

cattle that have run wild in America, where there were many peculiarities in the climate not to be found, perhaps, in any part of the old world, and where scarcely a single plant on which they fed was of precisely the same species, instead of altering their form and habits, have actually reverted to the exact likeness of the aboriginal wild cattle of Europe.

In answer to the arguments drawn from the Egyptian mummies, Lamarck said they were identical with their living descendants in the same country, because the climate and physical geography of the banks of the Nile have remained unaltered for the last thirty centuries. But why, it may be asked, have other individuals of these species retained the same characters in many different quarters of the globe, where the climate and many other conditions are so varied?

Seeds and plants from the Egyptian tombs.—The evidence derived from the Egyptian monuments was not confined to the animal kingdom; the fruits, seeds, and other portions of twenty different plants, were faithfully preserved in the same manner; and among these the common wheat was procured by Delille, from closed vessels in the sepulchres of the kings, the grains of which retained not only their form, but even their colour; so effectual has proved the process of embalming with bitumen in a dry and equable climate. No difference could be detected between this wheat and that which now grows in the East and elsewhere; and in regard to the barley, I am informed by Mr. Brown, the celebrated botanist, that its identity with the grain of our own times can be tested by the closest comparison. On examining, for example, one of the seeds from Mr. Sam's Egyptian collection in the British Museum, it is found that "the structure of the husks or that part of the flower which is persistent, agrees precisely with the barley of the present day, in having one perfect flower and the filiform rudiments of a second." Some naturalists believe that the perfect identification of the ancient Egyptian cerealia with the varieties now cultivated has been carried still farther, by sowing the seeds taken out of the catacombs, and raising plants from them; but we want more evidence of this fact. Certain it is, that when the experiment was recently made in the botanic garden at Kew, with 100 seeds of wheat, barley, and lentils, from the Egyptian collection before mentioned of the British Museum, not one of them would germinate.*

Native country of the common wheat.—And here I may observe,

* I by no means wish to express an opinion that seeds cannot retain their vitality after an entombment of 3000 years; but one of my botanical friends who entertained a philosophical doubt on this subject, being desirous of ascertaining the truth of three or four alleged instances of the germination of "mummy wheat," discovered, on communicating with several Egyptian travellers, that they had procured the grains in question, not directly from the catacombs, but from the Arabs, who are always ready to supply strangers with an article now very frequently in demand. The presence of an occasional grain of Indian corn or maize in several of the parcels of grain shown to my friend as coming from the catacombs confirmed his scepticism.