whither it resorts in the cold season from Siberia and the high plains of Central Asia; and Mr. Swinhoe states that he has seen specimens from Pekin, Amoy, and Foochow, in China.

Much difference occurs in the size and colouring of the sexes: Latham states that the male weighs five, and the female nine ounces. The former is distinguished by the blue colouring of the upper surface and the broad band at the extremity of the tail, while the latter is usually browner, transversely rayed with a darker colour on the back, and the tail is crossed with distinct bars of pale buff; in some very old individuals of this sex a wash of blue, similar to that of the male, is found to occur on the back and rump. The young differ from the adults in being more suffused with reddish brown, particularly the striæ down the breast. The strength of the female corresponding with her greater size, she is said to attack much larger birds than her mate, and, if pressed by hunger, to strike down a Partridge or a Pigeon.

The Merlin is frequently employed in the sport of Falconry, and is flown at the Lark, the Thrush, and the Blackbird—in former times, however, rather for the amusement of the lady than of her lord, whose pride was in his well-trained Falcon and Tiercel. "A gentleman, residing at Moyallen (county of Down)," says Mr. Thompson, "who has Merlins trained for the chase, frequently flies them at tame pigeons, which they kill well. Mr. W. Sinclair has remarked to me that, when living prey was given to his Merlins, they instantaneously extinguished life, whether or not they at the same time began feeding; while, under similar circum-

stances, the Peregrine Falcon has retained a bird in his grasp for some time, putting an end to its existence only when urged by hunger, though, like the Merlin, when it did commence, the most vital part was invariably first 'entered upon.' His Sparrow-Hawks, it need hardly be added, began feeding indiscriminately

on any part of the living objects offered them."

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Although I did not succeed in finding the nest of the Merlin when I visited the Dovrefjeld, I am certain that the bird was then engaged in feeding its young; for the old birds passed and repassed certain parts of the moor with a degree of regularity that attracted my attention; and as I sat on a stone watching them, I observed that they always took the same direction coming and going from the scrubby parts of the country to the hill-side. The kind of food they carried home I was unable to ascertain; probably small birds. I did not perceive that they ever attacked the Fieldfare or the Redwing, although these were plentiful in the immediate neighbourhood.

Mr. Alfred Newton, writing of the series of Merlin's eggs contained in the 'Ootheca Wolleyana,' states that it is "selected from about two hundred trustworthy specimens, more than three-fourths of which have been simultaneously compared in forming it. As it stands, it may therefore be held a fair representation of what the eggs of this species are really like. There are not many specimens in it which, taken singly, could be pronounced, from their appearance alone, to be certainly Merlins'; but, taken as a whole, a purple tint is seen to be prevalent, which is not discernible in the series of Kestrels' eggs lying in the same drawer, while the average size of these latter is also greater. It will be seen that the Merlin is also one of those birds of prey which are not constant in the choice of a locality for their nests, sometimes breeding (as in the British Islands is, I believe, its usual habit) on the ground, at others in trees." It also appears from the same work, that in Northern Lapland Mr. Wolley found the Merlin not unfrequently using the old nests of the Rough-legged Buzzard, which are built in high trees, for its own purposes.

Speaking of the Merlin, as seen by him in the Quickiock district, between 400 and 500 miles north of the Dovrefjeld, Mr. Wheelwright says it was the common Hawk, and must have been one of the early spring migrants; for he shot a female on the 19th of April. "It was impossible to walk on the fells without meeting this bold and pretty Hawk, which I have even seen chasing the Ptarmigan. I never found the nest here anywhere but on the ground, either on a bare cliff or in the heather, always on tolerably high fells. The earliest taken was on June the 9th. When first laid, the eggs have a beautiful violet-red tinge, with reddish-brown spots; this, however, soon fades, and they become of a reddish-brown hue, with dirty-brown spots. The Laps say that it sometimes builds in trees. The eggs appear to vary in number from four to six; and so much do they resemble those of the Kestrel, though generally a trifle smaller, that the two mingled together could never be accurately separated, unless each egg had been numbered."

"During flight," says Macgillivray, "this species sweeps along at no great height, glides over the fields, shoots by the edge of the wood, examines the thorn fence, and sometimes alights on a tree or wall, as if to survey the ground. Although it may occasionally pounce on a partridge, it usually preys on smaller birds, such as larks, thrushes, chaffinches, sandpipers, snipes, and plovers."

The Plate represents a male and a female, with their four young of a few days old, of the size of life.