From time immemorial the Raven's croak has been supposed to predict a death; and many a timid family has been rendered melancholy by the sound of its hoarse voice in the neighbourhood of their dwelling during the sickness of one of its inmates.

"As doth the Raven o'er the infected house,
Boding to all." *Othello*, Act iv. Sc. i.

. . . . . "Ravens . . . . . .
Fly o'er our heads and downward look on us.
As we were sickly prey." *Julius Cæsar*, Act v. Sc. 3.

"Some powerful spirit instruct the Kites and Ravens
To be thy nurses." *Winter's Tale*, Act ii. Sc. 3.

The Raven is omnivorous, and will eat grain, fruit, and berries, maritime and inland worms, mollusks of the salt and fresh waters, dead fish, and carrion of all kinds, young hares and rabbits, eggs and young birds (both those which breed on the ground and those which rest among the rocks); and a dead cetacean cast on the shore becomes the point of attraction to all the Ravens in the neighbourhood.

The Raven breeds very early—the nest being prepared in February, and the young hatched by the end of March. Now he seeks his prey on the sea-sides or the margins of estuaries and lochs, or resorts to fields for worms like the Common Crow and the Rook. Shepherds tell us that a number of Ravens will combine and take out the eyes of a cast sheep, and that sickly lambs are sure to be attacked unless they are carefully looked after.

Dr. Lawrence Edmonstone has given some interesting details respecting the bird as seen in Shetland, and some curious information respecting the use to which it was put by the ancient Scandinavian mariners. It not only served them as a nautical pioneer, but the Raven was the sacred standard of the great Odin; for these particulars, however, I must refer my readers to Macgillivray's 'History of British Birds,' vol. iii. p. 712, etc.

After alluding to the persecuted life led by the Raven in this country, Mr. Hewitson states that "in Norway, where the feathered tribes are loved and cherished, they so abound that we at one time counted as many as eighteen together. There they are pert and confident, and would frequently remain quietly seated till we had passed them at the distance of a few yards. On one island we saw several of their nests in a large sepulchral-looking cave, peculiarly suitable to the residence of birds which in some districts are regarded as of ill omen. At home the Raven breeds in the most wild and inacessible districts, building its nest for the most part in the steepest cliffs upon the sea-coast, sometimes, when inland, upon lofty trees. They have for a great many years been known to breed in the Mausoleum at Castle Howard, in Yorkshire. The nest is large, and composed of sticks plastered together with mud, and lined with a quantity of roots, wool, and the fur of animals. The eggs are four or five in number, and are subject to much variety,—some being of a dark greenish olive, blotched all over with irregular and various-sized marks of dark brown; while others are of a pale greenish blue, streaked all over, but particularly at the larger end, with pale red; and between these there are two or three varieties, some being distinctly and more sparingly spotted, and resembling somewhat the eggs of the Jackdaw.

"Mr. Newton has sent me the following graphical notes:—'A pair of these birds breed annually in the neighbourhood of Elveden Hall, in Norfolk. When undisturbed they have usually refurnished their last year's nest, always lining it neatly with rabbits' down. It is built on one of several lofty Scotch fir trees standing far out on a heath. The number of eggs laid is generally five, but I have known them to be content with four, while six were once deposited. While the hen is sitting, the actions of the male bird are well worth watching. He dashes indiscriminately at any bird that approaches, be it Stock-Dove or Peregrine Falcon, and, when the intruder has been utterly routed, shoots back to the nest, celebrating his victory by a sonorous croak, turning as he utters it completely on his back—an action which does not, however, in the least degree impede his onward career. He then resumes his look-out station on one of the highest boughs, perhaps leaving it again at the expiration of a few minutes to repel another invasion.'"

In the Faroe Islands and in Iceland the Raven is subject to variety, and many pied examples are met with; these were considered to be by Vieillot distinct, and named by him *leucophæus*; but they must only be regarded as varieties.

The accompanying figure represents a male about two-thirds of the natural size, on a branch of the spruce-fir (*Abies excelsior*).