

Acquaintance with Nature

Words: Henry David Thoreau, Music: Gwyneth Walker

Prologue

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.

I do not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear, nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary.

I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world;

or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.

Remember Thy Creator

Remember thy creator in the days of thy youth. Rise free from care before the dawn and seek adventures. Let the noon find thee by other lakes, and the night overtake thee everywhere at home. Grow wild according to thy nature. Let the thunder rumble. Take shelter under the cloud. Enjoy the land, but own it not.

I Seek Acquaintance With Nature

I want to go soon and live away by the pond, where I shall hear only the wind whispering among the reeds. It will be enough if I shall leave myself behind. I seek acquaintance with Nature, to know her moods and her manners.

I wish to know an entire heaven and an entire earth!

I Perceive the Spring in the Softened Air

I perceive the spring in the softened air. Looking through the transparent vapors, all surfaces look more vivid. The hardness of winter is relaxed.

I do not know that the woods are ever more beautiful, or affect me more. How silent are the footsteps of spring!

I perceive the spring in the softened air.

Mornings

There are from time to time mornings, both in summer and in winter, mornings, when especially the world seems to begin anew.

The world has been recreated in the night, Mornings of creation, I call them. It is the poet's hour. Mornings when we are newborn, we who have the seeds of life in us.

Dry, Hazy June Weather

It is dry, hazy June weather. We are more of the earth, farther from heaven these days. We are getting deeper into the mists of the earth. The season of hope and promise is past; already the season of small fruits has arrived, the season when berries are ripe. The prospect of the heavens is taken away, and we are presented with only a few small berries.

Dew on the Cobwebs

Everywhere there is dew on the cobwebs, little gossamer veils, or scarfs as big as your hand. They were dropped from the fairy shoulders that danced on the grass last night.

The First Star is Lit

Every day a new picture is painted and framed, held up for half an hour, in such lights as the Great Artist chooses, and then withdrawn, and the curtain falls. And then the sun goes down and the long afterglow gives light. And then the damask curtains glow along the western window.

And then the first star is lit, and I go home.

Epilogue

Time is but the stream I go afishing in. I drink at it, but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin currents slide away, but eternity remains. I would drink deeper, fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars.