

THE LONE SWALLOWS

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The Lone Swallows by Henry Williamson

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HENRY WILLIAMSON

**THE LONE
SWALLOWS**

THE LONE SWALLOWS

NEW NOVELS

**PENDER AMONG THE
RESIDENTS FORREST REID**

**THE CROSS-CUT
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**THE BEST GIFT OF ALL
 ROWAN GLEN**

**AS OTHERS SEE US
 MARMADUKE PICKTHALL**

**THE PIT-PROP SYNDICATE
 FREEMAN WILLS CROFTS**

ROSEANNE E. MARIA ALBANESI

THE LONE SWALLOWS

by

HENRY WILLIAMSON

"The beautiful swallows, be tender to them, for they symbol all that is best in nature and all that is best in our hearts."

Richard Jefferies.



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COMPILER'S NOTE

MOST of the papers in this volume are published for the first time. A few have appeared in *The Daily Express*, *The London Evening News*, *The Field*, *The Saturday Review*, *The Outlook*, *The English Review*, and *The Wide World Magazine*. I am indebted to the Editors of these publications for permission to reprint them; and I am personally grateful to Sir Theodore Cook, of *The Field*, and to Mr. Austin Harrison of *The English Review* for their encouragement and kindness in criticising and printing my earliest essays.

"Winter's Eve," the first attempt to describe the common sights and sounds of the English countryside, I include for reasons of sentiment. Nature writing, I have been told by some authorities on art, is regarded as a trivial thing—"nature,"

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according to those people, is but a frail base for art-creation. Those authorities, I discovered, did not know the difference between a linnet and a celandine. And they did not want to be told. But I imagine that, as children, they would have been delighted to see a linnet's woven nest, and to be told that the celandine is the first of the wild flowers to fashion after a dreary winter a gold cup in the February meadows and woods. My own belief is that association with birds and flowers in childhood—when the brain is plastic and the mind is eager—tends to widen human sympathy in an adult life. The hope of civilisation (since we cannot remake the world's history) is in the fraternity of nations, or so it seems to myself, whose adolescence was spent at the war; the hope of amity and goodwill of the nation is in the individual—in the human heart, which yearns for the good and the beautiful; and the individual is a child first, eager to learn, but unwilling

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to be taught. Therefore it would appear that the hope of civilisation is really in the child. Sometimes heredity may be too great a handicap, but a sweet environment is a gradual solvent of inherited vice; at least it will prevent hardness, whence springs un-understanding, and hate. It was on a Sunday in May, 1920, in a tramcar at Catford, a south-eastern suburb of London, that the seed of this thought was sown by the sight of children returning to the slums after a day in the country. How eager they were: and how their parents were happy! Immediately afterwards, in a visionary fervour, or, may be because I was very young, I wrote "London Children and Wild Flowers," which Austin Harrison published, with Walter de la Mare as god-parent.

H. W.

SKIRR COTTAGE,
11th November, 1921.