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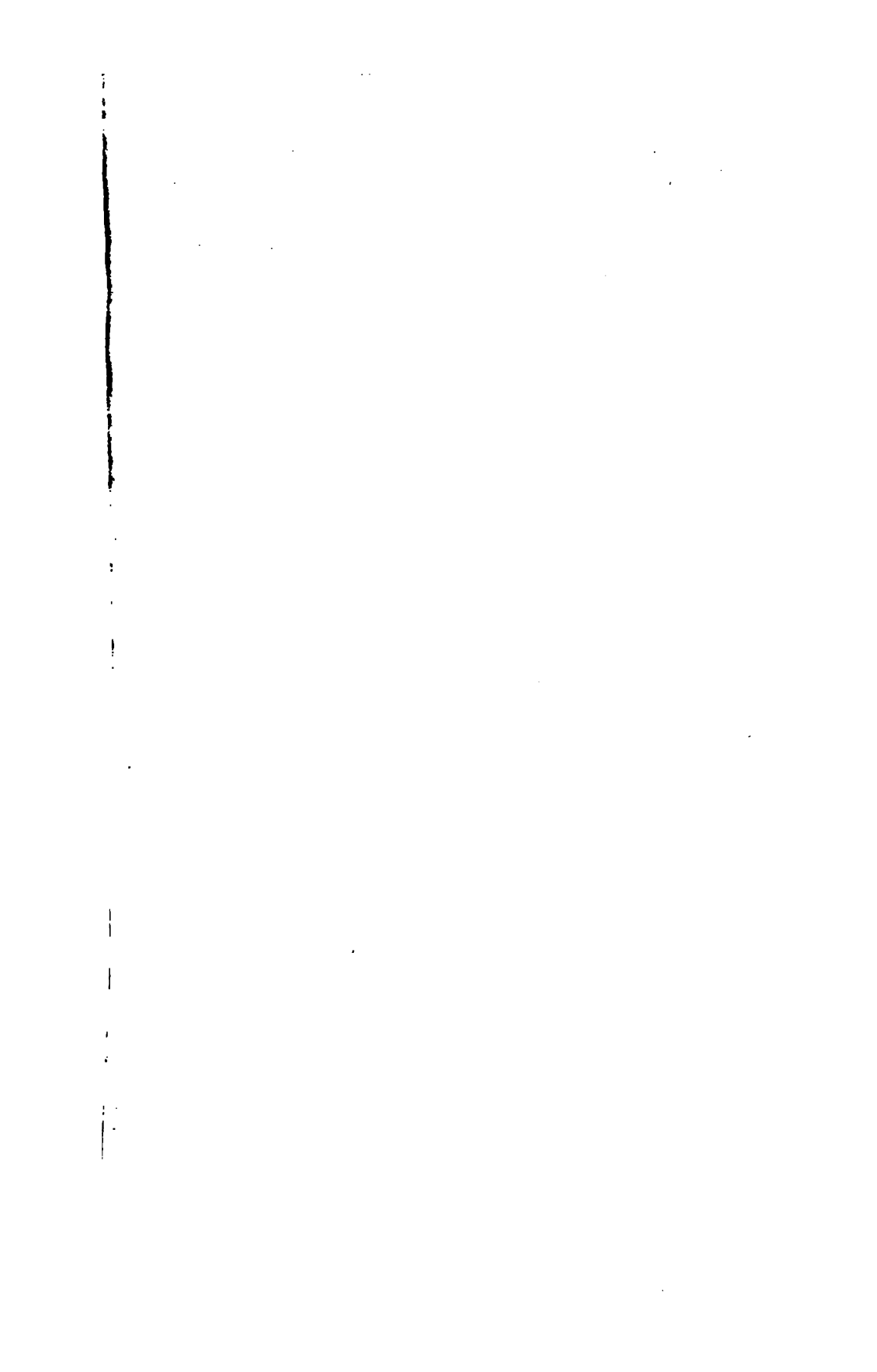


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*J. 1827.*  
**OBSERVATIONS**

**UPON**

**HAWKING,**

**BY**

**SIR JOHN SAUNDERS SEBRIGHT, BART.,**

**M. P.**

**DESCRIBING THE MODE OF**

**BREAKING AND MANAGING**

**THE SEVERAL KINDS OF**

**HAWKS USED IN FALCONRY.**

**LONDON:**

**PRINTED FOR J. HARDING, 32, ST. JAMES'S STREET.**

**1826.**

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*[Entered at Stationers' Hall.]*

TO

JOHN DAWSON DOWNES, ESQ.

MY DEAR SIR,

THIS little Work owes its existence to you, and to you therefore I address it. But for the instructions which you many years ago so kindly gave me, I could not myself have reclaimed and managed Hawks ; and without this practical knowledge of the art, I should not have presumed to offer these few pages to the public.

I am,

Dear Sir,

With great regard,

Your sincere and faithful Friend,

J. S. SEBRIGHT.

*Beechwood, Feb. 20th, 1826.*



## OBSERVATIONS,

*&c. &c.*

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HAWKING, the favourite diversion of our ancestors, is now so fallen into disuse that the Art of Falconry is in danger of being entirely lost. Conceiving, however, in whatever estimation we may hold it as an amusement, that the method of reclaiming a wild bird must always remain an object of curiosity, I have been induced to commit to paper the following observations on the subject :

They are the result, not only of my own\* experience, but of what I have learnt from the

best Falconers of the old school, having had abundant opportunities of acquiring information from them.

The village of Falconswaerd, near Bois le Duc in Holland, has for many years furnished falconers to the rest of Europe. I have known many falconers in England, and in the service of different princes on the Continent; but I never met with one of them who was not a native of Falconswaerd.

It has been the practice of these sober and industrious men to stay with their employers during the season for hawking, and to pass the remainder of the year with their families at home.

John Pells, now in the service of my friend John Dawson Downes, Esq., of Old Gunton Hill, Suffolk, and who also manages the Heron Hawks, kept by subscription in Norfolk, is (I believe) the only efficient fal-

coner by profession now remaining; all the others whom I remember are either dead or worn out, and there has been no inducement to younger men, to follow the employment of their forefathers.

The slight falcon, (*falco gentilis*) and the Goshawk, (*falco palumbarius*) are the two species generally used in falconry. The former is called a long-winged hawk, or one of the lure; the latter a short-winged hawk, or one of the fist. All hawks, according to the length of their wings, and to their mode of flight, belong to the one or to the other of these two classes; and as the mode of managing the slight falcon and the goshawk will apply to all of the class to which they each belong, I shall but briefly mention the other kinds, since they are but seldom used.

The slight falcon may either be taken from the nest, (or eyerie, as it is called, from the German word for egg,) or may be caught

when it has attained its full growth. It is then termed a passage hawk.

### THE EYESS.

Slight falcons breed in cliffs, in several parts of England; but are more abundant in Scotland, and in the northern regions.

The old birds, if not destroyed, return every year to the same nest.

If the young birds are to be conveyed to a distance, they should be taken from the nest before the feathers are enough grown to be in danger of being broken on the journey; but when this is not the case, they should be left with the old ones as long as possible.

They are at first to be put upon a little clean straw, in a large hamper, firmly fixed upon its side, about breast high, on the



branches of a tree, in a retired situation. The lid of the hamper may be so supported as to serve as a sort of platform for the young birds to come out upon, when they are fed.

All that is now required, is to shelter them a little from the rain, and to feed them regularly and plentifully twice a day with fresh raw beef, from which the skin and fat have been carefully removed. Pigeons, rooks, or any other birds just killed, should be given to them occasionally. No meat should be left by them; the basket is to be kept clean, and the young birds are on no account to be handled. By this treatment, they will soon learn to know the voice or whistle of the falconer.

There is frequently to be observed in the plumage of birds of prey a defect, which goes by the name of *hunger-traces*, owing to want of food at some period during the growth of the feathers.



Though the full grown falcon, when in health, may bear without injury the long fasts incident to birds of prey, the young eyess suffers like the young of all other animals, from deficiency of nourishment, and the consequence is principally discernible in the feathers.

This defect, when strongly marked, may be seen in some degree on every feather of the body, but it is especially observable on the expanded wing or tail, in a line crossing all the feathers. On the shaft of each feather, the mark may not only be seen but felt, as a ridge slightly projecting. It may also be seen as a line of imperfection across the web of every feather, neatly marked as if a razor had been lightly passed across the wing.

The injury from this cause is sometimes such, as to occasion the feathers to break off at the hunger-trace, and it is not improbable, that the razor mark seen on the web, is in fact

owing to the breaking off of all the fine fibres of the web in the line of the trace.

Young hawks should be plentifully fed, for if they are left one day without food, the hunger-traces will appear. Raw eggs should be mixed with their food two or three times in a week, as this additional nourishment tends to make the feathers broad and strong.

The growth of the young birds is rapid, they will soon perch on the branches of trees, or the tops of buildings; and as their strength increases, will extend their flights to a considerable distance; but if care be taken to feed them at the same place and at the same hour, they will not fail to be regular in their attendance at their meals.

The meat may either be cut into small pieces and given to them on a plate, or in large pieces, so fastened to the ground as to prevent them from flying away with it; and by

thus using them to feed near the falconer, they will be less disposed to carry, *i. e.* to fly away with the game; a fault to which all hawks are more or less inclined, and which is therefore to be guarded against by every possible precaution.

The longer they can be kept at hack, as this state of liberty is called, the better will they ultimately be; but when they have omitted to come for their food at the accustomed hour, for two or three successive days, it may be inferred that they have learnt to prey for themselves; and it will be necessary to take them up, or they would in a short time go away altogether.

They may be easily taken, by fastening a piece of meat to the ground with a small bow net, so arranged as to be drawn over them when they are feeding; or, one end of a long string may be fixed to the ground, and a slip-knot so placed around the meat, as to



be drawn about their legs by the other; for they will not easily be driven away, when they cannot carry their food with them.

Small leaden bells are sometimes attached to hawk's legs, to prevent them from preying for themselves; by this management they may be left at liberty, even after they have been flown at game. When thus kept, they are termed *hack hawks*.

It is now that the business of the falconer may be said to begin.

A cap of leather, called a *hood*, is to be put on the hawk's head the moment he is taken. It is so constructed as to prevent him from seeing, but to allow him to feed; and may be put on or taken off at pleasure: but to *hood* a hawk, requires a degree of manual dexterity that is not easily acquired.

Slips of light leather, seven or eight

inches long, and a quarter of an inch wide, are to be made fast to each of his legs. These are called *jesses*, and are to be fastened to a small swivel, fixed to the end of a thong of leather, three or four feet long, called a *leash*, so as easily to be detached from the swivel when the hawk is required to fly.

The *jesses* always remain on his legs. He is also to be equipped with two light bells fastened to his legs by pieces of soft leather; by the sound of which, when he is lost, we may be assisted in recovering him.

A hawk is never to be touched by the hand, but when it is absolutely necessary; but he must of course be held during these operations—care being taken not to break his feathers, or to do him any other injury.

A block of solid wood, in the form of a truncated cone, one foot in height, eight or

nine inches in diameter at the top, and large enough at the base not to be easily overturned, is the resting place of this hawk. A small staple is driven into the top, and to this he is to be tied with sufficient length of leash to allow him to go from the block to the ground at pleasure.

When he has been furnished with the necessary appendages of hood, bells, jesses, and leash, he is to be tied to the block, and left quiet for some hours, that he may recover from the alarm and fatigue that he has undergone.

The block is always (unless when it rains,) to stand in the open air in the day-time but in a place well protected from the wind.

The hawk must now be placed upon the fist with his hood on.

He will at first *bait*, (flutter off) when



he is to be re-placed gently by the hand; but he will very soon learn to sit still. He must be carried about on the fist during the greater part of the day, and frequently stroked with a feather on his back and legs.

When he is to be fed, the hood must be taken off. At first, this is best done at night, with a candle so placed as to give no more light than is absolutely necessary: but in two or three days this precaution will not be required, and he may be unhooded, and fed by day-light.

He must now be brought by degrees to stand quiet when the hood is to be put on.

The brail is used for this purpose. This is a thong of soft leather, with a slit running longitudinally along the middle, of such a length as to admit the pinion joint.

When the pinion joint has been intro-

duced into the slit, the lower end of the thong is brought backwards under the wing, and tied to the other end above it.

The wing is thus confined, and in such a way as to remove it but little from its natural position, and so that it can receive no injury.

Another very effectual way to make a hawk stand quiet is, by causing water to stream upon him, from a whisp of hay or straw, until he is thoroughly drenched ; this should always be done in the morning, and he should be carried on the fist until he is dry, with his wing *brailed*, be stroked with a feather, and hooded and unhooded very frequently.

When he has become a little accustomed to the hood, neither the brail nor the drenching will be necessary, but he must be carried almost all day upon the fist. The hood is to be occasionally taken off, and he may then be



allowed for a short time to pull upon a stump or pinion, from which he can get but little meat.

A few mouthfulls should always be given to him the moment the hood is put on.

Hawks, when hooded, are always quiet. In the field the hood prevents them from *baiting* when birds rise, and at other times from being alarmed at any thing that may approach them.

It may, perhaps, appear paradoxical to assert, that hawks, by being kept hooded, are brought nearer to their natural habits, but this is undoubtedly the case, for by this treatment they are induced to remain at rest when they are not either feeding, or in pursuit of game, and such are their habits in a wild state, when left undisturbed.

When the hawk is become tolerably

tame, he may be unhooded ; and after having eaten a few mouthfulls, be placed on the block, and enticed to come from thence to the fist when held near him. He will soon learn to fly to it when it is presented to him at the distance of several feet, the fist being of course always well garnished with meat.

When he has been practised in this manner for a few days, if he be unhooded on the fist, and a small piece of meat be thrown on the ground, to the distance of two or three feet, he will fly down to it, and having eaten it, fly back to the fist, enticed as usual by the offer of food.

It is hardly necessary to say, that a long and light string, called a *creance*, must always be tied to the leash when these lessons are practised, and that the young hawk should be brought to them so gradually, as not to risk a failure, by which much time would be lost.

The hawk is now to be taught to come to the *lure*; it is a forked piece of wood, covered with the wings of birds, and heavy enough to prevent the hawk from flying away with it. Pieces of meat are tied to each side of the lure, and it is attached to a string three or four feet long, by which it may be swung round in the air, or thrown to a distance.

The hawk is to be fed upon the lure, being first made to come to it when held very near him, then when held a little farther off; it is to be next thrown upon the ground to a small distance, and thus he is to be brought by degrees to fly to it, and to seize it eagerly, however far it may be thrown.

An assistant is now to swing the lure at some distance from the falconer, who casts off the hawk.

It is to be thrown into the air when



the hawk is flying towards it, but so that he cannot attain it until it falls to the ground, lest he should be hurt by striking it in his flight.

When this lesson has been repeated, until the hawk has become eager to take the lure, the assistant is to swing it as before, but is to take it into his hand when the hawk is coming ; he is then to swing it again as soon as the hawk has passed ; and finally, to throw it upon the ground, when the hawk is returning towards him.

In this way the hawk will soon be taught to fly round the falconer, bending his flight inwards when the lure is shewn to him, or when he hears the call of the falconer, who should always *halloo* when he is luring. He may thus be made to follow the falconer wherever he pleases ; this is called *waiting on*.

When the hawk has alighted upon the

lure, the falconer is to walk round him, whistle to him while he is feeding, and reward him with a good meal when he is taken up.

It is thus that hawks are made obedient to the lure, and that they are exercised when they cannot be flown at game, but they must not be kept too long upon wing, or they would acquire the habit of flying low; and it is the perfection of a slight falcon to soar as high as possible.

It is now time to enter him to his game. While the hawk is *waiting on* at a proper height, his head being turned inwards—a partridge tied to a creance is to be thrown up; and when the hawk has taken it, he must be allowed to eat it on the ground near the falconer, who is to walk round him, and whistle to him as usual.

When this lesson has been repeated three or four times, by throwing up partridges not

confined by the creance, the education of the eyess may be considered as completed; and he may be taken into the field to be used in the way that I shall endeavour to describe; but it will be necessary to give him every advantage in his first flights, and to have a live partridge in the bag ready to be thrown up to him, should he fail in his first attempts to take his game.

I have now described the mode of breaking eyesses, as practised by the falconers; but I am of opinion that it might be better done, and with infinitely less trouble, by using the young hawk when flying at hack, to feed always on the lure.

He would soon learn to fly to it, when swung round in the air, and would thus be taught to wait on.

The falconer should kneel down to the hawk, when he is feeding on the lure, and



give him meat from the hand, by which means he may not only be made tame, but may be prevented from carrying.

When the season for hawking is at hand, a few live partridges should be thrown up to him, and he should be allowed to eat them near the falconer.

I have no doubt but by this treatment a young hawk would be fit for use as soon as he was taken up, and that nothing more would be required than to accustom him to *stand to the hood*.

If care be taken to feed young hawks as soon as it is light in the morning, they may be left long to fly at liberty before they will prey for themselves; for they have no inclination to pursue game, when they are not impelled to it by hunger.

## PARTRIDGE HAWKING.

An open country is required for this sport. The falconers must be on horseback, provided with a steady pointer and one or two spaniels, under good command.

When a partridge is marked down, or pointed by the dog, the hawk is to be unhooded and cast off. He will fly round the falconer, and if a good bird, mount to a considerable height—the higher the better.

If he ranges to too great a distance, he may be made to incline inwards by the voice of the falconer, and by the lure; but these should be used with discretion: for it is much better that a flight should occasionally be lost from a hawk's ranging too far, than that his



pitch should be lowered (as is often the case) by too much luring. This, and the not giving the hawk time to mount before the game is sprung, are very common faults in the management of slight falcons.

It is by no means necessary that the hawk should be very near the birds when they rise. If he be within two or three hundred yards of them, it will be near enough, provided that his pitch be high, and that his head be turned towards them.

High ranging pointers are by far the best for this sport, for the birds will often lie to a dog, when they will not suffer horsemen to approach them.

When the dog points at a distance, the hawk is to be cast off, as it will both prevent the birds from rising, and give him time to mount.

When the partridge rises, the hawk will dart down to it with wonderful velocity, and either take it in the first flight, or force it to take refuge in a bush or hedge. In the latter case the hawk will make his point—that is, rise perpendicularly in the air over the spot where the bird got into cover.

The falconer is now to attend solely to his hawk, and leave it to others to assist the dog in springing the bird.

The hawk should *wait on* at a moderate distance, but his flight should not be lowered by an injudicious use of the lure.

When the hawk has taken the partridge, the falconer alone is to approach him, at first walking round him at a distance, with the greatest circumspection, and drawing near him by degrees, as he seems disposed to bear it. At length, by kneeling down, whistling as at the time of feeding, the arm may be extended

gently, (for all sudden motions are to be avoided) and by taking hold of the partridge, which the hawk will certainly not quit, he may be placed on the fist, still grasping his prey in his talons.

The hawk is then to be hooded, after having been rewarded with the head of the partridge, or if not required to fly again, he should be immediately fed.

If a young hawk does not take the bird in his first flight, and if it cannot be retrieved in a short time after he has *put it in* (driven it into cover), a live partridge from the bag should be thrown up to him; and if it be the first bird that he has taken, he should be allowed to eat it near the falconer. Nothing is so likely to prevent him from *carrying* as this treatment; for this very troublesome fault does not arise (as some suppose) from the wildness of the hawk, but from his dread of being deprived of his prey.



In the latter part of the season, when the birds are too wild to lie to the dog, the company may draw up in line at the distance of fifty or sixty yards from each other, and gallop across a plain with a hawk upon wing.

The falconer should be placed in the centre of the line, that he may regulate the pace by the situation of the hawk. The best sport that I have ever seen in partridge hawking was obtained in this manner, when the face of the country was so bare, and the birds so wild, as to make it impossible to approach them in the usual way.

When the birds will not lie to the dog, the hawk is sometimes unhooded, and cast off the moment that they rise. This is technically called *flying out of the hood*.

The first flight procured in this way affords but little sport; but if the bird is *put in*, the second may be in the right style, as the

hawk will then have time to get up to his pitch.

As the partridge always flies in a straight line, and does not shift to evade his pursuer, the perfection of this sport is, for the hawk to wait on at a great height, and to come down almost perpendicularly to strike his prey.

### **MAGPIE HAWKING.**

Magpies may be flown with eyess slight falcons, and afford excellent sport.

A down or common, where low trees or thorn bushes are dispersed at the distance of from thirty to fifty yards apart, is the place best calculated for this diversion.

When a magpie is seen at a distance, a hawk is immediately to be cast off. The magpie will take refuge in a bush the moment

that he sees the falcon, and will remain there until the falconer arrives, with the hawk waiting on in the air. The magpie is to be driven from his retreat, and the hawk, if at a good pitch, will stoop at him as he passes to another bush, from whence he is to be driven in the same way, another hawk having been previously cast off, so that one or the other may always be so situated as to attack him to advantage.

The second hawk is necessary, for the magpie shifts with great cunning and dexterity to avoid the stoop; and when hard pressed, owing to the bushes being rather far apart, will pass under the bellies of the horses, flutter along a cart rut, and avail himself of every little inequality of the ground in order to escape.

Four or five assistants, besides the falconer, (who should attend solely to his hawks) are required for this sport. They



should be well mounted, and provided with whips; for the magpie cannot be driven from a bush by a stick; but the crack of a whip will force him to leave it, even when he is so tired as hardly to be able to fly. Nothing can be more animating than this sport: it is, in my opinion, far superior to every other kind of hawking. The object of the chase is fully a match for its pursuers—a requisite absolutely necessary to give an interest to any sport of this kind; and it has the advantage of giving full employment to the company, which is not the case in partridge-hawking.

The magpie will always endeavour to make his way to some strong cover; care, therefore, must be taken to counteract him, and to drive him to that part of the ground where the bushes are farthest from each other. It is not easy to take a magpie in a hedge. Some of the horsemen must be on each side of it; some must ride behind, and

some before him; for, unless compelled to rise, by being surrounded on all sides, he will flutter along the hedge, so as to shelter himself from the stoop of the falcon. Many requisites are necessary to afford this sport in perfection—a favourable country, good hawks, and able assistants.

### **HAWKING OF ROOKS WITH EYESSES.**

As slight falcons are not bred in the neighbourhood of Falconswaerd, many of the falconers have had no experience with eyesses, and are of opinion that they cannot be made to fly rooks; but I have proved the contrary by my own practice.

From eyesses that have been confined to the block from an early age, much exertion cannot be expected; but I have had falcons that had flown long at hack, and



preyed frequently for themselves before they were taken up, that flew rooks in the highest perfection; and although I do not know that any eyesses have been flown at herons, I have no doubt but that some of the best of them would be fully equal to the passage-hawks for that purpose. This peculiar advantage attends the use of eyesses, that they may be flown when in high condition; whereas the falconers are obliged to keep the passage-hawks somewhat low, from the fear of losing them.

The females of almost every kind of hawk are considerably larger than the males. In the language of falconry, the former are called *falcons*, and the latter *teircels*. These terms are applied to almost every species of hawk. It is to be regretted that this language should prevail, as it has led to many mistakes.

The term falcon should be applied, *par ea-*

*cellence*, to the *falco gentilis*—a distinction that he is well entitled to, by reason of his superior qualities as a bird of chase.

### PASSAGE HAWKS.

The slight falcons that are brought to this country in the spring, to be used in flying herons, are caught in the preceding autumn and winter, on the heaths near Falconswaerd, as they pass towards the south and east.

These hawks are taken, by placing, in a favourable situation, a small bow-net, so arranged as to be drawn over quickly by a long string that is attached to it. A pigeon of a light colour is tied to the ground as a bait; and the falconer is concealed, at a convenient distance, in a hut made of turf, to which the string reaches.

A Butcher Bird, called by Linnæus, *Lanius Excubitor*; that is, the Warder Butcher Bird, from the look-out that he keeps for the falcon, is tied on the ground near the hut; and two pieces of turf are so set up as to serve him, as well for a place of shelter from the weather, as of retreat from the falcon. The falconer employs himself in some sedentary occupation, relying upon the vigilance of the butcher-bird, to warn him of the approach of a hawk. This he never fails to do, by screaming loudly when he perceives his enemy at a distance, and by running under the turf when the hawk draws near. The falconer is thus prepared to pull the net, the moment that the falcon has pounced upon the pigeon. The young hawks of the year are called *red* hawks, from the colour of their plumage. The older hawks are called haggards: it is these that ornithologists have mistaken for a distinct species, calling it the Peregrine Falcon. These certainly differ very much from the young birds, in the colour of



their plumage. Their feathers assume a blue or slate colour, and become lighter at every succeeding moult; and what is more remarkable, the bars on the breast-feathers of the red hawk are longitudinal, and those of the haggard are transverse. The same change takes place in the feathers of many other hawks. These changes are quite notorious to falconers, who have all had occasion to see the same individual hawks, at different periods of their lives, in the two different states that I have described.

It is to the old hawk, when found in the wild state only, that the term haggard is applied: those that have been *mewed* (moulted) in a state of captivity, are called intermewed hawks.

I have used the term slight falcon for the *falco gentilis*, because it is so called by the falconers; but from the habits of these birds, perhaps the term *falco peregrinus*

would be the most appropriate to the species.

Slight falcons take up their abode every year, from October or November, until the spring, upon Westminster Abbey, and upon other churches in the metropolis: this is well known to the London pigeon-fanciers, from the great havoc they make in their flights.

The mode of managing the passage-hawk, after he is caught, is very similar to that which I have described in speaking of the eyess, when first taken in hand; but as the former has been longer at large, he is, of course, more difficult to reclaim: but on the other hand, from having been accustomed to prey for himself, he will in general fly boldly at his game, which is not always the case with the eyess.

It may appear, to those who are unac-

quainted with falconry, that the difficulty of the art consists in taming the hawk; but this is by no means the case; for it is very easy to tame him, but very difficult to make him fly.

A *rufter hood* is put upon the hawk the moment he is taken. It is lighter than the common one; but from its being inconvenient for hooding and unhooding, is never used but for birds lately taken, or in the act of travelling.

The extreme points of the beak and talons are to be taken off, and jesses, leash, and bells are to be put on, as has been already directed for the eyess. The passage-hawk, when first taken, must be carried all day upon the fist, and fed at night by candle-light.

By constant *carriage*, not only by day, but also (should it be found necessary) during



hawk will then have time to get up to his pitch.

As the partridge always flies in a straight line, and does not shift to evade his pursuer, the perfection of this sport is, for the hawk to wait on at a great height, and to come down almost perpendicularly to strike his prey.

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When a magpie is seen at a distance, a hawk is immediately to be cast off. The magpie will take refuge in a bush the moment

that he sees the falcon, and will remain there until the falconer arrives, with the hawk waiting on in the air. The magpie is to be driven from his retreat, and the hawk, if at a good pitch, will stoop at him as he passes to another bush, from whence he is to be driven in the same way, another hawk having been previously cast off, so that one or the other may always be so situated as to attack him to advantage.

The second hawk is necessary, for the magpie shifts with great cunning and dexterity to avoid the stoop; and when hard pressed, owing to the bushes being rather far apart, will pass under the bellies of the horses, flutter along a cart rut, and avail himself of every little inequality of the ground in order to escape.

Four or five assistants, besides the falconer, (who should attend solely to his hawks) are required for this sport. They



should be well mounted, and provided with whips; for the magpie cannot be driven from a bush by a stick; but the crack of a whip will force him to leave it, even when he is so tired as hardly to be able to fly. Nothing can be more animating than this sport: it is, in my opinion, far superior to every other kind of hawking. The object of the chase is fully a match for its pursuers—a requisite absolutely necessary to give an interest to any sport of this kind; and it has the advantage of giving full employment to the company, which is not the case in partridge-hawking.

The magpie will always endeavour to make his way to some strong cover; care, therefore, must be taken to counteract him, and to drive him to that part of the ground where the bushes are farthest from each other. It is not easy to take a magpie in a hedge. Some of the horsemen must be on each side of it; some must ride behind, and

some before him; for, unless compelled to rise, by being surrounded on all sides, he will flutter along the hedge, so as to shelter himself from the stoop of the falcon. Many requisites are necessary to afford this sport in perfection—a favourable country, good hawks, and able assistants.

### **HAWKING OF ROOKS WITH EYESSES.**

As slight falcons are not bred in the neighbourhood of Falconswaerd, many of the falconers have had no experience with eyesses, and are of opinion that they cannot be made to fly rooks; but I have proved the contrary by my own practice.

From eyesses that have been confined to the block from an early age, much exertion cannot be expected; but I have had falcons that had flown long at hack, and

preyed frequently for themselves before they were taken up, that flew rooks in the highest perfection; and although I do not know that any eyesses have been flown at herons, I have no doubt but that some of the best of them would be fully equal to the passage-hawks for that purpose. This peculiar advantage attends the use of eyesses, that they may be flown when in high condition; whereas the falconers are obliged to keep the passage-hawks somewhat low, from the fear of losing them.

The females of almost every kind of hawk are considerably larger than the males. In the language of falconry, the former are called *falcons*, and the latter *terrcels*. These terms are applied to almost every species of hawk. It is to be regretted that this language should prevail, as it has led to many mistakes.

The term falcon should be applied, *par ea-*



cellence, to the *falco gentilis*—a distinction that he is well entitled to, by reason of his superior qualities as a bird of chase.

### PASSAGE HAWKS.

The slight falcons that are brought to this country in the spring, to be used in flying herons, are caught in the preceding autumn and winter, on the heaths near Falconswaerd, as they pass towards the south and east.

These hawks are taken, by placing, in a favourable situation, a small bow-net, so arranged as to be drawn over quickly by a long string that is attached to it. A pigeon of a light colour is tied to the ground as a bait; and the falconer is concealed, at a convenient distance, in a hut made of turf, to which the string reaches.



A Butcher Bird, called by Linnæus, *Lanius Excubitor*; that is, the Warder Butcher Bird, from the look-out that he keeps for the falcon, is tied on the ground near the hut; and two pieces of turf are so set up as to serve him, as well for a place of shelter from the weather, as of retreat from the falcon. The falconer employs himself in some sedentary occupation, relying upon the vigilance of the butcher-bird, to warn him of the approach of a hawk. This he never fails to do, by screaming loudly when he perceives his enemy at a distance, and by running under the turf when the hawk draws near. The falconer is thus prepared to pull the net, the moment that the falcon has pounced upon the pigeon. The young hawks of the year are called *red* hawks, from the colour of their plumage. The older hawks are called haggards: it is these that ornithologists have mistaken for a distinct species, calling it the Peregrine Falcon. These certainly differ very much from the young birds, in the colour of

their plumage. Their feathers assume a blue or slate colour, and become lighter at every succeeding moult; and what is more remarkable, the bars on the breast-feathers of the red hawk are longitudinal, and those of the haggard are transverse. The same change takes place in the feathers of many other hawks. These changes are quite notorious to falconers, who have all had occasion to see the same individual hawks, at different periods of their lives, in the two different states that I have described.

It is to the old hawk, when found in the wild state only, that the term haggard is applied: those that have been *mewed* (moulted) in a state of captivity, are called intermewed hawks.

I have used the term slight falcon for the *falco gentilis*, because it is so called by the falconers; but from the habits of these birds, perhaps the term *falco peregrinus*

would be the most appropriate to the species.

Slight falcons take up their abode every year, from October or November, until the spring, upon Westminster Abbey, and upon other churches in the metropolis: this is well known to the London pigeon-fanciers, from the great havoc they make in their flights.

The mode of managing the passage-hawk, after he is caught, is very similar to that which I have described in speaking of the eyess, when first taken in hand; but as the former has been longer at large, he is, of course, more difficult to reclaim: but on the other hand, from having been accustomed to prey for himself, he will in general fly boldly at his game, which is not always the case with the eyess.

It may appear, to those who are unac-



quainted with falconry, that the difficulty of the art consists in taming the hawk ; but this is by no means the case ; for it is very easy to tame him, but very difficult to make him fly.

A *rufster hood* is put upon the hawk the moment he is taken. It is lighter than the common one ; but from its being inconvenient for hooding and unhooding, is never used but for birds lately taken, or in the act of travelling.

The extreme points of the beak and talons are to be taken off, and jesses, leash, and bells are to be put on, as has been already directed for the eyess. The passage-hawk, when first taken, must be carried all day upon the fist, and fed at night by candle-light.

By constant *carriage*, not only by day, but also (should it be found necessary) during



a part of the night, and by frequent brushing with a feather, he will at length learn to feed freely on the fist by daylight; and he must then be brought by degrees to stand quiet when the hood is to be put on. I have fully described how this is to be done, in speaking of the eyess.

The hawk is not to be fed while he is thus *making to the hood*; but a small piece of meat should always be given to him after the hood is put on.

The passage-hawk is to be trained to the lure in the way that I have described in treating of the eyess; but it is enough if these hawks will fly to it when swung round at a distance: it would be very difficult to teach them to wait on, nor is it necessary, for the purposes to which they are applied. They are always *taken down* after having flown unsuccessfully at their game, not by the lure, but by a live pigeon tied to a string.

When the hawk has learnt to come well to the lure, a live pigeon is to be given to him from the hand ; one is then to be thrown up to him in a creance ; and if he behaves well in these trials, he may be trusted at large, to fly a pigeon whose flight has been shortened.

In the same way he is to be brought to fly a heron. First, one is to be given to him from the hand ; next, one in a creance ; and, lastly, one at large with its flight shortened. These are, in fact, the regular gradations by which all hawks are brought to fly at the game for which they are intended. It is hardly necessary to say, that the hawk should be well rewarded after each of these lessons.

Some hawks will not attack a heron, when it is first shewn to them ; but they may generally be brought to it by flying them at a cock, of a light colour, and by tying meat upon a heron's back, and allowing them to feed

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neighbourhood of Alconbury Hill. They are abundant in open countries. A great owl, (*strix bubo*) to the leg of which the falconers usually tie a fox's brush, not only to impede its flight, but to make it (as they fancy) more attractive, is thrown up to draw down the kite.

The Icelfalco and the gyrfalcon are managed very much in the same way as the slight falcon, as are also the two following species, with which I shall conclude my observations upon long-winged hawks.

The merlin and the hobby both breed in England; they are very small, but rapid in their flight. They may be made to *wait on*; the merlin will take blackbirds or thrushes; the hobby small birds, if thrown up from the hand; but they are neither of them strong enough to be efficient in the field.

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and a half in diameter, fixed horizontally about four feet from the ground. It is to be placed under a tree in fine weather, and in some sheltered place when it rains. To the perch is suspended a piece of cloth, or of matting, hanging like a curtain, which assists the hawk in regaining the perch when he has *baited* off, and prevents him from twisting the leash round it by passing under. The swivel that is fixed to the leash is to be tied close to the top of the perch, and is attached to the jesses by a short leash, six or eight inches long, in such a manner as to be easily taken off, when the hawk is to be prepared for flying. He is then to be held on the fist by the jesses, in the same way as the slight falcon.

As the goshawk is carried without a hood, and as he is not to be brought down by the lure, but must come to the fist at the falconer's call, it is essential that he should be made as tame as possible, and this can only be done by almost constant *carriage*, and by allowing

him frequently to *pull upon* a stump or pinion, from which he can get but little meat. He will soon learn to come from the perch to the fist, if held close to him when allured by meat. By persevering in this practice, and by cautiously increasing the distance, he will at length be brought to come to the fist, when he is thirty or forty yards off. It is hardly necessary to say, that a creance must always be attached to the leash when these lessons are given, until the hawk is sufficiently reclaimed to be trusted at large, and with this precaution too much must not be required of him at a time. In breaking hawks, and all other animals, much additional trouble is occasioned, and much time is lost in endeavouring to get them on too fast. When the gos-hawk will come freely to the fist, not only from the perch, but from the ground, and from low trees on which he should frequently be placed, it will only be necessary to give him a few live partridges in the way that I have described, and he will be ready for the field.

## PARTRIDGE HAWKING.

That the goshawk should have been highly valued before it was the practice to shoot flying, I can readily conceive: for he will not only take a great deal of game, but may be flown in the most inclosed country, or even in a wood. But I must be allowed to express my surprise that any one should use these birds for sport.

When a covey rises, if the birds are very young, the goshawk may possibly take one at the first flight; but if the partridges are tolerably strong, that is, what a sportsman would call *fit to kill*, they will fly at least twice as fast as this hawk.

He follows the covey at a distance, flying low, and in the manner of an owl. When the partridges take refuge in a hedge, (for



these hawks are too slow for an open country) the goshawk marks the spot with the greatest precision ; and after having *made his point*, by rising perpendicularly in the air, he takes his stand upon a neighbouring tree. If his situation be favourable, he is allowed to retain it, or otherwise he is called down to the fist. In either case the birds are to be driven out, and he either takes one at this their second flight, or again drives them into a hedge, and takes his stand as before.

A great many partridges may be killed *by the means* of the goshawk, in the beginning of the season, when the birds are young, and particularly in a dewy morning, as their wings becoming wet from their having been driven into the hedges, they will be easily taken by the dogs. In fact, not one in ten of the partridges brought home by those who use these birds, has been actually taken by the hawk.

The goshawk will take landrails and



pheasants ; but if much used to these easier flights, will not even attempt to fly partridges. Indeed, the goshawk is so *slack mettled*, that it requires the most skilful management to make him fly at all. The very worst of them will take rabbits ; and this is, in my opinion, the best use to which they can be applied.

## THE SPARROW HAWK.

(*Falco Nisus.*)

The sparrow-hawk is like the goshawk, but in miniature ; and he is to be managed exactly in the same way. His flight is rapid for a short distance ; he will take partridges at the beginning of the season, and is the best of all the hawks for landrails.

I once took a wild partridge with a sparrow-hawk of my own breaking, ten days after he had been taken wild from a wood.

These hawks must be kept in high condition, and cannot fly when there is the least wind; they are upon the whole more difficult to manage than stronger birds.

### ON FEEDING.

Hawks are not susceptible of attachment to their keeper; nor do they, like the dog, pursue game for the pleasure of the sport. Hunger is in them the only inducement to action; and in a wild, as in a domestic state, they remain almost motionless when their hunger is satisfied. It is, therefore, by this appetite alone that hawks can be governed—it is the bridle that restrains them, and the spur that urges them to exertion; and it is, therefore, on the right management of this *primum mobile*, that the success of the falconer must principally depend.

The health of the hawk is the first thing

to be attended to; for if he be not in full vigour, very little can of course be expected from him. I have already said, that fresh raw beef is the best food for hawks. It would be impossible to lay down rules for the quantity of food that is to be given to them, as it must depend upon the condition and behaviour of each individual bird, and will, of course, vary from day to day; but the average is about one-third of a pound of beef a day for a slight falcon, and for other hawks in proportion.

All hawks, to be kept in health, should have a *gorge*; that is, an abundant meal once in four or five days, and a moderate meal on each of the intervening days. It is easy to judge of the condition of a hawk by his weight, or by feeling the sides of his breast. Some hawks fly best when they are in high condition, and others when they are somewhat lower. When, therefore, it has been ascertained in what state of flesh any parti-



cular hawk flies best, his food should be regulated accordingly—it being always borne in mind, that it is far better that a hawk should be too high in keeping than too low. When it is found necessary to lower the condition of a hawk, his food may be considerably reduced for a day or two; but the gorge every four or five days must on no account be omitted.

This mode of treatment that has been adopted by the falconers, from long experience, and appears to be consistent with the habits of birds of prey in a state of nature; for in rainy or windy weather, or where game is scarce, they must frequently pass whole days without food; and when they do obtain it, they will, of course, satisfy their voracious appetites by eating to excess.

Hawks that are breaking must always be fed in the evening; for it would be in vain to



expect them to come either to the fist or to the lure, when they are not hungry: and, besides, nothing is so contrary to the nature of these birds as to *bait* and struggle, when their stomachs are full: they should, therefore, be kept as quiet as possible after they have been fed.

The less a hawk is reclaimed, the sharper must he be set when any thing is required of him. This applies equally to luring, training, coming to the fist, and to flying at game.

Hawks that want mettle must always be flown with a keen appetite; but excess of hunger would not only be injurious to their health, but it would make them hover about the falconer for food, and be regardless of the game. There is, perhaps, no time at which a hawk's appetite is in so perfect a state, for any thing that may be required of him, as

about one hour after his usual time of feeding, and when he has had rather a scanty meal on the preceding day.

I will suppose that hawks are to fly three days in the week, and endeavour to describe how they should be fed. It may, perhaps, serve as a sort of outline for the young falconer. The rest must depend upon his own judgment and discretion.

Hawks should have a slight meal on the day before flying; it should be more or less, according to the condition and behaviour of each particular bird. They should have a plentiful meal on the days that they have flown; and two whole days (on which they should be moderately fed,) ought to intervene between that on which they have a *gorge*, and the day of flying. It is better not to fly hawks on two successive days: it may always, however, be done occasionally. They

should be fed in the field the moment they have done flying.

Hawks, (and probably most, if not all other birds of prey) from feeding on birds and animals with their coats on, and thus swallowing a quantity of indigestible matter, relieve themselves by throwing it up in the form of castings, which are oblong balls, consisting of the hair or feathers forcibly compressed together. The condition of the hawk may be judged of by the appearance and state of cohesion of this mass; for when the bird is not in health, and the process of digestion not complete, the feathers, instead of being simply pressed into a ball, are held together by a tenacious mucus, and mixed with particles of undigested meat. When hawks are fed solely on beef, the skin of a bird with the feathers on, or that of an animal with the fur, should be given to them twice a week. Mice, lately killed, answer well for



this purpose: when none of these can be procured, feathers may be given with the beef as a substitute. It is to be observed that hawks, after having taken fur or feathers with their food, will not fly until they have cast.

### ON BATHING.

Hawks should bathe every five or six days, in a clear stream, or pool, of water, that is shallow at the edge; but when these are not at hand, eyesses may be made to bathe in pans sufficiently large for the purpose.

A moderate quantity of food is to be given to the hawk, before he is taken to the stream; a creance is to be tied to the leash, and fastened to the ground; he is then to be unhooded, and placed near the water. The falconer must then retire to a distance. When



the hawk has bathed, he should be left to plume himself on the beach, as long as he remains quiet, but he must be cautiously taken up the moment he shews signs of uneasiness, lest he should *bait in the creance* with a full crop, which is always to be prevented by every possible precaution.

### WEATHERING.

To weather a hawk, is to leave him unhooded in the open air; eyesses may be weathered on their blocks, but the passage hawks should be placed on a small hillock, covered with turf, and a few mouthfulls of food should be given to them when they are unhooded.

### IMPING.

When any of the flight or tail feathers of a hawk are accidentally broken, the speed

of the bird is so injured, that the falconer finds it necessary to repair them, by an expedient called imping.

This curious process consists in attaching to the part that remains an exact substitute for the piece lost. For this purpose the falconer is always provided with pinions, (right and left) and with tail feathers of hawks, or with the feathers separated from the pinion, carefully preserved and numbered, so as to prevent mistake in taking a true match for the injured feather. He then with a sharp knife gently parts the web of the feather to be repaired, at its thickest part, and cuts the shaft obliquely forward, so as not to damage the web on the opposite edge. He next cuts the substitute feather as exactly as possible at the corresponding point, and with the same degree of slope.

For the purpose of uniting them, he is provided with an iron needle, with broad tri-

angular points at both ends ; and after wetting the needle with salt and water, he thrusts it into the centre of the pith of each part, as truly straight, and as nearly to the same length in each as may be. When this operation has been skilfully performed, the junction is so neat that an inexperienced eye would hardly discern the point of union ; and as the iron rusts, from having been wetted with brine, there is little or no danger of separation.

### MEWING.

The mew is the place where hawks are put to moult. They are sometimes kept loose in a room ; but it is, in my opinion, much better to mew them on perches or on blocks. Hawks must be fed very high, and kept very quiet when they mew ; they are also kept unhooded, and frequently bathed.

As it is difficult to procure Icelanders and gyrfalcons, these valuable birds are well worth mewing ; but as slight falcons and goshawks are easily obtained, much trouble and expense will be saved by getting young birds every year ; and as these do not cast their flight and tail feathers the first year, they will be in order to fly in the autumn, when the older birds will be in moult.

### THE CAGE.

The cage is an oblong frame, four feet six inches long and two feet wide, made of light wood, the sides and ends are of a proper size for hawks to perch upon, and a little wadded, that it may not injure their feet. It is supported, when placed on the ground, by four legs, about a foot long. Slight rods of hazel are fixed across each end, to prevent the hawks from falling on the inside when



they bait. A space of about twenty inches in length is left in the middle of the cage, in which the falconer places himself, carrying it by two straps that pass over his shoulders. The hawks are tied upon the cage as upon a perch, and by this contrivance many may be carried by one man.

The cage, and other instruments used in falconry, are well described in the plates of the *French Encyclopædia*, printed in 1751.

FINIS.













