

planet and he estimated that this process would continue for yet 93,000 years by which time the globe would have become colder than ice. Then this beautiful Nature, which with its tribes of plants and animals, will have existed for 132,000 years, will perish.

In breadth and grandeur of conception Buffon far surpassed the earlier writers who had promulgated theories of the earth. The rare literary skill with which, in his masterpiece, the *Époques*, he presented his views, enabled him to exercise a powerful influence on his contemporaries, to direct their attention to the deeply interesting problems of which he wrote, and to give to natural science a far wider popularity than it had before enjoyed. If looking back from our present knowledge, we may be inclined to regard his eloquent pages rather in the light of a pictorial vision of what his brilliant imagination bodied forth as the origin of things, than a sober attempt to work out a theory on a basis of widely collected, carefully sifted and systematically co-ordinated facts, we must remember that science had not yet advanced far enough to provide such a basis. It was his great merit to have pointed out that the history of our earth is a long chronological record, the memorials of which are to be read in the frame-work of the globe itself, and to have himself applied the historical method to its interpretation. Nor were his services less conspicuous in breaking down the theological barrier which, after so many centuries, still blocked the way towards a free and unfettered study of the crust of the earth. So powerful in his time did the ecclesiastical authorities