

which would have carried destruction into this sacred land,(1) and inspired them with so much terror, that they even feared their feathers;(2) this bird, whose form the gods themselves would have assumed if compelled to adopt a mortal shape, and into which Mercury was really transformed when he desired to travel over the earth, and teach men the arts and sciences.

Not any other animal could be as easily recognisable as this one; for there is no other of which the ancients have left us, as they have of the ibis, such admirable descriptions, figures so exact and even coloured, and the body itself carefully preserved with its feathers under the triple covering of a bituminous preservation of thick linen in many folds, and in vessels solid and highly varnished.

And yet, of all modern writers who have spoken of the ibis, Bruce alone—a traveller more celebrated for his courage than the accuracy of his notions on natural history—has not been in error regarding the true species of this bird; and his ideas in this respect, exact as they were, have not been adopted by other naturalists.(3)

After many changes of opinion concerning the ibis, it was apparently agreed, at the period when I published the first edition of this work, to give the name of ibis to a bird a native of Africa, nearly the size of the stork, with white plumage, and the plumes of the wings black, perched on long red legs, with a long beak, arched with cutting edges, rounded at the base, jagged at the point, of a pale yellow

(1) Ælian, lib. 2, c. xxxv. and xxxviii.

(2) Ibid. lib. i. c. xxxviii.

(3) Bruce's French translation, in 8vo. v. xiii. p. 264, and Atlas plate xxxv. under the name *Abouhannes*.