BUFFON'S

fat in autumn, and equally so on their reviving in spring; this abundance of fat being an internal substance, sufficient to supply what they lose by perspiration. Besides, as cold is the sole cause of their torpor, and they never fall into that state but when the temperature of the air is beyond the tenth or eleventh degree, they often revive during the winter, for in that season there are frequently hours, and even days, in which the liquor will be found at the twelfth, thirteenth, or fourtcenth degree, and during this mild weather the dormice quit their holes in search of food, or rather eat what they had amassed the preceding autumn.

Aristotle asserted, and he has been followed by succeeding naturalists, that dormice pass the whole winter without eating, and that during this period of abstinence they become very fat, being more nourished by sleep alone than other animals by food. This is both untrue and impossible. In its torpid state, which lasts four or five months, it could only fatten by the air it breathes; and allowing (which however is granting too much) that part of this air is converted into nourishment, could so considerable an increase result from it? Would it be sufficient to recompense the waste by perspiration? Aristotle might have been led into this error by the winters in Greece being very mild.

250