

even the only good objection that can be adduced against the identity of our bird with the ibis. How, it is asked, could a curlew, a bird with a weak beak, devour these dangerous reptiles?

Our answer is, that positive proofs, such as descriptions, figures, and mummies, should always claim more belief than accounts of peculiar habits, too often devised without any other motive than to justify the various worships paid to animals. We might add, that the serpents from which the ibises freed Egypt are represented as very numerous, but not as very large. I believe, too, that I have ascertained decidedly that the bird mummies, which had a beak precisely similar to that of our bird, were real serpent-eaters; for I found in one of their mummies the undigested remains of the skin and scales of serpents, which I have preserved in our anatomical galleries.

But, at the present time, M. Savigny, who has observed whilst living, and even more than once dissected our white numenius, the bird which every thing proves to have been the ibis, asserts that it only eats worms, fresh water shell-fish, and other similar small animals. Supposing that there is no exception to this, all we can conclude is, that the Egyptians, as has before occurred to them and others, gave a false reason for an absurd worship. It is true, that Herodotus said, that he saw in a place on the borders of the desert, (1) near Buto, a narrow defile, in which an infinite quantity of bones and remains, which he was told were the relics of winged serpents, which sought to penetrate into Egypt at

(1) Euterpe, cap. lxxv. Herodotus says, *a place in Arabia*; but we cannot see how a place in Arabia could be *near the city of Buto*, which was in the western part of Delta.