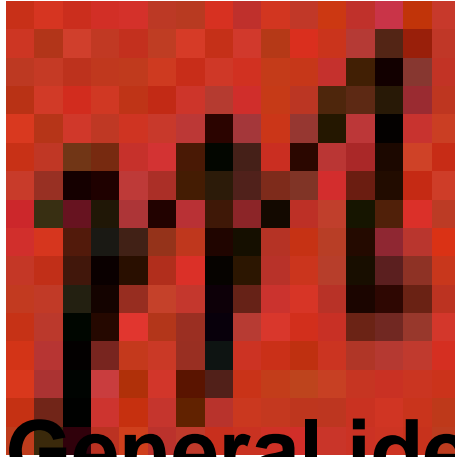


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XXX.23 General idea of the book on the establishment of the French monarchy in the Gauls, by the abbé Dubos

- The Spirit of Law - Book XXX. Theory of feudal laws among the Franks, in the relation they have to the establishment of the monarchy -
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It is appropriate, before I end this book, for me to make some examination of the work of the abbé Dubos, because my thoughts are constantly opposed to his ; and if he has found the truth, I have not.

That work has taken many people in, because it is written with considerable art, because it endlessly assumes what is in question ; because the more evidence it lacks, the more it multiplies probabilities ; because an infinite number of conjectures are posited as principles, and it draws other conjectures as consequences. The reader forgets that he has had doubts and begins to believe. And as endless erudition is placed, not within the system, but alongside the system, the mind is distracted by accessories, and forgets to attend to the principal. Besides, such a quantity of research does not permit the reader to imagine that it has turned up nothing ; the length of the journey implies that the destination has been reached.

But when we examine closely, we find an immense colossus which has feet of clay ; and it is because the feet are of clay that the colossus is immense. Had the abbé Dubos's system had a good foundation, he would not have been obliged to write three mortal volumes to prove it ; he would have found it all in his subject ; and without going searching in every direction for what was very far off, reason itself would have assumed the burden of placing this truth in the chain of other truths. History and our laws would have said to him : "Do not put yourself to such trouble ; we will testify for you."