years ago my children procured a young male Kestrel, which, when able to fly, I persuaded them to give its liberty; but it never left the place, and became attached to them. In the spring of the following year we missed him for nearly a week, and thought he had been shot; but one morning I observed him soaring about with another of his species, which proved to be a female. They paired, and laid several eggs in an old dove-cote, about a hundred yards from the Rectory; but being disturbed that season, as I thought by some White Owls, the eggs were never hatched. The next spring he again brought a mate; they again built, and reared a nest of young ones. Last year they did the same; but some mischievous boys took the young ones when just ready to fly. Though in every respect a wild bird as to his habits in the fields, he comes every day to the nursery window, and, when it is opened, will come into the room, and perch upon the chairs or table, and sometimes upon the heads of the little ones, who always save a piece of meat for him. His mate will sometimes venture to come within a yard or two of the house, to watch for him when he comes out of the room with his meat; she will then give chase and try to make him drop it, both of them squealing and chattering, to our great amusement. The male never leaves us; indeed he is so attached to the children, that if we leave home for a time he is seldom seen; but as soon as we return, and he hears the voices of his little friends calling him by name, he comes flying over the fields, squealing with joy to see them again. He is now so well known among the feathered tribes of the neighbourhood, that they take no notice of him, but will sit upon the same tree with him; even the Rooks appears quite friendly."

That the Kestrel is a constant resident with us, I apprehend no one will doubt; for it may be seen at all seasons, the cold of even our severest winters not driving it to more distant lands; but that it changes its position from one part of the country to another in search of a more abundant supply of food is very probable; and on this point Mr. Macgillivray, after remarking that it is more numerous near the Frith of Forth in winter than in summer, says, "Probably, like the Merlin, it merely migrates from the interior to the coast;" and "in the North of Ireland, generally," says Mr. Thompson, "Kestrels seem to be quite as numerous in winter as in summer."

The following remarks on the habits of the bird, as observed in India, are from the pen of T. C. Jerdon, Esq., one of the most accurate and careful of the many officers who have written on the Natural History of that country, and are taken from the first sheets of his forthcoming work on the 'Birds of India.'

"The Kestrel," says Mr. Jerdon, "is a cold-weather visitant to India, one of our earliest, indeed; and it does not leave till April. It is most abundant, being found in every part of the country, and at all elevations. It chief food is lizards; but it also eats rats and mice, insects, especially grasshoppers and locusts, and, rarely, young or sickly birds. It constantly hovers over a spot where it has observed something move, and, when certain of its presence, drops down upon it with noiseless wing. Mr. Blyth mentions that parties of twenty or thirty may be seen together beating over the cultivated lands in Lower Bengal. This I have never witnessed. It does not breed in this country. It used to be trained occasionally in Europe to hunt larks, quails, and other small birds, but it is scouted by the Indian falconers as an ignoble race."

I observe that Indian specimens are somewhat smaller and lighter-coloured than those inhabiting England; the whole of the under surface is whiter or more silvery, and the longitudinal streaks narrower, as are also the arrow-head-shaped marks of black on the back. I further find that this remark equally applies to specimens from Trebizond and Malta, males from both of which localities are now before me side by side with others killed in England.

The site chosen by the Kestrel for laying its eggs is much varied; sometimes it selects the nest of a Crow, or other large bird, at others the shelf of a rock, or a crevice in a tower or other building—its four or five eggs being laid without any pretence of a nest of its own making.

The eggs of the Kestrel are of a pale reddish white, mottled all over with dark reddish brown, and occasionally with blotches of reddish brown; they are one inch and seven lines long, by one inch and three lines broad.

The young, when first hatched, are covered with white down; this soon gives place to feathers which are alternately barred with black and buff, a character of plumage which is always retained by the female, but which is only carried by the male to his first moult, when it is exchanged for a very different dress; the head, lower part of the back, and tail are now uniform grey, with the exception that the latter is crossed near the tip by a conspicuous black band; the breast is longitudinally streaked and spotted, and the feathers of the back tipped with lancet-shaped markings. This dress is accurately figured on the accompanying illustration, which represents a male more strongly marked than usual; it was taken from a fine Welsh specimen, kindly sent to me by my friend Colonel Watkyns, who informed me that it had been killed by a blow with a stick. The reduced figure of the female, which sex is always larger than the male, will give the reader an equally accurate idea of her colouring and markings, and render a description of this common English bird almost unnecessary; let me beg, however, that it may not be confounded with the Sparrow-Hawk, a bird of very different stamp and character: I mention this because I have often heard the Kestrel so called.

The front figure represents a male of the natural size on a branch of a Scotch Fir.