

36 When the Swallows come

morning, I have almost trodden on a Cuckoo before it knew I was near.

If we follow the stream at the bottom of the orchard we come to a good-sized lake, and it is here we nearly always see the Swallow for the first time. When the trees are fading in autumn, this is also the place where we last see them before their long and perilous journey to a more sunny home in the South. On this morning in particular the silvery ripples are catching the early sunbeams: and twittering Swallows seem quite at home on their old lake, although they have only been back here for a day or two. Moor-hens and Coots are swimming about, and a Little Grebe plays on the water near the island. On this tree-covered island a pair of Swans have their nest, and a great structure it is, too: I went over in a rickety old punt and photographed it.

A friend who tried a similar feat a few days later was not so successful. The punt was all right so long as you kept it level and made a quick passage from shore to island and *vice versa*. It filled with water fairly quickly, however, and unless one was swift and sure in