

appreciations of the early nineteenth-century poets; also in other works. They did not tell me in so many words that it was the mystical faculty in me which produced those strange rushes or bursts of feeling and lifted me out of myself at moments; but what I found in their words was sufficient to show me that the feeling of delight in Nature was an enduring one, that others had known it, and that it had been a secret source of happiness throughout their lives.

This revelation, which in other circumstances would have made me exceedingly happy, only added to my misery when, as it appeared, I had only a short time to live. Nature could charm, she could enchant me, and her wordless messages to my soul were to me sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, but she could not take the sting and victory from death, and I had perforce to go elsewhere for consolation. Yet even so, in my worst days, my darkest years, when occupied with the laborious business of working out my own salvation with fear and trembling, with that spectre of death always following me, even so I could not rid my mind of its old passion and delight. The rising and setting sun, the sight of a lucid blue sky after cloud and rain, the long unheard familiar call-note of some newly-returned migrant, the first sight of some flower in spring, would bring back the old emotion and would be like a sudden ray of sunlight in a dark place—a momentary intense joy, to be succeeded by ineffable pain. Then there were times when these two opposite feelings mingled and would be together in my mind for hours at a time, and this occurred oftenest during the autumnal migration, when the great wave of bird-