

THE EAGLE.

The eagle has always been reckoned the king of birds, whether on account of the superiority of his strength, the terror he inspires into so many other animals on whom he preys, his natural fierceness, or the rapidity and elevation of his flight. It is said that this bird will live a century, and that he increases in bulk till his death.

Naturalists have remarked, that the eagle has a very quick threatening eye, a little sunk in the head, and protected by the prominency of the forehead, which a little resembles an eye-brow; under which is a very hard and bony ledge, composed of several substances joined and placed one above another like scale. The tongue does not terminate in a point, like that of other birds, but is cartilaginous, and almost square at the end; and at its root are two hard points, like the iron point of an arrow. The stomach shows the voracity of the eagle; for when thoroughly inflated it is two inches in diameter. The bones are very hard, and have very little marrow in them. The eagle's blood is thick and fibrous: the bill sharp and corrosive.

So great is the eagle's voracity, that he ravages all the neighbouring country for his support.—Hence it is that there are seldom two eagles to be found in the same quarter. It is also said, that the eagles chase their young ones, not only out of the nests, but out of the country where they inhabit, as soon as they are able to fly.—Not contented with preying on the larger birds, such as hens, geese, and cranes, the eagle frequently lifts from the ground and carries off kids, lambs, rabbit, hares, &c. As the eagle lives wholly on the flesh of the creatures he devours, so he quenches his thirst with their blood, and never drinks water but when he is sick. All other birds, except the swan, which often resists him with success, are extremely afraid of the eagle; at his cry they tremble and quake; even the dragon, when he hears him, takes refuge in his den. Nor are the fishes safe from his voracity: as he skims over the seas and lakes, he perceives them at the bottom, plunges with the greatest rapidity, drags them to the shore, and devours them. Various of these particulars in the natural history of the eagle are mentioned in the book of Job. 'Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make his nest on high? She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. From thence she seeketh the prey; and her eyes behold afar off.—Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she.'

Sharpness of sight is a quality of the eagle which sets him above all other birds; and he seems to be sensible of that advantage; and to preserve it in his species, as soon as his young begin to have strength, he turns them towards the sun, and makes them fix their eyes upon it—and if any one cannot bear the heat and the rays, he chases him from his nest, as if he judged him unworthy of his protection and assistance; but attaches himself to the rest with a more remarkable affection than formerly, even to the exposing of

his own life, to preserve them from danger. To teach his young ones to fly, he flutters round his nest in various ways. Afterwards he takes them upon his back in such a manner, that the fowler cannot hurt the young, without piercing the body of the old one. In the middle of his course he darts from under them in order to prove them; and if he perceives that they cannot as yet support themselves alone but are in danger of falling, with the rapidity of an arrow he again darts below them, and receives them between his wings. The eagle is the only bird into which nature has instilled this kind of instinct, which the scripture has chosen as a most expressive symbol of the tenderness with which God protected his people in the wilderness. 'Ye have seen,' says Jehovah, 'what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself.' And says Moses in his song, 'As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him.'

One reason why the eagles can look steadfastly in the face of the sun, and support his severest rays, is, because they have two eye-lids; one with which they shut their eyes entirely; the other, which is thinner, they draw over them when they look upon any luminous object, which renders the glare of light much more supportable; by means of this the eagle rises to a prodigious height. To this instinct he owes, it is said, the renewal of his strength and of his youth. Every ten years his feathers become very heavy, and less proper for flight. He then makes his utmost effort, and approaches nearer to the sun than usual; and after being excessively heated by his flight, with the greatest velocity he plunges into the sea; his feathers then fall off, and new ones supply their place, which soon restore him to his pristine strength. To this circumstance the psalmist alludes, when he says, 'Thy youth is renewed as the eagle's.' And to the total loss of his feathers the prophet refers when he says, 'Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children, enlarge thy baldness, as the eagle.'

As the eagle flies most swiftly, especially when hungry, or when pursuing his prey, we find, that, in scripture, the rapidity of time, and the uncertainty of worldly riches, are compared to the eagle's flight. 'My days,' says Job, 'are passed away as the eagle that hasteth to the prey.'—And says the wise man, 'Riches certainly make themselves wings, they fly away as an eagle towards heaven.' To denote the haste that the enemies of the church make to persecute and to destroy, it is also compared to the flight of an eagle. 'Our persecutors,' says the church, 'are swifter than the eagles of the heaven.' In Ezekiel and in the Revelation, the eagle is one of those cherubic living creatures, whose meaning it is perhaps difficult to decipher.

Job says of the eagle, 'Where the slain are, there is she.' The language of Job is to be taken in a literal sense; for though the common sort of