

doubted that it was the true black ibis of the ancients. M. Savigny also made a drawing of it in Egypt, but from a young individual only\*. Buffon's figure is from an adult bird; but its colours are too pale.

The error which prevails at present respecting the white ibis began with Perrault, who was also the first naturalist who made known the *Tantalus ibis* of the present day. This error, adopted by Brisson and Buffon, passed into the twelfth edition of Linnæus, where it is blended with that of Hasselquist, which had been inserted in the tenth, forming with it a compound altogether monstrous.

It was founded on the idea, that the ibis was essentially a bird that destroyed serpents, and upon this very natural conclusion, that, in order to enable it to devour these reptiles, it was necessary for it to have a sharp beak, more or less resembling that of the heron. This idea is even the only good objection that can be made against the identity of our bird to the ibis. How, it is urged, could a bird with a weak bill, a curlew, devour those dangerous reptiles?

It may be replied, that positive proofs, such descriptions, figures, and mummies, ought always

---

\* See the Great Work on Egypt, Natural History of Birds, pl. vii. fig. 2.