

This silence may appear singular in a philosopher, whose works prove that he had examined man under every aspect, and indicate, at the same time, a dignified, manly, and firm manner of thinking, far distant from that inclination to scepticism, and that incertitude which leads to indifference.

Few philosophers, few writers, have obtained so popular a glory as Buffon; and he had the happiness of seeing it continually increase in proportion as other enjoyments, diminishing those of self-love, became more necessary to him. He suffered but little from criticism, because he was careful not to offend any party, and because the nature of his works excluded ignorant pretenders to literature from meddling with them. The learned, almost unanimously, preserved silence, knowing that science could derive little honour or little utility from combating a system which would necessarily rise to a general truth, if the facts were confirmed, and which, if otherwise, would fall of itself.

Besides, Buffon employed the most certain means of preventing the multiplication of criticisms; he never replied to any. Not that they were all contemptible; those of Haëler, Bonnet, and Condillac, those too which many learned individuals had furnished to the author of the *American Letters*, merited answers which would not always have been easily given. But by answering, he would stimulate the self-love of their authors to continue their strictures, and would have perpetuated a war, in which a victory, that could not be completed, would not indemnify him for the loss of that time which he could employ more usefully to his glory.

Sovereigns, and foreign princes who visited France, were eager to pay homage to Buffon, and to visit him in the midst of the wealth of nature, which he had collected round him. The Empress of Russia, whose name is connected with that of our most celebrated philosophers, lavished on our author testimonies of her admiration, most calculated to affect him, by sending him whatever, in her vast dominions, could most excite his curiosity, and selecting, with much ingenious research, those singular productions, which might serve as proofs to his opinions.

In society, Buffon patiently endured that mediocrity which served to engage his mind without opposing it, and without subjecting it to the fatiguing business of foreseeing their objections, or replying to them. Simple in his pri-
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