

FALCO PEREGRINUS.

Peregrine Falcon.

Falco peregrinus et *communis*, Gmel. et auct., *F. calidus*, Lath. ; *F. abietinus*, Bechst. ; *F. micrurus*, Hodgs.
Bhyri of the Hindoos ; *Bas* of the Bucharrians ; and *Basi* of the Persians.

To enumerate the parts of Great Britain and Ireland frequented by the Peregrine would be superfluous, since it is universally, though sparingly, dispersed over the three kingdoms wherever situations occur adapted to its habits ; these are generally, though not exclusively, precipitous rocks in the neighbourhood of the ocean, and bold headlands, such as Beachy Head and the cliffs of the Isle of Wight, Lulworth Cove, Wales, and Holyhead. In Scotland, the Bass Rock and all similar situations, both on the mainland and in the islands, are frequented by it ; and the same may be said of the sister kingdom of Ireland, where its numbers are neither diminished nor augmented, similar conditions alone being necessary for its presence. The other countries inhabited by this bird are the continent of Europe generally, Greenland, and probably Arctic America. That it also extends its range to Northern Africa, India, Borneo, the Amoor, China, and Japan is certain, from the evidence of various writers, and from the fact of my having received specimens from nearly all those countries. Birds intimately allied to the *Falco peregrinus* are also found in North America, Cape Horn, at the Cape of Good Hope, in India, and in Australia, all of which, although closely resembling each other, possess distinctive characteristics, and have rightly, I think, been regarded as so many species ; they are the *Falco anatum* of North America, the *F. minor* of South Africa, the *F. tunetanus* of North Africa, the *F. peregrinator* of India, and the *F. melanogenys* of Australia. These distinctions being admitted, the Peregrines form an important section of the Falconidæ, instead of constituting a single species, as was formerly supposed ; they are all of similar habits, and they are alike destined to perform similar offices in the great scheme of nature.

The Peregrine is the Falcon "par excellence" employed in the noble sport of Falconry ; but into this part of its history it will not be necessary for me to enter, so many excellent works having been written on the subject, to one of which I would, however, especially direct attention, namely, the magnificent 'Traité de Fauconnerie' of my friend Dr. Schlegel of Leyden. In days gone by, our ancestors devoted much of their time to this noble sport, preserved and cherished the Peregrine by every means in their power, and punished its destruction or molestation with great severity, many instances of which are on record.

During the period of incubation and the rearing of its progeny, when the oceanic cliffs are resorted to, it preys upon Gulls, Guillemots, Rock Pigeons, Plovers, and nearly every other bird which occurs within the area of its particular beat, and vast indeed is the destruction of life in the neighbourhood of its eyrie. In autumn the Peregrine often retires inland and takes up a position in parts likely to afford it a plentiful supply of food, particularly wooded parks and domains in the neighbourhood of large waters frequented by ducks, coots, and other water-fowl, to which it appears to be especially partial ; and in such localities it would probably always remain until the next breeding-season, if left unmolested. Of this feature in the bird's economy I have some certain and curious evidence forwarded to me from Coombe Abbey, Warwickshire, by Mr. James Burdett, keeper to the Earl of Craven, who, unlike keepers in general, has, much to his credit, evinced a desire to preserve rather than to destroy this fine bird,—a line of conduct which has not only met with Lord Craven's approval, but which will be duly appreciated by every lover of nature. On the 25th of March, 1856, Burdett writes, "There has been for the last four or five years a Peregrine, and sometimes two, on the trees skirting the large water at Coombe Abbey. I have often seen them take Coots, Moor-hens, Ducks, &c. On Sunday the 13th I saw one of them strike six Bald Coots quite dead, but it did not take any further notice of them as regards taking them for food. While Charles Lachlan Harris, Esq., and I were fishing yesterday, the 24th, the Peregrine came within five or six yards of us, and took from the water a Bald Coot by the head and carried it nearly ashore, but, on my calling out, dropped it ; in two or three minutes he came again, seized another Coot by the head as before, and took it in his talons to the shore, a distance of about one hundred and fifty yards ; I pushed after him, and when I had arrived within about thirty yards, he flew off, leaving the Coot behind ; he had dislocated its neck, and commenced picking its breast. I send you this bird for examination." On dissection I found the neck dislocated at the third joint from the head, and an appearance as if the sharp point of the hind claw had penetrated the brain at the occiput. Burdett informed me that such was the amazing rapidity with which the Peregrine skimmed over the surface of the water, that the Coot had no chance of escaping either by diving or by flight. Dr. Troughton of Coventry, in a note dated October 12th, 1860, says, "The Peregrine has returned to Coombe, committing devastation among the Coots and Pigeons." Now I regard the foregoing information with much