

Indigenous quadrupeds and birds extirpated in Great Britain. — Let us make some inquiries into the extent of the influence which the progress of society has exerted during the last seven or eight centuries, in altering the distribution of indigenous British animals. Dr. Fleming has prosecuted this inquiry with his usual zeal and ability; and in a memoir on the subject has enumerated the best-authenticated examples of the decrease or extirpation of certain species during a period when our population has made the most rapid advances. I shall offer a brief outline of his results.*

The stag, as well as the fallow deer and the roe, were formerly so abundant in our island, that according to Lesley, from five hundred to a thousand were sometimes slain at a hunting-match; but the native races would already have been extinguished, had they not been carefully preserved in certain forests. The otter, the marten, and the polecat, were also in sufficient numbers to be pursued for the sake of their fur; but they have now been reduced within very narrow bounds. The wild cat and fox have also been sacrificed throughout the greater part of the country, for the security of the poultry-yard or the fold. Badgers have been expelled from nearly every district, which at former periods they inhabited.

Besides these, which have been driven out from their favourite haunts, and every where reduced in number, there are some which have been wholly extirpated; such as the ancient breed of indigenous horses, and the wild boar; of the wild oxen a few remains are still preserved in some of the old English parks. The beaver, which is eagerly sought after for its fur, had become scarce at the close of the ninth century; and, by the twelfth century, was only to be met with, according to Giraldus de Barri, in one river in Wales, and another in Scotland. The wolf, once so much dreaded by our ancestors, is said to have maintained its ground in Ireland so late as the beginning of the eighteenth century (1710), though it had been extirpated in Scotland thirty years before, and in England at a much earlier period. The bear, which, in Wales, was regarded as a beast of the chase equal to the hare or the boar †, only perished, as a native of Scotland, in the year 1057. ‡

Many native birds of prey have also been the subjects of unremitting persecution. The eagles, larger hawks, and ravens, have disappeared from the more cultivated districts. The haunts of the mallard, the snipe, the redshank, and the bittern, have been drained equally with the summer dwellings of the lapwing and the curlew. But these species still linger in some portion of the British isles; whereas the larger capercaillies or wood grouse, formerly natives of the pine-forests of Ireland and Scotland, have been destroyed within the last sixty years. The egret and the crane, which appear to have been formerly very common in Scotland, are now only occasional visitants.§

The bustard (*Otis tarda*), observes Graves, in his British Orni-

* Ed. Phil. Journ., No. xxii. p. 287. Oct. 1824.

† Ray. Syn. Quad., p. 214.

‡ Fleming, Ed. Phil. Journ., No. xxii. p. 295.

§ Fleming, *ibid.*, p. 292.