CALOBATES SULPHUREA.

Grey Wagtail.

Motacilla boarula, Penn. Brit. Zool., vol. i. p. 492.
——— *melanops*, Pall. Zoogr. Ross.-Asiat., tom. i. p. 500.
——— *cinerea*, Leach. Syst. Cat. of Indig. Mamm. and Birds in Brit. Mus., p. 22.
——— *sulphurea*, Bechst. Naturg. Deutschl., tom. iii. p. 459.
——— *montium*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 345.
Budytes boarula, Eyton, Hist. of Rarer Brit. Birds, p. 15.
Calobates sulphurea, Kaup, Natürl. Syst., p. 33.
Pallenura sulphurea et *javensis*, Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av., tom. i. p. 250.

Extreme elegance of form, gracefulness of action, and a peaceful disposition combine to render this species of Wagtail a favourite with every one who has bestowed a moment's thought upon the objects surrounding him in our islands. It has neither the comparatively coarse feet nor the strong bill of the pied *Motacillæ*, nor the bright-yellow colouring of the *Budytes*. In colour it differs from the members of both those genera, and also in its more delicately formed bill, in its smaller legs, in its shorter hind claw, and in the possession of a far more ample tail. Like the *Motacillæ* it is subject to a seasonal change—a change confined to the throat, which becomes black in summer and forms a conspicuously distinguishing feature of the bird at that season. The differences indicated above have induced ornithologists to consider the Grey Wagtail to be entitled to rank as a separate genus; and I consider Professor Kaup was justified in proposing a generic name for it, that of *Calobates*, which I have therefore adopted. The wide area over which the bird ranges, also, favours the idea of its being a very distinct form from the other Wagtails, most, if not all, of which are very limited in the extent of their range. The ornithologist who has collected generally, or studied the birds of the world, instead of a single country, will have learned that it not only inhabits the British Islands, from the Highlands of Scotland to the Land's End, but is equally numerous in all parts of Europe, from north to south, and is even found beyond the Mediterranean and Black Sea. He will have noticed examples in every collection from India, in whatever part of that country it may have been found, and have remarked that it also occurs in Malasia, Java, China, and in Japan. Specimens from all these countries are before me while writing my account of the species. At this point, however, I naturally ask myself, Is this the extent of the bird's range over the globe? Is it found in Australia or any of the Polynesian Islands? and my experience answers, No, we have no evidence that it is. Does it form a part of the avifauna of the American continent, either on its eastern side, which opposes Europe, or on the north-western, which is contiguous to China and Japan? This I again answer in the negative. Why it should not, I am unable to say, any more than I can tell my readers why the *Budytes flava* is common at Boulogne and Calais and rarely, if ever, found at Folkestone or Dover—or why the *Motacilla Yarrelli* should be confined to the British Islands, while the *M. alba* of the Continent is almost excluded. These are some of the inexplicable laws of nature which we shall probably never understand. North America, like Europe, has its rocky trout-streams and gurgling rills of water, accompanied by all the conditions favourable to the salmon, the trout, and the char, and other physical features precisely the same as those in which the Grey Wagtail loves to dwell; yet neither that species nor any member of its family has yet been seen in any part of the New World. The absence of these beautiful tripping birds from a country so thickly peopled with Europeans must often cause a pang of regret to those who look to surrounding objects in their newly adopted homes. But the distribution of our Grey Wagtail need not be further dwelt upon, except as regards our immediate home—the British Islands. With us in the south the bird is much less frequently seen in its summer black-throated garb than in the months of winter, when the throat is greyish-white, and the whole under-surface more uniform. In summer it is away breeding in the lake-districts of England, the Grampians and other parts of the Highlands, the rugged portion of Derbyshire, the gullies formed by the high tors of Devon and Cornwall; rarely is it found elsewhere at this season. But as there is usually an exception to every rule, I may mention that a few pairs sometimes remain in the neighbourhood of London and breed on the banks of our trout-streams, as it is wont to do in the localities above mentioned. In one lovely valley in Buckinghamshire, through which runs the river Chess, I have for many years seen this bird breeding; and one of the greatest pleasures I ever experienced was the meeting of my favourite face to face each succeeding summer, when the Duke of Bedford kindly favoured me with a day's fly-fishing at Chenies. These little birds generally occupied the same site for their nest—a hole in a wall, occasioned by the removal or falling out of the end of a brick in