is changed! and such a change! Oh, night,  
And storm and darkness!”

\* Those who are acquainted with Figuier's interesting works will note a remarkable correspondence between his treatment of this subject and my own. It is but justice, therefore, to state that these chapters were drawn up long before the work of Figuier appeared. This, indeed, has been my conception of these primeval scenes since 1856; and it was in print in 1857.