

given rise to the theory of the earth, have, at the same time, furnished it with its principal illustrations;—the only ones, indeed, that have as yet been generally acknowledged.

It is this consideration which has encouraged us to investigate the subject. But the field is vast; and it is but a very small portion of it that could be cultivated by the labour of a single individual. It was necessary, therefore, to select a particular department; and the choice was soon made. The class of fossil remains which forms the subject of this work, engaged our attention at the very outset, because it appeared to us to be that which is the most fertile in precise results, and yet, at the same time, less known, and richer in new objects of research*.

High importance of the Fossil Bones of Quadrupeds.

It is obvious, in fact, that the fossil bones of quadrupeds must lead to more accurate conclusions than any other remains of organized bodies, and that for several reasons.

* My work has, in fact, proved how far this inquiry was yet new when I commenced it, notwithstanding the excellent labours of Camper, Pallas, Blumenbach, Merk, Sömmering, Rosenmüller, Fischer, Faujas, Home, and other learned men, whose works I have most scrupulously cited in such of my chapters as their researches are connected with.