

Alfred Russel Wallace Notes 41.

Violet Wallace's 'Natural History for Infants'.

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July 2026

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Summary: In 1893 Violet Wallace (1869-1945), daughter of Alfred Russel Wallace (1823-1913), published a serialized work entitled 'Natural History for Infants'. *Keywords:* Alfred Russel Wallace, Violet Wallace, teaching, educational literature

A few years ago, while running a routine search through *The British Newspaper Archive* online for Wallace-related material, I came upon an interesting item that had been printed in the 16 October 1895 issue of the *Birmingham Daily Post*. Joseph Hughes & Co., Limited, a publisher of educational materials, had put in a prospectus ad soliciting support from investors; this included a list of eleven writings by authors who had contributed to the firm's previous success. Notably, the eighth of these eleven was: " 'Natural History for Infants' (Illustrated). By Violet Wallace, daughter of Dr. Alfred Russell [sic] Wallace, F.R.S." This was something new to me, and it caught my interest. The story goes as follows.

Alfred and his wife Annie (1846-1914) were the parents of three children: the short-lived Herbert (1867-1874), Violet (1869-1945), and William (1871-1951). William followed in his uncle's footsteps (Wallace's older brother John) and became an engineer; he married in 1919 and had children ancestral to ARW's only now-living descendants. Violet, meanwhile, who never married, became a grade school teacher sometimes working within an institutional setting and at other times in self-employment. Most of what we know about her is through the more than one hundred letters from and (mostly) to her that have been collected in the Wallace Correspondence Project ('WCP') headed by George Beccaloni.

I am informed by correspondent James Williams that Violet worked during times dominated by a 'marriage bar': that is, the requirement that single women resign their jobs upon marrying. In his words, "where Violet was teaching, it restricted access to permanent posts, forced resignations upon marriage, and kept them concentrated in low-status, low-paid roles." Indeed, a perusal of the just-mentioned correspondence between Violet and her father revealed a good deal of instability in her employment history.

Before seeing the 1895 newspaper item I was unaware that Violet had produced any body of published writings, so I decided to look into the matter a bit further. Although it seemed unlikely that this 'Natural History for Infants' item contained more than passingly interesting textual material, the "Illustrated" wording could have meant that Wallace or his wife had contributed drawings or paintings to the effort, as both were decent graphic artists (note the watercolor paintings reproduced in my *Natural Selection and Beyond* [Smith &

Beccaloni 2008], and the line drawings Wallace supplied for Buckley [1876]). Further, the subject itself made it appear almost inevitable that Wallace's hand in the work was in one way or another fundamental to its existence.

But on looking further I could find not even a single other mention of this work in general databases, bibliographies, library catalogues, publisher's circulars, or archives. So, for the time being I gave up, conjecturing that perhaps the item had never actually reached print.

Just recently, however, I returned to the British Library's online newspaper archive and found another mention of 'Natural History for Infants', in the 23 January 1893 issue of the *Morning Post* (London). This came in a short notice of the arrival of a new teaching aids periodical, the quaintly named *The Infants' Mistress* (subtitle: "Kindergarten and Needlework Teacher"). The publisher was the same Joseph Hughes, in a business incarnation previous to the 1895 notice. Violet's work was again mentioned, leading me to think that perhaps it had appeared as a single long effort in the first issue, or possibly been serialized. In theory, the 1895 mention could also have been referring to an offprint that was being made available at that point (though the latter notice contained no indication of this).

The Infants' Mistress (1893-1901) is at present a very rarely held title; in the United States only a small handful of libraries retain copies of it, on microfilm (as part of the *Women and Victorian Values, 1837-1910* series). It turned out to be an unpretentious weekly set out in 16-page signatures, three columns to a page. Part I of Violet's essay – "Lesson I. Subject: The Cat" – appeared on page 4a-4b of the premier issue of the magazine ("Volume 1, Number 1"), on 14 January 1893.

This creation of Violet's is not exactly what the title suggests it is: instead of being a 'general natural history' – or for what we would now term 'infants' – it (1) concentrates on mammal natural history, and (2) seems more targeted at teens (actually, the teachers of teens), even after one makes allowance for varying period usage of the word 'infants'. In any case, it was serialized into thirty parts, one each in the first thirty consecutive numbers of the magazine (ranging in dates from 14 January 1893 to 5 August 1893). Each instalment loosely approaches fifteen hundred words in length. Just for the record, the thirty weekly 'Subject' titles are:

- Lesson I. Subject: The Cat. Vol. 1, no. 1 (14 Jan. 1893): p. 4a-b.
- Lesson II. Subject: The Dog. Vol. 1, no. 2 (21 Jan. 1893): p. 4a-b.
- Lesson III. Subject: On the Less Known British Carnivora. Vol. 1, no. 3 (28 Jan. 1893): p. 4b-c.
- Lesson IV. Subject: On the Larger Carnivora of Foreign Countries. Vol. 1, no. 4 (4 Feb. 1893): p. 5b-c.
- Lesson V. Subject: The Cow. Vol. 1, no. 5 (11 Feb. 1893): p. 11a-b.
- Lesson VI. Subject: Sheep, Goats and Antelopes. Vol. 1, no. 6 (18 Feb. 1893): p. 6b-c.
- Lesson VII. Subject: Deer, Giraffes and Camels. Vol. 1, no. 7 (25 Feb. 1893): p. 6a-c.
- Lesson VIII. Subject: The Horse and Its Relatives. Vol. 1, no. 8 (4 Mar. 1893): p. 11a-c.
- Lesson IX. Subject: Some Thick-skinned Animals of the Order Ungulata. Vol. 1, no. 9 (11 Mar. 1893): p. 7a-b.
- Lesson X. Subject: The Rabbit and Hare. Vol. 1, no. 10 (18 Mar. 1893): p. 4a-b.
- Lesson XI. Subject: Rats and Mice. Vol. 1, no. 11 (25 Mar. 1893): pp. 4c-5b.
- Lesson XII. Subject: Dormouse and Squirrel. Vol. 1, no. 12 (1 Apr. 1893): p. 6b-c.
- Lesson XIII. Subject: The Hedgehog. Vol. 1, no. 13 (8 Apr. 1893): pp. 6c-7a.

Lesson XIV. Subject: The Mole and the Shrew. Vol. 1, no. 14 (15 Apr. 1893): p. 6b-c.
 Lesson XV. Subject: The Bat. Vol. 1, no. 15 (22 Apr. 1893): p. 5b-c.
 Lesson XVI. Subject: Monkeys. Vol. 1, no. 16 (29 Apr. 1893): p. 6a-b.
 Lesson XVII. Subject: Whales and Porpoises. Vol. 1, no. 17 (6 May 1893): p. 11a-b.
 Lesson XVIII. Subject: Characteristics of Mammals. Vol. 1, no. 18 (13 May 1893): pp. 4c-5a.
 Lesson XIX. Subject: Birds. Vol. 1, no. 19 (20 May 1893): pp. 4c-5a.
 Lesson XX. Subject: Perching Birds. Vol. 1, no. 20 (27 May 1893): p. 4a-b.
 Lesson XXI. Subject: Songbirds. Vol. 1, no. 21 (3 June 1893): p. 6b-c.
 Lesson XXII. Subject: Ground Birds. Vol. 1, no. 22 (10 June 1893): pp. 4c-5a.
 Lesson XXIII. Subject: Water Birds. Vol. 1, no. 23 (17 June 1893): pp. 6c-7a.
 Lesson XXIV. Subject: Wading Birds. Vol. 1, no. 24 (24 June 1893): pp. 3c-4a.
 Lesson XXV. Subject: Birds of Prey. Vol. 1, no. 25 (1 July 1893): p. 4b-c.
 Lesson XXVI. Subject: Reptiles. Vol. 1, no. 26 (8 July 1893): p. 4a-b.
 Lesson XXVII. Subject: Frogs and Toads. Vol. 1, no. 27 (15 July 1893): p. 5b-c.
 Lesson XXVIII. Subject: Snails and Slugs. Vol. 1, no. 28 (22 July 1893): pp. 4c-5a.
 Lesson XXIX. Subject: Insects. Vol. 1, no. 29 (29 July 1893): p. 5b-c.
 Lesson XXX. Subject: Bees. Vol. 1, no. 30 (5 Aug. 1893): p. 4a-b.

'Nothing terribly notable here, beyond the facts that the first eighteen entries concern mammals, and fishes are not treated at all (the masses at that time tended to restrict the term 'animals' to mean *land* animals). It perhaps says something that cats, rather than dogs, are profiled first: Wallace and his family are known to have kept, and been very fond of, cats, and seem not to have been much disposed toward dogs.

Despite the mention in the 1895 notice, none of the entries are accompanied by illustrations. Were there ever any (perhaps an attempt was made to sell the series as a single separate after all, with these being added later)? To give some idea of the style, here is an excerpt from 'The Dog', published on page 4 of the 21 January 1893 issue:

Habits. – The dog is essentially a gregarious animal, always hunting in packs, *e.g.*, wolves, and jackals, the fox being the exception which proves the rule, and no doubt he has managed to survive because he is content with small game such as rabbits, chickens, &c., and has also taken to coming out at night. The larger members of this family, however, depend entirely upon united strength, which is so great, that some wild dogs called dholes, who inhabit parts of India, hunt game as large as deer, and it is said they will even overpower the tiger.

The dog being in its wild state a social animal, learnt in its wild life to follow a leader, and to take its place amongst others; and it was, no doubt, on account of this social instinct that man was able to teach the dog for a variety of purposes so that it has become the helper and companion of mankind.

The origin of the domestic dog is unknown, some naturalists thinking it was derived from the wolf, and others the jackal; but as dogs have been domesticated from time immemorial, and in every part of the world, it is impossible to trace their ancestors.

The varieties of dogs are very numerous, and each kind has peculiar characteristics of its own as well as the general ones of the dog tribe. Thus the terriers are distinct from spaniels, and these again from collies. The shepherd's dog was most probably the first which civilised man made use of to protect his flocks from beasts of prey, while savage man made use of the hunting dog as a means of securing game.

It was initially difficult for me to imagine that the main – or *only* – source of content for this series could be other than Violet's father, veritable encyclopedia of information on the subject that he was. This supposition in part assumed, however, that Violet was living at home during the period the work was conceived. Instead, in those years Violet was mostly residing in remote locations – both as a student, and later during her first working years. Some key excerpts from the WCP correspondence record (all from ARW to Violet) bearing on this follow:

WCP202 (16 May 1889): My dear Violet:

I am glad to hear that you like your work & your companions. I hope you will get on well & pass your preliminary examination in July with ease. ... I will pay for any books you are required to have if you will send me a list of them & the cost. Then I propose to give you for the next year, £.5 a quarter, the first payment to be made on Midsummer day for you to find your own clothes & all other things except your board....

WCP210 (9 March 1890): My dear Violet:

I have been very busy with the horrid Vaccination Commission, & other things. I hope you have given your Cat lessons with E-claw (eclàt)! introducing some nice "tales", and making them "a-mew-sing" and "purr-suasive". It is a great honour to be asked to teach the students!!

WCP214 (14 June 1890): My dear Violet:

...I thought your Chemical exam. was over before this: How did you get on. ...

WCP334 (11 October 1891): My dear Violet:

...I hope the Nat. Hist. lectures to the Students is not too hard work for you. If it is give it up, as the most important this year is to pass your exams. well. ...

WCP335 (25 October 1891): My dear Violet:

...I hope you have got the two Zool. Atlases, and that they will be useful. Prof. Lloyd-Morgan is writing a children's book about animals which will be very amusing. I have seen one of the proofs, and it will be just the thing for lessons to kids. ... In case you have not seen it I enclose an essay which will enlighten you on some of the problems of physiology.

WCP218 (November 1891): My dear Violet:

...there is not much demand for hedgehogs & they would have to be ordered. To get one stuffed would be perhaps even more difficult as of course they do not lend Museum specimens. Who had our stuffed one at Godalming? Did not Will give or sell it or exchange it to Vassall or Hayward? Another time get your specimens before you prepare your lesson. If you buy a hedgehog & cannot keep it in London, put it in a box and send it me by parcel post. I will give you what it costs. ...

WCP228 (20 May 1892): My dear Violet:

...Tell Madame it is absolutely necessary for success in Exams. on Wednesday & Thursday, that you have perfect mental rest on Monday & Tuesday. You may teach kids – but nothing more. ...

WCP236 (5 July 1893): My Dear Violet:

...I enclose you £.5 for clothes &c. this quarter. ...

WCP240 (8 October 1893): My dear Violet:

I am sure I wrote you in reply to yours to me, & I only wanted to know how you got on, because, after the mere announcement that you had 17 kids this term, your next letter ignored them altogether, & we knew nothing of how you got on with them or what help you

had &c. &c. &c! Now we are a little more posted up, but still you do not say if you have an assistant from the School, which I understood you were to have. Let us know what Hughes says – “Infants Mistress” comes here. As to dollars, one equals s4/2 = 50 pence. Therefore 1.80 = 90d = 7s./6d. A simple sum for your cleverest pupils!...

WCP244 (26 November 1893): My dear Violet:

You must certainly write to Mr. Hughes at once & tell him that you find your work too much for you to write more articles for him now. ...

WCP247 (11 March 1894): My dear Violet:

...By all means get a better engagement, if you can, but do not do anything towards giving up Liverpool till you have secured something else. The longer you stay there the better chance you will have of getting something good, as experience always counts for a great deal. ...

It would therefore appear more likely that Violet conceived the project largely on her own. At that point she was immersed in her school program, which included classroom teaching and practice. This is not to say that she didn't consult her father for sources she could use, but to attribute most of the content to him directly seems unwarranted.

WCP240 and WCP244 above certainly connect Violet with this specific publication, but how much Violet was paid for her efforts, and whether she published more work of this kind (though in a later letter, WCP290 from 4 May 1897, ARW discusses a draft manuscript by Violet tentatively titled 'Children in the Parks'/'Poor Children in the Parks'/'Playgrounds for Poor Children'), remain unknown. Further, there still seems to be no obvious reason why the 1895 notice proposes that 'illustrations' were involved.

Acknowledgments

My thanks to George Beccaloni, Rosemary Meszaros, and James Williams for their critical observations on an earlier version of this essay.

References*

* The numbers prefixed by 'WCP' are unique identifiers for letters whose transcripts and metadata are available in George W. Beccaloni (ed.), *Epsilon: The Alfred Russel Wallace Collection* (<https://tinyurl.com/WallaceInEpsilon>).

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