What is an American? Anthology of the 1890s

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Passages Selected from Within the Anthology

➢ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Solitude of Self. “Whatever the theories may be of women’s dependence on man, in the supreme moments of her life, he cannot bear her burdens. In the tragedies and triumphs of human experience, each mortal stands alone.”

➢ John Muir, American Forests. “God has cared for these trees, saved them from drought, disease, avalanches, and a thousand straining, leveling tempests and floods; but he cannot save them from fools,—only Uncle Sam can do that.”

➢ Zitkala-Sa, Why I Am a Pagan. “Still I would not forget that the pale-faced missionary and the hoodooed aborigine are both God’s creatures, though small indeed their own conceptions of Infinite Love. A wee child toddling in a wonder world, I prefer to their dogma my excursions into the natural gardens where the voice of the Great Spirit is heard in the twittering of birds, the rippling of mighty waters, and the sweet breathing of flowers. If this is Paganism, then at present, at least, I am a Pagan.”

➢ W.E.B. Dubois, A Negro Schoolmaster in the New South. “There were, however, some such as Josie, Jim, and Ben, they to whom War, Hell, and Slavery were but childhood tales, whose young appetites had been whetted to an edge by school and story and half-awakened thought. Ill could they be content, born without and beyond the World. And their weak wings beat against their barriers, barriers of caste, of youth, of life; at last, in dangerous moments, against everything that opposed even a whim.”

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