Tiercel; and the Sparrow-hawk did not attempt to carry, but held on his way. I jumped down and picked up the body of the Lark and the head, the two being entirely disunited. The velocity and force of the stoop must have been tremendous. I have often seen Grouse and Partridges ripped up the back and neck, and the skull laid bare; but I never saw a head taken clean off before."

With what spirit and daring does this bird pursue its victims! In the instance described by Mr. Hammond, the stoop was made close to his horse's head; but I have heard of a Sparrow-hawk pursuing a Finch between the legs of a man, where it had flown for shelter; and in the course of my life I have known many instances of its dashing through or killing itself against a pane of glass in pursuit of a bird, or when flying at a caged bird within.

The following characteristic note on the habits of the bird is from the Rev. J. C. Atkinson's 'British Birds and their Nests':—

"If you hear some careful housewife of a hen skirling and fussing, in dire alarm, her terrified chicks the while seeking any possible shelter, you may be almost certain that the gliding form you caught a glance of rounding the corner of the barn was a Sparrow-hawk, and that some hapless Dove or Chicken has lost the number of his mess. Not that he does not like wild game as well as tame poultry. Mr. Selby mentions one nest containing five young ones, in or close to which were found a Peewit, two Blackbirds, a Thrush, and two Greenfinches, all fresh and half-plucked."

The nest of the Sparrow-hawk is placed on high trees or on the ledges of rocks, according to circumstances, and it not unfrequently adopts the flattened-down nest of a Crow or a Magpie. The eggs are bluish white, very beautifully blotched and marked with umber and light reddish brown. Mr. Hewitson remarks that "the eggs, though usually very readily distinguished from those of any other species, are subject to varieties which sometimes rather resemble those of the Kestrel, but are never marked with the same rich colouring. There are some specimens on which all the markings are very obscure and indistinct, and others in which the dark blotches of colour are at the smaller instead of the larger end. I know of no other egg which is so subject to this variety."

The young, for the first fortnight of their existence, are clothed with greyish-white down, and it is while they are in the nest that the parents are so destructive; on which subject I append a note written by Mr. Weir to the late Mr. Macgillivray, and published in his 'History of British Birds,' vol. iii. p. 359.

"In one of the plantations on Boghead, for several years past, a pair of Sparrow-hawks have reared their young, either in the deserted nest of the Carrion-crow or Magpie. They were uncommonly bold, and with the rapidity of an arrow skimmed over the ground. Amongst Partridges, Pigeons, and other smaller birds they committed great destruction; with almost unerring aim, they pounced upon their prey. From a hut, formed of the branches of trees, I watched for several hours the habits of a pair of these voracious birds whilst they were engaged in feeding their young, which were nearly half-fledged. During the time that I remained at it, the female continued to sit upon them. The male, at shorter or longer intervals, alighted upon the top of a tree, at the distance of about forty yards from the nest, with a bird in his talons. The female always took it from him, and divided it amongst her nestlings. Sometimes he arrived with a Blackbird or a Thrush, but more frequently with a Lark, a Yellow Bunting, or a Chaffinch. Being anxious to know whether the male is in the habit of feeding his offspring, I one morning, in a place of concealment, watched another pair of them for four or five hours. The male always alighted, as in the former case, upon the top of a tree at some distance from the nest, with a bird in his claws, and called upon his mate, who came and caught hold of it in her bill. I shot her as she was carrying it to her young. About nine o'clock in the morning I went home. At six in the evening I returned with a boy, who climbed the tree to see what was in the nest. He had no sooner looked into it, than with astonishment he exclaimed, 'Oh! Sir, the poor little things are gasping.' They were, in fact, almost suffocated by the dead birds about them. He threw down no less than sixteen, amongst which were Larks, Yellow Buntings, Hedge-sparrows, and Green Linnets. I took home the young, which were four in number. They seemed not to have been fed during the day, as they were exceedingly hungry. In these two instances it would seem that the male bird provided the food, but did not give it to his family. Whether this is always the case with the Sparrow-hawk, I cannot ascertain until I have had further opportunities of observing their

The Sparrow-hawk enjoys a wide range over the face of the earth, being found in all parts of Europe except the extreme north, in Northern Africa, Persia, in all the hilly parts of India, where it is highly prized by the natives for falconry, and is employed to capture Partridges, Quails, Coursers, and Sandgrouse; and Mr. Swinhoe states that it is found from Canton to the Amoor, and also in Japan. My son, the late Dr. John Henry Gould, sent me fine male specimens of this bird from Scinde, which on comparison with examples killed in this country presented no appreciable difference.

The Plate represents an adult male of the natural size, while the reduced figure is that of an old female in the act of seizing a Sparrow from the ivy-clad wall of a garden.