



THE HARPY EAGLE.

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Sitting motionless on the ground in the corner of the eagles' cage, in Central Park, New York city, is a curious bird which, at first sight, visitors mistake for an owl, and wonder why it is confined among the more noble birds of prey and apart from its own species. The creature rarely stirs from its favorite corner. When food is offered, or when some one of the eagles ventures to approach it too closely, it erects a tuft of feathers on the back of its neck, and twists its head about with a rapidity that shows it, despite its sleepy attitude, to be keenly on the alert. The eagles, even the huge bald-headed monarchs of the air, cherish a wholesome respect for the formidable beak and huge talons, and permit the uncommunicative stranger to continue its ponderous thinking without intruding upon its meditations.

This bird is a harpy eagle (*harpya destructor*), and is probably, next to the condor, the most dangerous and ravenous bird of prey

indigenous to the New World. It inhabits the tropics between Mexico and the southern part of Brazil, and abounds in great numbers in the warm regions in the interior of South America. In size it is smaller than the condor, but larger than the true eagle, and stands as a kind of connecting link between the latter and the buzzards. The characteristic features of the bird are well shown in the engraving presented herewith. The beak is strong and curved, and the tail long; and the wings are of medium size. The back, wings, upper chest, and neck are greyish black, the tail is black with whitish cross bands, the lower chest and abdomen are white, and the claws yellow.

Unlike the condor, the harpy avoids high mountains where the air is rare and cold, and dwells in dense forests or on the shores of large bodies of water. Its food is small animals, especially monkeys. Regarding its eggs or its breeding habits, but very little is definitely known.