

An Eagle for an Emperor

Words and Music: Nigel Harbron

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a time signature of 6/8. The lyrics are written below the notes. Chord symbols are placed above the staff at various points. The lyrics are: "The prin - ce's pe - re-grine's long slim wings let him soar in - to the sky, To stoop down on his hap - less prey in two blinks of an eye, The short-winged hawk flies close to ground to catch its prey by stealth, To the hard up priest a spar - row-hawk is pre - fer - able to wealth. An ea - gle for an em - per - or, A kest - rel for a knave, There is a bird for ev - ery - one ex - cept the poor - est slave."

The Prince's Peregrine's powerful wings
Let it soar into the sky,
To stoop down on its hapless prey
In two blinks of an eye.
The short-winged hawk flies close to ground
To catch its prey by stealth.
To the hard up Priest a Sparrowhawk
Is preferable to wealth.

*Ch: An eagle for an Emperor
A kestrel for a Knave -
There is a bird for everyone
Except the poorest slave.*

The Lady's Merlin's free to fly
While still a juvenile bird.
It can pluck a lark from out the sky,
Its beating wings unheard.
The Yeoman's Goshawk, proud on perch,
With jesses hanging down,
Shows no sign of hunger trace -
Some say it wears a crown.

Gerfalcons are for Royalty -
Both great in several ways.
They take just what they want from life -
All wilt before their gaze.
These birds of prey won't fly away
As to you they'll return,
But only if they've been well manned
For they have much to learn.



We see peregrines quite often nowadays, particularly at Smardale National Nature Reserve. The speed at which they fly without any apparent effort is truly remarkable, and, from the picture above, it is easy to see why a poor old pigeon stays hit when these talons make their presence felt.

Sadly, the peregrine is still persecuted - not so much by gamekeepers - but by pigeon fanciers. There is money to be made within the world of racing pigeons, and some of those involved don't take kindly to their birds ending up as fodder for the peregrine. It is thought that around two hundred peregrines are killed illegally each year, this from a breeding population of around 1,400 pairs.