

views, and that power of enchanting the mind, and making it admire the author when even reason cannot adopt his principles.

The Natural History contains a work of a different nature, under the title of *moral arithmetic*. An application of calculation to the probabilities of the duration of human life, entered into the plan of Natural History; and Buffon could not treat on this subject without saying something on the principles of this calculation, and on the nature of the different truths. He establishes this opinion, that mathematical truths are not real truths, but mere truths of definition; a just observation, if we take it in a strict metaphysical sense, but which then applies to truths of every description, the moment they become precise, and have not individuals for their object.

In his descriptions Buffon was a poet; but, like the great poets, he knew how to render the delineation of physical objects interesting, by artfully intermingling moral ideas, which charm the soul at the same time that the imagination is amused or astonished. His style is harmonious; not that sort of harmony which belongs to every correct writer, who has got the sense of hearing, and which consists almost solely in avoiding harsh and unpleasant sounds, but that harmony, which is a part of genius, which adds to its beauties by a sort of analogy between the ideas and the sounds, and which makes the phrase either soft and sonorous, majestic or easy, according to the object which it is intended to delineate, or the sentiments to be awakened. If Buffon be more abundant than precise, that abundance is rather in things than in words; he does not content himself with a simple idea, he multiplies its shades; but each is expressed with precision. His style has majesty and pomp; but that is because he presents vast ideas and majestic images; force and energy appear natural to him, and it seems as if it were impossible for him to speak, or rather to think otherwise. The variety of his style has been praised; its monotony has been censured; but this very censure is in fact an eulogy; in painting nature sublime or terrible, soft or gay, in describing the fury of the tiger, the majesty of the horse, the fierceness and rapidity of the eagle, the brilliant colours of the colibri, his style assumes the character of the objects, but still preserves its imposing dignity; it is always nature that he paints, and he knew that even in the smallest objects she manifests all her power.