

than was necessary, that Horace had lost ground instead of gaining it since the studies were interrupted. To Mr. Tollingwood's inquiries he said—

"We must not spend too much time in trying to picture the 'might have been,' especially what I may call 'other people's might have been.' Perhaps we are tyrants to ourselves when we use memory as a rod; but we are far more prone to tyrannise over others when we use imagination that we may appoint the standard which they should have reached."

Whether this was intended as a compliment or an excuse for Horace, Mr. Tollingwood could not feel certain, and he thought it the best to ask for no explanation.

"I'm as fond of the lad as if he was my own son," he replied, "and if there is the making of anything out of the usual way in him, I should like to see it."

"We must be thankful for reasonable averages in mental stature," Mr. Penthurst said. "A world full of geniuses would be an uncomfortable place to live in. They are the spice of society; but we could not exist on pungent tastes and aromatic smells."

"Bravo, Alick!" Mr. Tollingwood exclaimed; "it is good fun to hear you say that clever men are no great shakes; because you are the cleverest man I know, and nobody can pretend that you say it out of jealousy."

Horace took a real interest in the experiments which were still in progress for what Mr. Tollingwood had called the Philosopher's Stone.

"This is the kind of chemistry which is really fascinating," he said to Mr. Penthurst and Annie, one day when they were in the laboratory, and he had been informed about the stage which had been reached with the investigations. "To think of all the waste which is going on continually in Moistershire, and the great heaps of refuse which lie worthless in every direction, and you are studying a plan by which it can be made useful and valuable! You talked about the poetry of science when I was a lad. There is a poetry about it, too."

"And a prose," Annie replied, smiling, as she looked around the room, at the results of toilsome years upon the shelves. Then she gazed very tenderly towards her father, whose face was worn and seamed, and whose eyes were closed.

Mr. Penthurst seemed to know what was passing through his daughter's mind, for he stretched his hand towards her, and said—

"Come to me, God's gift. It has been all poetry to me, and you have had all the weariness."

"Now, father," Annie said, with mock chiding in her tone, "you must not assume that I have not been as deeply interested as yourself. That would not be fair. We have shared both poetry and prose."

Then she drew her fingers through the hair which lay thin and white upon the well-shaped head of her father, and sang in a low, sweet voice—

"The cloud came after rain,
And after rain the cloud;
Wild wind chased wind again,
And mocked the thunder loud.

"But calm prevailed at last,
With spreading, searching sway;
And when the storm was past,
Bright stillness crowned the day."

The heart of Horace went out to her as she sang, and she seemed to know it; but nothing was said then.

Lowfield had real charms for Horace, and he asked himself many times whether Annie had forgiven him, and cared for him or not. Annie was in strange uncertainty. There was something about Horace which she could not quite understand. That he loved her, she believed, but he seemed to have a divided heart; and then, one morning, came the anonymous letter, which said that he was playing a part and deceiving his friends. Chill and gloom came upon her, and the words which the "Preacher" has applied to the condition of feeble age seemed appropriate to her. Thus to herself she said—

"The clouds return after the rain."

END OF CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

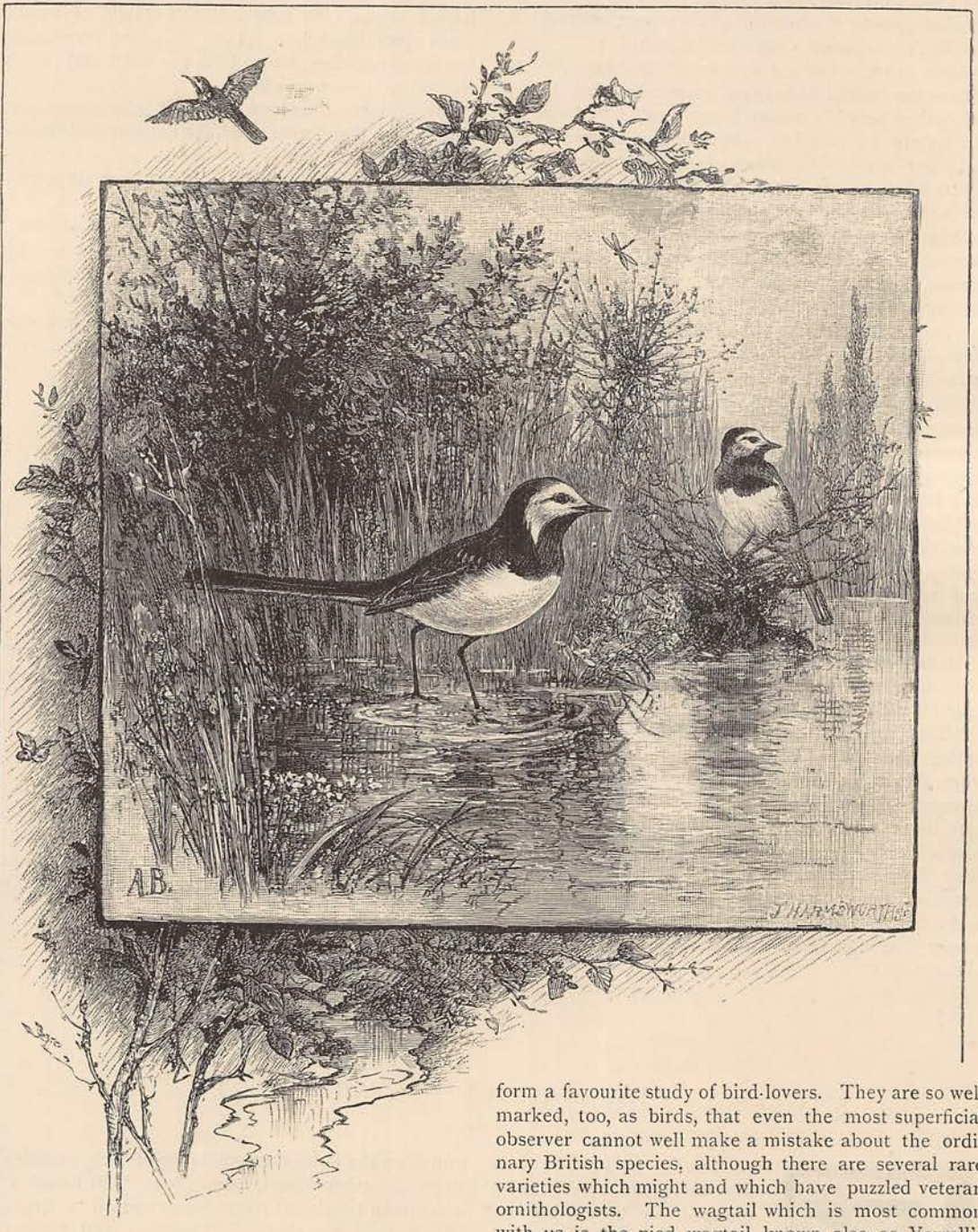
THE WAYS OF WAGTAILS.



FEW families of British birds are more characteristically grouped, or better known, than the *Motacilladae*, which is merely a translation of wagtails. The members of this family are continually jerking their tails up and down, running on a little, taking a short flight, and again shaking their tails as

they alight. Indeed, these pretty birds seem never quiet. In France, they are appropriately called *hochequeuees*,

and from the fancied resemblance of their attitudes to those of washerwomen, *lavandières*. "Dishwasher" is a common provincial name for a wagtail in England. In Scotland "quaketail," "waggie," and "waterie" are other ordinary names. They are distinguished by the possession of slender awl-like bills, tails of twelve feathers, and short claws, of which, in some species, the hinder toe is elongated like the pipit's. These birds are only natives of the Old World. One of the most beautiful and singular of the wagtails is the King-king, of Java, which glories in a fine black crest, and black and white forked tail. Its habits much resemble those of the English wagtail.



At all times of the year the naturalist may easily find wagtails for study at the sides of streams and rivers. Occasionally some draw nearer to houses, especially if there is a well-shaven lawn on which they may flit about, or when they are famished in a cold winter. Some are migratory as species; while many of the individuals, even of those kinds which stay here all the year, are fond of migrating. Consequently, wagtails

form a favourite study of bird-lovers. They are so well marked, too, as birds, that even the most superficial observer cannot well make a mistake about the ordinary British species, although there are several rare varieties which might and which have puzzled veteran ornithologists. The wagtail which is most common with us is the pied wagtail, known also as Yarrell's wagtail. Its plumage is dark—black mottled with white—and it is found throughout the United Kingdom, although individuals are fond of migrating in winter. Some of these birds reach down as far as the western part of North Africa. It rarely perches on a tree or bush, and loves the neighbourhood of water where it can procure flies and aquatic larvæ. Mr. A. E. Knox, an excellent ornithologist, who has lately passed away, spent much care and time upon the migration of this

species. He found that it left us about the middle and end of August, returning to Sussex about the middle of March. This is the bird that most country-lovers are familiar with. It haunts lawns and yards, as well as streams, and often forms the foster-nurse of the young cuckoo.

The white wagtail is a very rare British bird everywhere, save in the South of England; and indeed it is not often taken there. Not only so, but it requires a practised ornithologist to detect the difference between it and the above species. Its distribution is much wider, being found from the North of Europe to the Mediterranean, in Africa, India, and as far eastward as Lake Baikal. The feathers on the back of this bird are grey, whereas in the pied wagtail these are black, at all events during summer.

Much more beautiful than these birds is the grey wagtail, with its grey back, black and white wings, and bright yellow breast and under parts. Much wilder too are the localities which it loves to frequent, mountainous districts and rapid clear streams. Thus it is only a local resident, and is only found for the most part in the Eastern counties of England as a winter visitor. It loves the society of its mate, and of their family party, till late in the season, when the young ones quit and probably go abroad, and the two old birds may be seen in their usual haunts. It is a most restless bird, ever on the wing, and flirting its tail on the gravel beds at the river's brink which it frequents. It is supposed to have two broods in the year. Though unknown in Norway or Iceland, according to Prof. Newton, it yet penetrates through Persia and South Siberia to Japan. The bird is dear to the trout-fisher in rocky districts, who invariably looks out for it and another characteristic water-bird, the dipper.

The yellow wagtail, while in some respects resembling the last, is a smaller bird, and of very different habits. It is only a summer visitor to our islands, arriving about the beginning of April, and disappearing in September. It is fond of flying in little companies about hedgerows, and does not draw near to gardens, or care much for a running stream. It, too,

has two broods during the summer. The breast is of a beautiful yellow; indeed, this may be called the predominant tint of the bird's plumage. No more joyous creature of the hedgerows can be found. It often frequents commons, and feeds near cows as they pasture, and if it only were fonder of man and his habitations, would doubtless become one of our most popular birds, as it is one of our most graceful.

These are the chief of the British wagtails. The blue-headed wagtail, much like the bird last described, has been occasionally found in Great Britain, but is not likely to be known to most country dwellers. It may be distinguished from the yellow wagtail by the white streak over its eyes. Three more wagtails are known on the Continent, but have not been obtained in the United Kingdom.

The poets have not condescended to write much on the wagtail. It is not a classical bird, and so none of our greater poets notice it. Montgomery may be termed its laureate. He sings—

“What art thou made of—air, or light, or dew?
‘I have no time to tell you, if I knew,
My tail—ask that—perhaps may solve the matter;
I've missed three flies already by this chatter.’”

Mr. P. Robinson helps us to another quotation from the same poet—

“‘I'm the lord of the creation,
I, a water-wagtail bold!
All around, and all you see—
All the world was made for me!
Here the pretty prattler ending,
Spread his wings to soar away;
But a cruel hawk descending,
Pounced him up, a helpless prey.’”

If most of the wagtails are shy of man, the pied wagtail is certainly the most patient and forbearing of birds. Last year we watched a young cuckoo, twice as big as its foster-parent, crouching on the grass and screaming for food. As often as this took place, the wagtail brought it some, and was most attentive to its wants. When it is remembered that the cuckoo had already thrust the wagtail's brood out of her nest, the wagtail's conduct is all the more striking.

“WILL HE COME?”

THE sun has lit the wood and set;
With heavy dews the grass is wet;
The firs stand out in silhouette,
Sharp, tall, and stilly;
Sometimes a rabbit flits in sight,
A scampering whisk—a gleam of white;
Naught else. Her scarf she gathers tight—
The air is chilly.

The belfry-clock strikes slowly—eight!
“Ah, waning love makes trysters late;
Slack suitor he whose queen may wait!”—
She stops and listens:

A deaf leaf rustled—that was all!
Well, maiden pride will come at call;
She will not let the teardrop fall—
It stands and glistens.

She turns—but hark! the step she knows!
The branches part and, swinging, close;
What penance now on him impose
The tryst who misses?
She can't be hard, though sore she tries,
For love will melt through loving eyes,
And all the chiding words that rise
Are crushed with kisses.

FREDERICK LANGBRIDGE, M.A.