

where;—a bird which possessed instinct enough to know the increase and waning of the moon, and to regulate accordingly the quantity of its daily food, and the development of its young; which arrested at the frontiers of Egypt the serpents which would otherwise have carried destruction into that sacred land *, and which inspired them with such terror that they dreaded its very feathers †;—a bird, in fine, whose form the gods would have assumed, had they been forced to adopt a mortal figure, and into which Mercury was really transformed, when he had a mind to traverse the earth, and instruct men in the sciences and arts.

No other animal could have been so easy to recognize as this; for there is no other of which the ancients have left us at once, as of the ibis, excellent descriptions, accurate and even coloured figures, and the body itself preserved with its feathers, under the triple envelope of a preservative bitumen, thick and close folds of linen, and solid and well varnished vases. And yet, of all the modern authors who have spoken of the ibis, there is but one, the celebrated Bruce, a traveller more famous for his courage than for the justness of his

* *Ælian*, lib. ii. cap. 35 and 38.

† *Id.* lib. i. cap. 38.