

"At the age of thirteen, he formed, with some of his school-fellows, a juvenile society, several members of which subsequently became members of the Institute (of France.) Their investigations became more important as their year advanced,—and electricity and magnetism, among other subjects, engaged their attention. Lacepede having made some experiments, and deduced conclusions which appeared new to him, he transmitted them to Buffon, who noticed them in the supplements of his work."

This was indeed an honour to the young philosopher,—and as he went about this time to Paris, he made the "formal acquaintance" of the two great men with whom he had before corresponded. In the society of Buffon, Gluck, and the elite of the Parisian academicians, his time passed away "in a kind of enchantment,"—and having, at the request of his relatives, accepted a nominal rank in the army of one of the German states, he then followed the bent of his own inclination, and, as we before said, devoted himself to music—his pursuit of which, however, closed with the composition of his unacted opera, and of a work entitled "The Poetry of Music," which introduced him to the notice of Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, and of many other eminent men. We pass over a period during which he published two philosophical works, which added nothing to his reputation, and continued that part of Buffon's Natural History that related to animals, in a first volume of the History of Reptiles, judged worthy of the great work to which it was appended.

The year 1788 arrived,—the French Revolution commenced, and that which changed alike the destinies of the monarch and the peasant, did not fail to alter "the prospects of the young naturalist." He suddenly found himself popular—for the people had their eyes directed to talent;—"he was successively chosen President of his section, commander of the National Guard, extraordinary deputy of Agen (his native place) to the Assemblee Constituante, member of the General Council of the department of Paris, president of the electors, deputy of the first legislature, and president

of that assembly." But the native kindness of his heart was opposed to the views of the principal actors in these great events. He was denounced by the press as an enemy, forced from Paris by his friends,—and when, in the simplicity of a heart that judged no evil of his fellow creatures, he desired to return to a city where his life would have been immediately sacrificed, and caused an application for permission to do so to be made to Robespierre, that monster, for once actuated by a spark of humanity, replied—"He's in the country? Tell him to stay there!" an answer which saved the philosopher's life.

"Of all the occupations in which M. de Lacepede had been induced to engage, the sciences alone, as is usual, remained faithful to him in the time of misfortune, and it was with them he consoled himself in his retreat. Resuming the habits of his youth, passing the day in the midst of the woods or on the banks of the rivers, he traced his plan of his Natural History of Fishes—the most important of his works. Immediately after his return, (to Paris,) he commenced its composition,—and at the end of two years, in 1793, he found himself in a condition to publish the first volume. Five volumes appeared in succession, the last in 1803."

Of this work it is said by Cuvier, "Even at the present day there is no work on the History of Fishes superior to Lacepede's, and he is always quoted on the subject: when the immense materials collected in these latter days shall have been put together in another work, the brilliant pieces of colouring, full of sensibility and deep philosophy, with which he has enriched his work, will not be forgotten. Science, from its nature, is every hour advancing; but the great writers will not remain the less immortal."

This work was soon followed by his *Cetacea* (History of Whales), and several others more or less important; but the change of Government by the master-spirit which now appeared—Napoleon—brings us to a renewal of Lacepede's political career. He was replaced in all the high offices he had held, and elevated to others still more important,—being appointed Pre-