

the limits of that variation : for the accurate development of which, the scientific world, and more than the scientific world, are deeply indebted to the skilful researches and correct reasonings of Cuvier ; whose fame will rest securely on this natural and imperishable basis, when his own and all other artificial systems of classification, for artificial we can see them to be even in the present state of our knowledge, will probably have been overturned by the force of those new views of nature, which must necessarily result from the contemplation of the numerous and varied phenomena which are rapidly accumulating in this department of knowledge. The field, indeed, in which Cuvier has laboured, with such advantage to science as well as honour to himself, is the investigation of the conditions which accompany the development of individual and specific form : and the result of his labours has afforded a splendid instance of the wonderful effect which the powers of the human mind are capable of producing, in a subject apparently of the least intrinsic interest and of the most unpromising aspect. The explanation of his views which I shall now attempt to offer, while it may tend to make known the particular merits of this philosopher to a class of readers, who at present are acquainted with little more of him than his great name, will certainly accord with the general object of this treatise.