

## July 2

I have written about racism a lot lately. Glad I did, and I will write more.

Today, though, I am going back to offering you, gentle reader, some excerpts from my daybook for the year, *Circle of the Seasons* (1953), written and illustrated by Edwin Way Teale, an Indiana Dunes native son who became a well-known and much admired nature writer and photographer. He lived and worked in the metro NYC area and often wrote about his early morning rambles through the area called Milburn Pond in Nassau County, LI. His learning and language were lush as Kentucky bluegrass, as I have observed before. My aim is to refresh us all, to remind us that we are creatures together on this fragile and wonderful world.

Excerpts from several daily entries June 1 to July 1, 1952, with occasional side notes from me.

“The machinery of nature, with its winds and dews and dawns and morning mists, produces poetry as well as seasons and growth and change. Here the functioning of nature’s cogs has produced dew drops and veils of luminous mist caught among the cattails. Before the work of the day, taste the poetry of the day! Our poor, battered minds and spirits need the dawn. There is the calm of nature, the sanity of the earth, in each breath of scented air on a sunrise in June.” (June 1)

“W.H. Hudson, one of the greatest of literary naturalists, used to express his attitude toward wild creatures with the words: “Neither pet nor persecute”. His outlook was sound. The wild should be left wild.” (June 6). You may have found your memory jogged by the name, W.H. Hudson—mine was. I did not know he was a serious naturalist, I merely recalled him as the author of the novel, *Green Mansions*.

“At first glance, (the sweet flag) [with] its slender leaves seems linked with the iris family. In truth, however, it is a close relative of the skunk cabbage, the golden club and the Jack-in-the-pulpit. Four centuries ago, it was the leaf of the sweet flag that contributed to the downfall of Cardinal Wolsey in the days of Henry VIII. He had such leaves strewn daily over his floors to perfume the air. They were brought at considerable expense from the marshes of Norfolk and Suffolk. Among the charges that led to his tragic last days, as recorded in William Shakespeare’s *Henry VIII*, was the one that he had been extravagant in his spending for sweet flag leaves.” (June 10). Perhaps you recall Wolsey’s poignant speech, “O Cromwell, Cromwell! Had I but served my God with half the zeal I served my king, He would not in mine age have left me naked to mine enemies.” (*Henry VIII*, iii,2).

“Out of doors, adventures are everywhere. Wonders are all around us. If the world is stale, its fascination gone, the fault, we find, is in ourselves. As G.K. Chesterton put it: “The world will never starve for want of wonders, but only for want of wonder”. (June 11). This observation reminds me of Shakespeare on our individual natures, Dr.

Johnson about London, R.L. Stevenson concerning the natural world, and Hemingway remembering Paris.

“On this twenty-first of June, the hinge day of the seasons, the yearly tide of light reaches its flood. Tomorrow it will begin the long rollback to the dark days of December. I heard the robins singing this morning shortly after four o’clock...They are now singing at nine o’clock at night. A robin’s day is a long one. It uses up all the daylight, even on this longest day of the year. In the later sunset of this final day of Spring, we walk to the bay...(this day) comes to an end with silver mist and low-lying land and the smell of the sea. Twilight here is doubly impressive for we are face to face with twin mysteries—the mystery of the sea and the mystery of the night. We, as diurnal creatures of the land, are looking into foreign realms, into worlds other than our own, into the mysterious dark and the mysterious depths.” (June 21)

“In the long June twilight tonight I watch the bats, the flittermice, zig-zag in their wildly staggering flight above the cattails. How beneficial they are; how unearned and unjust the long enmity that has surrounded them. I wonder if this enmity will be lessened now that the secret of their uncanny ability in avoiding objects has been exposed as similar to the sonic depth finder man uses at sea. No longer does the skill of the bat seem allied to sorcery. Understanding has replaced mystification. And this, it is to be hoped, may lighten the load of dislike that has descended from ages when the human mind viewed the natural world through superstition’s dark and distorting glass.” (June 25)

New birds are everywhere—speckled robins, gray starlings, brownish redwings. Between nest and migration, the weeks are few. Birds have an early harvest.” (July 1).

God’s peace and joy.