

QUOTATION

GEORGE CUVIER'S SECRET OF PRODUCTIVITY

I got into Cuvier's sanctum sanctorum yesterday, and it is truly characteristic of the man. In every part it displays that extraordinary power of methodising which is the grand secret of the prodigious feats which he performs annually without appearing to give himself the least trouble. But before I introduce you to this study, I should tell you that there is first the museum of natural history opposite his house, and admirably arranged by himself, then the anatomy museum connected with his dwelling. In the latter is a library disposed in a suite of rooms, each containing works on one subject. There is one where there are all the works on ornithology, in another room all on ichthyology, in another osteology, in another *law* books! &c. &c. When he is engaged in such works as require continual reference to a variety of authors, he has a stove shifted into one of these rooms, in which everything on that subject is systematically arranged, so that in the same work he often takes the round of many apartments. But the ordinary studio contains no book-shelves. It is a longish room, comfortably furnished, lighted from above, and furnished with eleven desks to stand to, and two low tables, like a public office for so many clerks. But all is for the one man, who multiplies himself as author, and admitting no one into this room, moves as he finds necessary, or as fancy inclines him, from one occupation to another. Each desk is furnished with a complete establishment of inkstand, pens, &c., pins to pin MSS. together, the works immediately in reading and the MS. in hand, and on shelves behind all the MSS. of the same work. There is a separate bell to several desks. The low tables are to sit to when he is tired. The collaborateurs are not numerous, but always chosen well. They save him every mechanical labour, find references, &c., are rarely admitted to the study, receive orders, and speak not.

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