

himself said of another philosopher equally celebrated, his rival in the art of writing, and like him, perhaps, more useful by the effect of his writings, than by the truths which they contained: *others had said the same things, but he commanded them in the name of nature and they obeyed him!*

The style of Buffon does not always offer the same degree of perfection; but is every part intended to be felt? He has that correctness, and that purity, without which, when a language is once formed, it is impossible to attain to a durable celebrity. If he suffers himself sometimes to be negligent, it is always in those discussions which are purely scientific, where the blemishes which he may have left, does not injure the beauties, but rather serve, perhaps, to render more charming the brilliant pictures which follow. It was by long labour that he attained to give his style that degree of perfection; and he continued to correct it till he had effaced all appearances of labour, and had given himself facility; for this quality, so precious in a writer, is only the art of hiding his efforts, of presenting his thoughts, as if he had conceived them at a single impulse, in the most natural and striking order, and clothed in the most proper and happy expressions; and this art, which forms the greatest charm of style, is to be acquired only by a long series of observations and minute attentions.

Buffon loved to read his works to others, not from vanity, but to be certain, from experience, of their clearness and precision, two qualities, perhaps, of which an author is the worst judge himself. With such intentions he did not select his auditors, but took them as chance offered, which he thought resembled the most the public, whose mode of thinking he wished to anticipate by them: he did not confine himself to receiving their advice, or rather their eulogies; he often asked them what idea they attached to a phrase, what impression they had received; and if they had not seized his idea, if the effect failed which he wished to produce, he concluded that this part of his work wanted clearness or force, and he wrote it over again. This is an excellent method in philosophical works, which are intended to be popular; but few authors would have the courage to employ it. It must not, however, be expected to meet with an equal degree of clearness in all the Natural History; Buffon wrote for the learned, for the philosopher, and for the public; and he has accordingly