

To those who have never been accustomed to connect the facts of Natural History with philosophical speculations, who have never raised their conceptions of the end and import of such studies beyond the mere admiration of isolated and beautiful objects, or the exertion of skill in detecting specific differences, it will seem incredible that amidst the din of arms, and the stirring excitement of political movements, so much enthusiasm could have been felt in regard to these precious remains.

In the official report, drawn up by the Professors of the Museum at Paris, on the value of these objects, there are some eloquent passages, which may appear extravagant, unless we reflect how fully these naturalists could appreciate the bearing of the facts thus brought to light on the past history of the globe.

"It seems," say they, "as if the superstition of the ancient Egyptians had been inspired by Nature, with a view of transmitting to after ages a monument of her history. That extraordinary and eccentric people, by embalming with so much care the brutes which were the objects of their stupid adoration, have left us, in their sacred grottos, cabinets of zoology almost complete. The climate has conspired with the art of embalming to preserve the bodies from corruption, and we can now assure ourselves by our own eyes what was the state of a great number of species three thousand years ago. We can scarcely restrain the transports of our imagination, on beholding thus preserved, with their minutest bones, with the smallest portions of their skin, and in every particular most perfectly recognizable, many an animal, which at Thebes or Memphis, two or three thousand years ago, had its own priests and altars."*

Among the Egyptian mummies thus procured were not only those of numerous wild quadrupeds, birds, and reptiles; but, what was perhaps of still higher importance in deciding the great question under discussion, there were the mummies of domestic animals, among which those above mentioned, the bull, the dog, and the cat, were frequent. Now, such was the conformity of the whole of these species to those now living, that there was no more difference, says Cuvier, between them than between the human mummies and the embalmed bodies of men of the present day. Yet some of these animals have since that period been transported by man to almost every climate, and forced to accommodate their habits to the greatest variety of circumstances. The cat, for example, has been carried over the whole earth, and, within the last three centuries, has been naturalized in every part of the new world, — from the cold regions of Canada to the tropical plains of Guiana; yet it has scarcely undergone any perceptible mutation, and is still the same animal which was held sacred by the Egyptians.

Of the ox, undoubtedly, there are many very distinct races: but the bull Apis, which was led in solemn processions by the Egyptian priests, did not differ from some of those now living. The black

* Ann. du Muséum d'Hist. Nat., tom. i. p. 234. 1802. The reporters were MM. Cuvier, Lacépède, and Lamarck.