

INTRODUCTION.

IF we examine the geographical situation of the British Islands in relation to continental Europe, we cannot but perceive the advantages offered, as a point of observation to the naturalist, wherein to study, among other interesting facts connected with the habits of the feathered race indigenous in our portion of the globe, the periodical migrations undertaken by so many species, the time of their arrival and retreat from our shores, together with the ends to be answered both by their visit and departure. As regards temperature, no less than relative situation, are these islands favourable for a series of such observations: we need scarcely say that, placed to the westward of Europe, they occupy a medium station between the extremes of heat and cold: no portion indeed of the European continent advances within the line of the intertropics; still, however, the southern shores of Spain, Italy, and Turkey in Europe, together with the minor islands of the Grecian Archipelago, participate so nearly in the temperature of the hotter portions of the globe as to present us with many natural productions whose congenial habitat is exclusively beneath a sultry sky. But the summer heat of England never rises above a moderate degree of temperature, and the severities of winter are mild in proportion; on the other hand, if we visit the extreme north of the European continent, we there find a climate, the severities of which in winter are extreme, while the summer, though hot while it lasts, endures but for a short period.

We will not attempt to discuss the subject of the universal law of migration further than to observe that its immediate intention is the well-being of such species as would be deprived of their natural food were they to remain stationary in any given locality; in addition to which it is essential in another point of view, inasmuch as by its operation there is secured both a