

would now become feet which would enable them to walk on the land. Then follows an account of seals, sea-dogs, and the origin of man, wherein the author states that he will scrupulously reject everything which might be regarded as fanciful, and that he will confine himself to well-attested and recent facts. He then gravely recites a number of tales of mermen and mermaids, of savage dumb men, like apes, of men with tails, of giants and dwarfs, and he comes to the conclusion that as all the species of mermen are still unknown, it is not yet possible to trace from which of them the various races of mankind have been derived. He sees no difficulty in the transition of men from the water to the air, and thinks that this passage is easiest in polar regions, where probably the transformation of mermen into ordinary men is always most common.

The last and not the least eminent of the cosmogonists who may be cited in this retrospect is the illustrious naturalist G. L. Leclerc de Buffon (1707-1788)—one of the great pioneers in science who figure so conspicuously in the history of France. At first he interested himself in physics and mathematics, but gradually widened his outlook, and conceived broad and profound ideas regarding the whole realm of Nature. Endowed with a spirit of bold generalisation, and gifted with a style of singular clearness and eloquence, he was peculiarly fitted to fascinate his countrymen, and to exercise a powerful influence on the scientific progress of his age. He is the central figure in a striking group of writers and observers who placed France in the very front of the onward march of