

Struck with a sort of religious respect for the great phenomena of the universe, for the general laws to which the various parts are subjected, this sentiment is every where visible, and forms, in some measure, the ground upon which he exhibits such variety, without, however, its being totally invisible.

This art of painting, while you only seem to relate, this great power of style over objects which had already been treated with clearness, elegance, and embellished with ingenious reflections, but to which eloquence had hitherto been unknown, soon struck every mind: the language of France had already become the language of Europe, and Buffon acquired every where readers and disciples. But what was still more glorious to him, because it produced a real utility, was, that the success of this great work was the epoch of a revolution in the minds of men; they could not read it without wishing, at least, to take a glance at nature, and natural history became almost a vulgar sort of knowledge; it was for all classes of society, either an amusement or an occupation; they wished to have a cabinet, the same as they wished to have a library; but the result was not the same; for in the library they only repeated copies of the same books; in cabinets, on the contrary, they collected different individuals, they multiplied them for naturalists, and from that time objects worthy of being observed more rarely escaped them.

Botany, metallurgy, those parts of natural history immediately useful to medicine, to commerce, and to manufactures, had been encouraged; but it was to science itself, to that science as having for its object the knowledge of nature, that Buffon first directed the minds of sovereigns, nobles, and public men of all countries. More certain of obtaining recompense, being able to aspire at length to that popular glory which true philosophers know how to appreciate better than other men, but which they do not despise, naturalists gave themselves up to their labours with new ardour; they were seen to multiply, at the voice of Buffon, in the provinces and in the capitals, in other parts of the world, as well as in Europe. Doubtless they had, before him, endeavoured to make the utility of the study of nature be felt; science was not negligent; human curiosity was carried into distant countries, endeavoured to know the surface of the earth, and to penetrate into her bosom; but to Buffon may be applied what he
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