

to preponderate over accounts of habits too often imagined without any other motive than to justify the different worships rendered to animals. It might be added, the serpents from which the ibis delivered Egypt, are represented to us as very venomous, but not as very large. I have even obtained a direct proof that the birds preserved as mummies, which have had a beak precisely similar to that of our bird, were true serpent eaters; for I found in one of their mummies the still undigested remains of the skin and scales of serpents, which I have deposited in our anatomical galleries.

But, at the present day, M. Savigny, who has observed, in a living state, and more than once dissected our white numenius, the bird which every thing concurs to prove to have been the ibis, asserts that it only eats worms, fresh water shells, and other small animals of that sort. Supposing this fact to have no exception, all that can be concluded from it is, that the Egyptians, as has happened more than once to them and others, had invented a false reason for an absurd worship. It is true that Herodotus says, he saw, in a place on the borders of the desert *, near

* Euterpe, cap. lxxv. Herodotus says a place in Arabia, but it is not seen how a place in Arabia could have been near the city of Buto, which was in the western part of the Delta.