

historical interest, first as the earliest recorded attempt to compute the probable age of the earth and of the planets from physical observations, and secondly as an epoch-making departure from the old and orthodox notion that our globe came into existence only some six thousand years ago. In discussing the Biblical narrative of the Creation, Buffon boldly asks what we can possibly understand by the six days, if not six periods of time or intervals of duration. Though referred to in the Book of Genesis as days, for want of another term, they can have no relation to our actual days, seeing that no fewer than three of them had passed away before the sun was fixed in the firmament. "The sense of the narrative seems to require that the duration of each 'day' must have been long, so that we may enlarge it to as great an extent as the truths of physics may demand."<sup>1</sup>

The First Epoch embraced the primeval time when the earth, newly torn from the sun, existed still as a molten mass which, under the influence of rotation, assumed its oblate spheroidal form. The transition from fluidity to solidity, and from luminosity to opacity was brought about entirely by cooling, which commenced at the outer surface. A crust was thus formed, outside of which the substances still in a vaporous condition, such as air and water, remained as a hot æriform envelope, while the interior still continued liquid. The period of incandescence before the globe consolidated to the centre was computed by Buffon to have amounted to 2936 years while the period during which the surface remained too hot to be

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire Naturelle*, tome III. p. 204.