

with them in magnitude, and some of the aquatic ones, as we have seen,* exceed them in extent of wing and untired flight, yet none can come near them in the union of all those qualities which constitute their claim to the first rank amongst the birds; and the eagle has, as it were, been *consecrated* king over them all, by being placed in the Holy of Holies of the Jewish temple as one of the symbols of those powers that rule under God in nature.†

This Order is usually divided into two sections, which might be denominated Sub-orders, the *nocturnal* birds of prey and the *diurnal*. The first of the birds of these sections are distinguished by their large eyes, the enormous pupil of which receives so many rays of light, that they are dazzled by the glare of day; but by it are enabled to see in the night—they fly in the evening and by moonlight. Thus they are fitted best to fulfil their function, and to be very beneficial to man, in keeping within due limits animals that are often extremely detrimental to his property, and commit their ravages more or less in the night; on this account owls are often seen in barns where mice and rats abound, and are most valuable auxiliaries to the cats. The white owl‡ is said to destroy more of the murine race than even these last animals. Had not the provident care of the Father of the universe created these mouse-and-rat-destroying animals, the tiller of the soil would often labour in vain.

The *diurnal* section of the Raveners contains all the birds of might and power. I have before mentioned the secretary bird,§ created to diminish the number of serpents; so similar to some of the *waders*, as to have been classed with them by several ornithologists; but Cuvier says, its whole anatomical structure, as well as its beak and other external

* See Introd. 33, 34.

‡ *Strix flammea*.

† Ezek. i. 10; x. 1.

§ See above, p. 132.