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T H E R A T.  

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IF we descend by degrees from great to small, from strong to weak, we find that Nature has uniformly maintained a balance throughout her works; attentive only to the preservation of each species, she creates a profusion of individuals, and supports by numbers those she has formed of a diminutive size, and left unprovided with arms, courage, or resources; she has not only enabled these inferior species to resist and maintain their ground by their own numbers, but has added a kind of supplement to each, by multiplying the neighbouring species. The rat (*fig. 74.*), the mouse (*fig. 76.*), the field mouse (*fig. 77.*), the water-rat (*fig. 75.*), the short-tailed field mouse (*fig. 78.*), the dormouse, the shrew mouse, with several others, which I shall not mention here, because they do not belong to our climate, form so many distinct and separate species, but yet so little varied, that should any one chance to fail, its absence would be hardly perceptible. It is this great number of approximate species that first  
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