

L I F E
OF
GEORGE LOUIS LE CLERC,
COUNT OF BUFFON.

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BY CONDORCET.  
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THIS celebrated naturalist was born at Montbard, September 7, 1707, and was the son of Benjamin le Clerc de Buffon, counsellor of the parliament of Bourgogne and of Mademoiselle Marlin.

Animated from his earliest youth with a desire to learn, experiencing at once ardour for knowledge and for glory, he was not insensible to the pleasures of his age; and his passion for study, by preventing him from being subdued by his ardour for pleasure, contributed to preserve rather than to extinguish it. Chance introduced him to the acquaintance of the young Lord Kingston, who loved and cultivated the sciences: in this society Buffon found instruction and amusement: he lived with him at Paris and at Saumur, followed him into England, and accompanied him to Italy.

Neither the *chef d'œuvres* of antiquity nor those of the moderns, who, in imitating have often surpassed them, had any power over the mind of Buffon: he beheld nothing but nature, at once grand, majestic, and delightful, presenting voluptuous retreats and peaceful asylums between torrents of lava and on the wrecks of volcanos; lavishing her wealth to countries which she threatened to swallow up beneath heaps of cinders and burning rivers, and displaying at each step, the proofs and vestiges of the ancient revolutions of the globe. The perfection of the works of