

life set northwards, and all through March and April the birds were visible in flock succeeding flock from dawn to dark, until the summer visitants were all gone, to be succeeded in May by the birds from the far south, flying from the antarctic winter.

This annual spectacle had always been a moving one, but the feeling it now produced—this mingled feeling—was most powerful on still moonlight nights, when I would sit or lie on my bed gazing out on the prospect, earth and sky, in its changed mysterious aspect. And, lying there, I would listen by the hour to the three-syllable call-note of the upland or solitary plover, as the birds went past, each bird alone far up in the dim sky, winging his way to the north. It was a strange vigil I kept, stirred by strange thoughts and feelings, in that moonlit earth that was strange too, albeit familiar, for never before had the sense of the supernatural in Nature been stronger. And the bird I listened to, that same solitary plover I had known and admired from my earliest years, the most graceful of birds, beautiful to see and hear when it would spring up before my horse with its prolonged wild bubbling cry of alarm and go away with swift, swallow-like flight—what intensity and gladness of life was in it, what a wonderful inherited knowledge in its brain, and what an inexhaustible vigour in its slender frame to enable it to perform that annual double journey of upwards of ten thousand miles! What a joy it would be to live for ages in a world of such fascinating phenomena! If some great physician, wise beyond all others, infallible, had said to me that all my doctors had been wrong, that, barring accidents, I had yet fifty