

at the long run it has been remarked, that the appearance of the heavens was no longer exactly the same that it anciently was at the times of the equinoxes and solstices. But we have never been able to observe exactly the heliacal rising of a star, being always necessarily some days wide of it; and people frequently speak of it, without possessing a fixed datum on which to count. Before Hipparchus, we find nothing, either in books or in traditions, that can be submitted to calculation; and it is this which has given rise to so many systems. Controversies have arisen without a sufficient knowledge of the subject. Those who are not astronomers may form ideas as beautiful as they please of the knowledge of the Chaldeans, Egyptians, &c.; no real inconvenience will result. The enterprise and knowledge of the moderns may be lent to these nations, but nothing can be borrowed from them; for they have either had nothing, or they have left nothing. Astronomers will never derive from the ancients any thing that can be of the slightest utility. Let us leave to the learned their vain conjectures, and confess our utter ignorance respecting things of little use in themselves, and of which no monument remains.

“The limits of the constellations vary according to the authors which we consult. We find these limits extend or contract, as we pass from Hip-