

we perceive an intermixture of existing with extinct species; the proportion of the former increasing according to the more recent formation of the strata, till, in the deposits of the modern era, the remains of existing species alone are discovered, and, as we have already remarked, in these accumulations of débris, the skeletons of man, and traces of the works of art of the early tribes of our race, are sometimes found imbedded.

The extinction of whole genera of animals and plants has, no doubt, depended on various causes. In the earlier revolutions, the vicissitudes of climate, and the mutations of land and water, were, probably, the principal agents of destruction: but since man became the lord of the creation, his necessities and caprice have occasioned the extirpation of many tribes, whose relics are found in the same superficial strata with those of species concerning which all human history and tradition are silent.\*

The obliteration of certain forms of animal life (and perhaps the creation of new ones) appears, therefore, to be dependent on a law in the economy of nature, which is still in active operation. Of this we have a remarkable instance in the case of the *Dodo*, which has been annihilated, and become a denizen of the fossil kingdom, almost before our eyes. The Dodo was a bird of the gallinaceous tribe, larger than the turkey, which existed in great numbers in the Mauritius and adjacent islands, when those countries were first colonized by the Dutch, about two centuries ago. This bird was the principal food of the colonists; but it was incapable of domestication, and its numbers soon became sensibly diminished. Stuffed specimens were sent to the museums of Europe, and paintings of the living animal were executed, and copied into the works on natural history. *The Dodo is now extinct*: it is no longer to be found in the isles where it once flourished, and even all the stuffed specimens are destroyed; the only relics that remain being the head and foot of an individual in the Ashmolean museum at Oxford, and the leg of another in the British museum. To render this history complete, the fossilized remains were alone wanting, and these have actually been found beneath a bed of lava in the Isle of France, and are now in the museum of the Jardin des Plantes at Paris; affording the most unexpected and conclusive evidence of the truth of what was formerly considered one of the most startling propositions in modern geology.†

Another highly interesting and important fact is proved by the phenomena that have been presented to our examination, namely, the comparatively recent period at which man became an inhabitant of the earth, and exercised dominion over the animal creation; a fact in

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\* In Great Britain, we may instance, as belonging to species which formerly existed in this country, and are still living in other parts of the globe, the *beaver*, *bear*, *wolf*, *hyena*, &c.; and, as wholly extinct, the *Irish Elk* and *Mammoth*, with whose bones existing species of shells are sometimes found associated. Consult *Dr. Fleming's British Animals*, 1 vol. 8vo. 1828: also an excellent Memoir, by the same author, in the *Edinburgh Philosophical Journal*, No. xxii.

† See an excellent paper on the Dodo, by Mr. Duncan, *Zoological Journal for January*, 1828: also, "Contributions towards the History of the Dodo, (*Didus ineptus*), by J. V. Thompson, Esq., *Mag. Nat. Hist.*, vol. ii. p. 412; and Mr. Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, vol. ii. p. 151.