MILVUS REGALIS.

Kite or Glead.

Falco milvus, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 20.

Milvus regalis, Briss. Orn., tom. i. p. 414, pl. xxxiii.

— ictinus, Savig. Descr. de l'Egypte, Hist. Nat. tom. i. p. 88.

— castaneus, Daud. Traité d'Orn., tom. ii. p. 146.

--- russicus, Daud. ibid., p. 188.

--- vulgaris, Flem. Hist. of Brit. Anim., p. 51.

--- ruber, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., tom. i. p. 50.

--- regalis, Kaup, Classif. der Säugeth. und Vög., p. 114.

I have remarked elsewhere that, by Linnæus and the other ornithologists of his day, the Crows, Jays, and Pies were all included under the one generic term of Corvus; and I may here state that in like manner the Eagles, Buzzards, Hawks, Falcons, and Kites were comprised in the single genus Falco. Since the period when the great Swede lived, men of science in every department have studied nature more closely, have become more intimately acquainted with the habits and economies of those birds, and have perceived that they constitute so many distinct forms, to which generic terms should be applied; and this has accordingly and very appropriately been done; for the Hawks differ from the Falcons, the Falcons from the Kites, and the Kites from the Eagles. Each of these groups, again, has been further subdivided; for instance, the forest-loving Golden Eagle has been separated from the rock-frequenting Sea-Eagle and the lake-haunting Osprey, each of which, besides differing greatly in size, is characterized by peculiar habits; but these need not be dwelt upon.

The short-winged Hawk, with its quick-dashing low flight, differs from the hovering Kestrel; the impetuous stoops of the true Falcons differ from the soaring, buoyant, and gracefully circling flights of the Kites, birds which suddenly descend upon, but never pursue, their prey, which live partly on carrion, dead fish, insects, small rodents, and fledgeling gallinaceæ, but have neither the courage nor the disposition to encounter even so little formidable an opponent as the domestic Hen, the Pheasant, or the Partridge. They have been called "docile" birds, because it is the nature of some, if not of all the species, to sit about on the branches of trees near cities, villages, cantonments, and farm-steads, and thence to make forays into the very streets, and sometimes to become so bold as to suddenly descend and clutch the passing joint while being carried from the kitchen to the house or tent. Many such acts of daring are described as having been performed by some of the species. That something like this was the conduct of our bird in olden times, we may justly conclude from a statement of Clusius, who, according to Mr. Harting's 'Birds of Middlesex,' visited England in 1571, during the reign of Elizabeth, and who says that the Kite was formerly abundant in the streets of London, and that it was forbidden to kill it on account of its acting the part of a scavenger.

The late Mr. John Wolley informed Mr. Hewitson that it was formerly so abundant in our Metropolis that several visitors from the Continent, besides the one above mentioned, have made a note of their surprise at its numbers and familiarity. "A learned writer in the 'Quarterly Review,' in an article upon the Bohemian Embassy in England some four hundred years ago, supposes that the word 'Milvi,' in Schassek's Journal must have been a mistake for 'cygni,' as London had always been celebrated for Swans; but other old writers leave no room for doubt that the Kite was the most familiar bird with the citizens of Old London. How few of the persons who see the paper toys hovering over the parks on fine days in summer have any idea that the bird from which they derive their name used to float all day in hot weather high over the heads of their ancestors!"—Hewitson's 'Coloured Illustrations of the Eggs of British Birds,' 3rd edit., vol. i. p. 36.

In further confirmation of how common the Kite must have been, and how intimately its disposition and habits were known, especially to Shakespeare, we have abundant evidence in them any allusions made and the reproachful terms applied by him to the bird. Mr. Harting, in his communication to the 'Zoologist,' "On the Birds of Shakespeare," speaking of the Kite, says:—"Although a large bird, and called by some the Royal Kite (Milvus regalis), it does not seize living and strong prey, but glides about ignobly, looking for a sickly or wounded victim, or for offal of any sort. Our poet, therefore, has not inaptly called it 'the lazar Kite' (Henry V., Act II. Scene 1); and in alluding to its habits in 'Julius Cæsar' (Act V. Scene 1) he says:—

"And kites

Fly o'er our heads and downwards look on us As we were sickly prey.

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"Again, in Part II. of 'Henry VI.' (Act V. Scene 2): - 'A prey for carrion kites.' From the ignoble