

the attempts towards a new system of physics; he according translated "Newton's Fluxions" and Hales's "Vegetable Statics."

Each of these translations is preceded by a preface. Buffon has since obtained so great and merited celebrity as a writer, that the first attempts of his youth excite curiosity. It is natural to expect in them the first dawnings of his talents, to behold what has been since added by practice, to observe in fact between the gifts of nature and the efforts of reflection. But in these prefaces only one characteristic of Buffon's style will be found, that noble gravity which hardly ever quits him. His taste was already too much formed to permit him to seek for ornaments which the subject did not require, and his name too well known to risk them. Timidity and boldness may be equally the character of the first work of a man of genius; but that timidity which supposes a taste inspired by nature and a premature wisdom, has been the gift of those writers only who have shewn the most decided and chaste talents. Rarely those who have not been restrained by salutary fear in the outset of their career have attained its goal without deviations.

Buffon at first appeared to be entirely devoted to the mathematics. Regarded since Newton's time as the foundation and the key to all physical knowledge, they became as it were a sort of fashion, and which was partly owing to the circumstance of M. de Maupertuis being a geometrician, and at the same time a man of the world. But if Buffon occupied himself some time with the mathematics, it was, in some measure, to study himself, to try his strength, and to ascertain the temper of his genius. He soon felt that nature called him to other studies; and he tried a new road, which the public taste also pointed out to him.

Following the example of M. Duhamel, he wished to apply his physical acquirements to objects of immediate utility; as a naturalist he studied in the woods, which, as their proprietor, he was compelled to occupy, and he published upon this part of agriculture many memoirs, particularly remarkable for the wisdom with which, avoiding all system, all general but uncertain views, he confined himself to detailing facts and relating experiments. He dared not deviate from that spirit which now began to prevail among the learned, that severe and scrupulous fidelity to take for guides nothing but calculation and observa-  
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