

CHAPTER III.

TOMBS OF PRIESTS, AND PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS.

IF I could fix on any part of this vast abode of death, where the most ancient tombs are exclusively met with, I should not hesitate in commencing my notice of them in the order of their relative antiquity; but as some of a remote epoch are continually intermixed with those of more recent date, it is impossible to fix with precision the exact extent of the earliest cemeteries. It is likewise difficult to determine the particular portions set apart for the sepulture of the members of the various castes into which the Egyptians were divided, since those of the same class are found in more than one part of its extensive circuit. Some general notions may, however, be formed on this head by looking over the survey itself; others must be given in the following pages, where I shall also notice those kings whose names appearing in the sculptures fix in some degree the epoch at which several portions of this burial-ground were consecrated to the reception of the dead. But in many of these all clue to the determination of this fact is entirely lost, by the decay of the sculptures or the fall of the stucco on which they were painted;