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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF W. E. B. DU BOIS

*A Soliloquy
on Viewing My Life
from the Last Decade
of Its First Century*

W. E. B. Du Bois

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3-25-08

Series Editor, Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

Introduction by Arnold Rampersad

OXFORD
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Published by Oxford University Press, Inc.
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016
www.oup.com

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available.

ISBN: 9780195311808 (Series)
ISBN: 9780195325898 (Volume)

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free paper

CHAPTER X

Europe 1892 to 1894

When I was a young man I conceived that the foundations of world culture were laid, the way was charted, the progress toward certain great goals was undoubted and inevitable. There was room for argument concerning details and methods and possible detours in the on sweep of civilization; but the fundamental facts were clear, unquestioned and unquestionable.

Between the years 1885 and 1894 I received my education at Fisk University, Harvard College and the University of Berlin. It was difficult for me at the time to form any critical estimate of any meaning of the world which differed from the conventional unanimity about me. Apparently one consideration alone saved me from complete conformity with the thoughts and confusions of then current social trends; and that was the problem of racial and cultural contacts. Otherwise I might easily have been simply the current product of my day. Even as it was, the struggle for which I was preparing and the situations which I was trying to conceive and study, related themselves primarily to the plight of the comparatively small group of American Negroes with which I was identified, and theoretically to the larger Negro race. I did not face the general plight and conditions of all humankind. That I took for granted, and in the unanimity of thought and development of that day, as I saw it, this was scarcely to be wondered at.

It was to my mind and the minds of most of my teachers a day of Progress with a capital P. Population in all the cultured lands was increasing swiftly, doubling and more; cities everywhere were growing and expanding and making themselves the centers and almost the only centers of civilization; transportation by land and sea was drawing the nations near and making the lands of the earth increasingly accessible. Inventions and technique were a perpetual marvel and their accomplishment infinite in possibility. Commerce was madly seeking markets all around the earth; colonies were being seized and countries integrated into European civilization in Asia, Africa, South America and the islands. Of the methods of this colonial imperialism, the condition of colonial peoples and the effect of colonies on home labor, I knew little until years later.

Above all, science was becoming a religion; psychology was reducing metaphysics to experiment and a sociology of human action was planned. Fighting the vast concept of evolution, religion went into its heresy trials, its struggles with

"higher criticism," its discomfort at the "revised version" of the New Testament which was published the year I entered college. Everywhere men sought wealth and especially in America there was extravagant living among the rich; everywhere the poor planned to be rich and the rich planned to be richer; everywhere wider, bigger, higher, better things were set down as inevitable.

All this, of course, dominated education; especially the economic order determined what the next generation should learn and know. On the whole, looking at the marvelous industrial expansion of America, seeing the rise of the western farmer and the wages of the eastern mechanic, all seemed well; or if not, if there were ominous protests and upheavals, these were but the friction necessary to all advance. "God's in His heaven; All's right with the world," Browning was singing—that colored Robert Browning, who died just after I received my first bachelor's degree.

Had it not been for the race problem early thrust upon me and enveloping me, I should have probably been an unquestioning worshipper at the shrine of the established social order and of the economic development into which I was born. But just that part of this order which seemed to most of my fellows nearest perfection, seemed to me most inequitable and wrong; and starting from that critique, I gradually, as the years went by, found other things to question in my environment.

At first, however, my criticism was confined to the relation of my people to the world movement. I was not questioning the world movement in itself. What the white world was doing, its goals and ideals, I had not doubted were quite right. What was wrong was that I and people like me and thousands of others who might have my ability and aspiration, were refused permission to be a part of this world. It was as though moving on a rushing express, my main thought was as to my relations with the other passengers on the express, and not to its rate of speed and its destination.

In the days of my formal education, my interest became concentrated upon the race struggle. My attention from the first was focused on democracy and democratic development; and upon the problem of the admission of my people into the freedom of democracy. This my training touched but obliquely. We studied history and politics almost exclusively from the point of view of ancient German freedom. English and New England democracy, and the development of the white United States. Here, however, I could bring criticism from what I knew and saw touching the Negro.

Europe modified profoundly my outlook on life and my thought and feeling toward it, even though I was there but two short years with my contacts limited and my friends few. But something of the possible beauty and elegance of life permeated my soul; I gained a respect for manners. I had been before, above all, in a hurry. I wanted a world, hard, smooth and swift, and had no time for rounded corners and ornament, for unhurried thought and slow contemplation. Now at times I sat still. I came to know Beethoven's symphonies and Wagner's *Ring*. I looked long at the colors of Rembrandt and Titian. I saw in arch and stone and steeple the history and striving of men and also their taste and expression. Form, color and words took new combinations and meanings.

I crossed the ocean in a trance. Always I seemed to be saying, "It is not real; I must be dreaming!" I can live it again—the little, Dutch ship—the blue waters—the smell of new-mown hay—Holland and the Rhine. I saw the Wartburg and Berlin; I made the *Hartzreise* and climbed the Brocken; I saw the Hansa towns and the cities and dorfs of South Germany; I saw the Alps at Berne, the Cathedral at Milan, Florence, Rome, Venice, Vienna, and Pest; I looked on the boundaries of Russia; and I sat in Paris and London.

On mountain and valley, in home and school, I met men and women as I had never met them before. Slowly they became, not white folks, but folks. The unity beneath all life clutched me. I was not less fanatically a Negro, but "Negro" meant a greater, broader sense of humanity and world fellowship. I felt myself standing, not against the world, but simply against American narrowness and color prejudice, with the greater, finer world at my back.

In Germany in 1892, I found myself on the outside of the American world, looking in. With me were white folk—students, acquaintances, teachers—who viewed the scene with me. They did not always pause to regard me as a curiosity, or something sub-human; I was just a man of the somewhat privileged student rank, with whom they were glad to meet and talk over the world; particularly, the part of the world whence I came.

I found to my gratification that they, with me, did not regard America as the last word in civilization. Indeed, I derived a certain satisfaction in learning that the University of Berlin did not recognize a degree even from Harvard University, no more than Harvard did from Fisk. Even I was a little startled to realize how much that I had regarded as white American, was white European and not American at all: America's music is German, the Germans said; the Americans have no art, said the Italians; and their literature, remarked the English, is mainly English. All agreed that Americans could make money and did not care how they made it. And the like. Sometimes their criticism got under even my anti-American skin, but it was refreshing on the whole to hear voiced my own attitude toward so much that America had meant to me.

I wrote in my diary: "Holland is an extremely neat and well-ordered mud-
puddle, situated at the confluence of the English, French, and German languages. My memory of my first sight of it is inextricably interwoven with a smell of clover. It was after a two weeks' sea voyage—pleasant to be sure, fascinating as the changing, changeless sea ever is, but *two weeks*—then I came on deck one sunny morning to see long low green fields, sleepy little farm houses, long, prim, and decent rows of trees, stolid windmills and cows. So far as landscape is concerned, I never saw ought else in Holland and had I (God forbid!) followed my first inclinations, I should have gone away from this dear old nook with the usual uninteresting tale. I stayed a week or so, and I am very glad.

"There is to be sure a certain sameness about the homely country—a slowness which makes an American gasp and sometimes swear, and yet the very monotony of the country, the low dogged hum of its simple life, has for the loiterer a charm I can only liken to that of the backyard of my New England home. The Dutchman is in no hurry; he sees no necessary connection between the new and the good—rather the contrary; he is ponderously honest, and he is guiltless

of anything savoring of personal beauty. His nation may become grasping and greedy, but the individual Dutchman is too honest to know it or to believe it when it is told.

"If Rotterdam had been any but a Dutch town, I shouldn't have seen it—I mean if Dutch business methods had not been so exasperatingly deliberate as to take six days to get a draft on Baring Bros. of London cashed, I should not have spent even a night at this interesting place. As it was, I was imprisoned for nearly a week in the town, in daily terror lest mine host should present his ruddy bill before my extremely wan purse. And I liked it: a nice place in its way. To be sure I must say I never saw a more poorly tailored town in my life. I saw very few persons whose clothes seemed to have been made with the slightest reference to their bodies, except the housemaids. In maidservants, Rotterdam has apparently reached the *ne plus ultra* [acme; furthest point]: elaborately beruffled caps, immaculate white stockings and slippers, simple gingham dresses, and healthy, honestly homely faces, made them most pleasant figures to meet on the promenade.

"Rotterdam as a city has a certain lack of individuality which is in itself characteristic. You see, it lies in the midstream of Dutch commerce with the great world and the current has changed it. It has almost forgotten its native tongue—so used is it to jabbering English, French, and German, and it has a general unconnected sort of air which would make a nervous people picturesque, but only makes the Rotterdamites a wee bit ludicrous.

"One annoyance I met here and all over Europe: the landlord would hasten to inform me beamingly that 'Fellow Americans had just arrived.' If there was one thing less desirable than white 'fellow Americans' to me, it was black 'fellow Americans' to them."

Of greatest importance was the opportunity which my *Wanderjahre* in Europe gave of looking at the world as a man and not simply from a narrow racial and provincial outlook. This was primarily the result not so much of my study, as of my human companionship, unveiled by the accident of color. From the days of my later youth in the South to my boarding a Rhine passenger steamer at Rotterdam in August 1892, I had not regarded white folk as human in quite the same way that I was. I had reached the habit of expecting color prejudice so universally, that I found it even when it was not there. So when I saw on this little steamer a Dutch lady with two grown daughters and one of 12, I proceeded to put as much space between us as the small vessel allowed. But it did not allow much, and the lady's innate breeding allowed less. Soon the little daughter came straight across the deck and placed herself squarely before me. She asked if I spoke German; before I could explain, the mother and other daughters approached and we were conversing.

Before we reached the end of our trip, we were happy companions, laughing, eating and singing together, talking English, French and German and viewing the lovely castled German towns. Once or twice when the vessel docked for change of cargo, the family strolled off to visit the town. Each time I found excuse to linger behind and visit alone later; until once at Düsseldorf, all got away before I sensed it and left me and the prettiest daughter conversing. Then seeing we had docked she suggested we follow and see the town. We did; and thereafter we continued

acting like normal, well-bred human beings. I waved them all good-bye, in the solemn arched aisles of the Cologne Cathedral, with tears in my eyes.

So too in brave old Eisenach, beneath the shadow of Luther's Wartburg, I spent a happy holiday in a home where university training and German home-making left no room for American color prejudice. From this unhampered social intermingling with Europeans of education and manners, I emerged from the extremes of my racial provincialism. I became more human; learned the place in life of "Wine, Women, and Song"; I ceased to hate or suspect people simply because they belonged to one race or color; and above all I began to understand the real meaning of scientific research and the dim outline of methods of employing its technique and its results in the new social sciences for the settlement of the Negro problems in America.

In the Marbach home which took only properly introduced "paying guests" were two grown daughters, and two young women who were relatives; two young Frenchmen, an English youth and myself. *Herr Oberpfarrer* [the Rector], Doctor Marbach, and his efficient and correct wife presided. At first my German was halting and I was shy. But soon the courtesy of the elders and the ebullient spirits of the young folks evoked my good nature and keen sense of camaraderie. The very mistakes of those of us who were foreigners—mistakes in grammar and usage and etiquette—became a source of merriment and sympathy. We became a happy group closely bound to each other. We went together to church services and to concerts. We took long excursions through field and forest to places of interest, lunching in homely inns or in the open.

I remember once the contest in poetry we had in a forest glen looking out on a great mountain range; I recited in English and one of the Frenchmen in his tongue. Then Madame Marbach (who always chaperoned us) recited *Du bist wie eine Blume* [You are like a flower]. We wept openly at its beauty and I looked at Dora with her blue eyes and black hair and the lovely coloring of her skin. Dora always paired with me, first to correct my German and then by preference. Once we all went to the annual ball of the upper middle-class folk in the town. It was formal and a little stiff. The carefully gowned matrons sat around the walls of the room, knitting and gossiping and keeping watch over the demure white-gowned girls in their charge. The fathers sat at tables and drank beer. I danced with all the girls of our home; then bowing from the waist ventured to ask other young ladies to whom I had been introduced. Then came the *Damenwahl* [Ladies' Choice], I drew back, but it was unnecessary, for my card was filled for every dance.

I was very fond of Dora Marbach and as I well knew, so was she of me. Our fellows joked about us and when I sang the folk song of *Die Lore am Thore* [Lore at the Gate], little Bertha invariably changed the name to "Dora." We confessed our love for each other and Dora said she would marry me "*gleich!*" [at once]. But I knew this would be unfair to her and fatal for my work at home, where I had neither property nor social standing for this blue-eyed stranger. She could not quite understand. Naturally I received much advice as to marriage plans. One lady told me very seriously "*Sie sollen heiraten eine hell-blonde!*" [you should

marry a light blonde]. But I knew better, although there may have been some echo in my mind of the proverb:

*Es war' so schön gewesen
Es hätt' nicht sollen sein!*

It was so lovely
That it could not be!

It was an American woman who sought to see to it that no entanglement between me and Dora took place. She and her husband came to board with the Marbachs for a month or so. He was a professor in Colorado, a good-natured, ill-mannered Westerner. She was a nervous gossip, astonished to see a Negro so well received in this household. What she told Frau Marbach about American Negroes I do not know, but I can imagine. There was nothing said of the couple but all were glad when they left. I felt a little sensitive when I left. I exchanged letters with the family while I remained in Germany but I never returned to this beloved foster home.

In the Fall I went up to Berlin and registered in the university. In my study, I came in contact with several of the great leaders of the developing social sciences: in economic sociology and in social history. My horizon in the social sciences was broadened not only by teachers, but by students from France, Belgium, Russia, Italy and Poland.

For matriculation in groups of 100 we went into a large room with a high ceiling ornamented with busts of Berlin's famous professors. The year's Rector Magnificus was the widely famous Rudolf Virchow. He was a meek and calm little man, white-haired and white-bearded, with kindly face and pleasant voice. I had again at Berlin as at Harvard, unusual opportunity. Although a foreigner, I was admitted my first semester to two seminars under Gustav Schmoller and Adolf Wagner, both of them at the time the most distinguished men in their lines; I received eventually from both of them pleasant testimony on my work in economics, history and sociology. I sat under the voice of the fire-eating Pan-German, Heinrich von Treitschke; I heard Max Weber; I wrote on American agriculture for Schmoller and discussed social conditions in Europe with teachers and students. Under these teachers and in this social setting, I began to see the race problem in America, the problem of the peoples of Africa and Asia, and the political development of Europe as one. I began to unite my economics and politics; but I still assumed that in these groups of activities and forces, the political realm was dominant. Here are comments I made at the time:

"Matriculation commenced the 15th of October. I registered as number 85 of the more than 5,000 who usually matriculate here. The lectures mostly began the week following. Each professor writes a more or less legible announcement as to the time and place of the commencement of his lectures. The student then has to scurry about and examine a dozen different blackboards and hundreds of different slips of paper to find his particular professor's announcement. Poorly written English is bad enough, but when puzzling German, cloaked in execrably written

German script, it is a combination fearful and wonderful to behold. Schmoller's scrawl caused me trouble, Wagner was well-nigh illegible, but Treitschke—well, I haven't deciphered his announcement yet.

"The lectures are of two sorts—private and public. The first have four hours a week, generally mornings on Tuesdays or Fridays, or on two afternoons from four to six. These lectures must be paid for at the rate of \$5.00 a course for the semester. In this heaven of 'electivism' every student must take at least a one-point course. The public lectures are full, and have one or two hours a week, on Wednesday or Saturday mornings or on other evenings at six or seven.

"An American astounded a professor by asking how much work a student was expected to do. The real answer is none or all he can manage. Only two things are required: the signature of the teacher at the beginning and at the end of the course. One of the articles furnished at matriculation is an *Anmelde-Buch* in which the names of the various professors and lectures you propose to take must be written. This is taken to the Questor who receives the tuition and receipts. Then you must trot to each professor and get his signature for each set of lectures at the beginning and end of the semester.

"The students take part in the recitation-room proceeding mainly with their feet. A shuffle of feet presages disapproval, a stamping means applause. A few days ago, when Wagner mentioned Bismarck and called him the principal creator of German unity, a rub-a-dub followed from the 300 students for nearly five minutes. Shuffling is used also to express disapproval of late arrivals. Sometimes the disturbance is not generally thought great enough and the shuffling is rebuked by hissing. At other times when the tardy one is unusually noisy, there is a deafening whirr of feet which stops the lecture and never fails to abash the intruder. Commencing late, the lectures also end late. The students generally submit to remaining five minutes past but after that there comes an ominous clicking of ink-stands and now and then designed and premature applause cuts off the lecturer's last words.

"To me by far the most interesting of the professors is the well-known von Treitschke, the German Machiavelli. He never comes to his lectures until very late, often commencing his ten o'clock lecture on *Politik* at 10:30—never before 10:20. He is a large man, of 'fair round belly with good capon lined,' or possibly with the more unpoetic beer; he generally dresses rather carefully in dark gray or blue cutaway with cylinder hat, gloves and the all-pervading German cane. His complexion is dark, his well-kept hair and full beard iron gray, and his features rather gross. He is stone deaf with a slight impediment in his speech, and a sort of breathless way of speaking, that makes him very difficult at first for a foreigner to understand. The task, however, is worth all pains, for his is one of the most forcible and independent minds on the faculty.

"His entrance is always the same. He comes in slowly, somewhat out of breath, with his overcoat, hat, and cane on his left arm. These he hangs on the wall and ascends to his desk where he stands as he speaks. He then takes off his right glove and putting his head a bit on one side says: '*Meine Herren,*' with a falling inflection. Then begins the lecture, which, as I overheard a puzzled and sighing American say, 'has but one period and that's at the end.' He does not

speaking so fast, but his articulation is bad (imagine badly articulated German!) and he has a way of catching his breath in the midst of his sentences instead of at the end, giving the ear no natural pause.

"His lectures are nevertheless intensely interesting. He is rapt in his subject, a man of intense likes and dislikes, beliefs and disbeliefs. He is the very embodiment of united monarchical, armed Germany. He has pity for France, hearty dislike for all things English—while for America, well, the United States is his *bête noire*, which he seldom fails to excoriate. One day he startled me by suddenly declaring during a lecture on America: '*Die Mulatten sind niedrig! Sie fühlen sich niedrig.*' [Mulattoes are inferior; they feel themselves inferior.] I felt as if he were pointing me out; but I presume he was quite unaware of my presence. However my presence or absence would have made no difference to him. He was given to making extraordinary assertions out of a clear sky and evidently believing just what he said. My fellow students gave no evidence of connecting what he said with me. Yet von Treitschke was not a narrow man. His outlook is that of the born aristocrat who has something of the Carlyle contempt of levelling democracy. On the other hand he criticizes his own government and nation unsparingly when he sees fit—I have heard him characterize one of the highest officials as a *verrückte Dummkopf* [mad idiot] while the students cheered. He grows enthusiastic in his lectures, gestures considerably, and has a little half-caustic smile which always foreshadows some sharp critical sally that usually brings down the house; as for instance when he characterized some current author's work as efforts 'to widen the boundaries of human stupidity.'

"The Berlin student is not typical of his class, nor will the stranger find here so much of the purely student life. Berlin stands, I imagine, to the smaller universities something as Harvard to the Western universities. The students generally go to a local university first, then spend a semester or more in the classic glare of Berlin with its 83 full professors, 87 assistant professors, and 186 instructors; returning finally to their own universities to take their degree. The galaxy of learning here at Berlin is not so brilliant today, I imagine, as in the day of the great Theodor Mommsen.

"Yet it is sufficiently attractive. All of these professors, of course, I have not had the opportunity of seeing, much less hearing—indeed, four years at Harvard left some great names and faces unconnected in my mind. Those I have seen here are more especially connected with my department of political science; but they are celebrated enough to merit some particular notice. Wagner I have already spoken of personally—his hobby is the discovery of the golden mean between the warring extremes of his science. He comes dangerously near committing the common mistake in such cases of mistaking his extremes. He is publishing a new edition of his valuable *Lehrbuch*, and as inducement is offering various blandishments to the national apparition of socialism. The *bête noire* of the German economist is, of course, the British school founded, as Wagner says, with a jerk of his head, by 'Adahm Smiss.' Wagner, however, gives them due credit for their great work and agrees with them more fully than with the younger German radicals headed by Schmoller.

"There is evidently no intellectual love lost between Wagner and Schmoller. Schmoller is a large man about 50, with flowing beard, grown bald and

prematurely gray. His complexion is dark and his eyes small and bright. He wears glasses, speaks with an accent, and is evidently a man of strong prejudices, fearless and sharp in expression of opinion, but a tireless investigator. He strikes me as more of a historian than economist. He conducts the economics seminar every other semester, alternating with Wagner. This semester Schmoller has the seminar, consisting of upward of 40 members, two of whom are American born, representing Harvard and Boston University. The papers presented so far have been indifferent, but the discussion animated and intelligent.

"The difference in general appearance between the Berlin student and his Harvard brother is very marked. The Harvard man affects a slouchy stride, jams his hands in his pockets, dresses well, and yet with a certain conscious carelessness; and would appear as a sort of devil-may-care young fellow, out of swaddling clothes but not yet in straitjacket. The Berlin student affects a strut, never uses his trouser pockets or whistles in public, dresses poorly but with a certain primness of collar, gloves, and cane; and would appear as a young man of intellect, promise, and present importance. A crowd of German students is more picturesque.

"In social life particularism is more marked here than even at Harvard. The simpleton who asks: 'Well, how about the social life of the Harvard students?' should be questioned in turn: 'Which Harvard students?' So in Berlin. Most of the students have spent their *kneipe* [carousing] years elsewhere and come here if not for more serious, at least for a different sort of play. The *Verbindungen* [student associations] do not consequently play so much of a role here as elsewhere.

"After so much has been written, most people understand the German student fraternities. They are of two sorts: the *Verbindungen* and the *Vereine*. The *Verbindungen* are in two great divisions: the *Verbindungen* with affiliate chapters in all universities; under these come the corps, to which formerly only the nobles belonged, but which now differ but little from the other divisions—the *Burschenschaften*, the *Landmannschaften*, which have the bulk of members. Second, the *Freie Verbindungen*, which are local societies.

"All the inter-university *Verbindungen* wear the student caps, a band of three colors across the breast; practice the sham sword duels to a considerable extent, do not wear beards, *kneipe* together, and address each other by the familiar *Du* instead of the polite *Sie*. The objects of the *Verbindungen* are purely social. They meet at stated times in their 'local,' drink beer, and sing, fight, etc. Duelling still goes on—have recently seen three or four freshly cut cheeks and heads—but not to a very great extent. I should judge that less than a tenth, possibly less than a twentieth of the members, bear scars. The custom as carried out now is entirely harmless—more so than the Harvard Dickey initiation, I should say. All the different societies parade slowly in the little square before the University in full regalia. Their number are, however, insignificant—generally not more than fifty or sixty in all.

"The *Vereine* are clubs for local social and literary purposes. They wear no caps or only colors on their fob watch chains. There are numerous *Vereine* in Berlin for all purposes, from philosophy to chess, and from converting the Jews to Alp-climbing. Outside of this, there is also an independent 'student union' of those belonging to no societies.

"The political situation is followed with keen interest by the students, though there is very little outspoken opinion. It is easy to see, that William II is not altogether popular among the young men, that many are not averse to coquetting a bit with socialism, and there is a general unrest and dissatisfaction among these future citizens.

"Naturally I am attracted to the socialist movement, but the history of the development of Marxism and of the revisionists like Lassalle, Bernstein and Bakunin was too complicated for a student like myself to understand, who had received no real teaching along this line. I was overwhelmed with rebuttals of Marxism before I understood the original doctrine. Even such great occurrences as the French Commune were minimized by the main history teaching to which I had listened in America. Until the fall of Bismarck in 1890, socialist organization or agitation were illegal in Germany, but the increase of industrial workers had led to a vast scheme of state insurance for accidents, old age relief and the like under Bismarck. In 1891, William II through his new Chancellor Caprivi tried a new social policy which allowed socialists to organize and a new Social Democratic party was beginning to grow rapidly at the time I arrived as a student. I frequently attended their meetings, but my student rank hindered me from that close personal acquaintanceship with workers which I should have had for complete understanding. I did soon realize that the Social Democratic party was the largest in the state, but kept from its rightful representation in the Reichstag by privilege and systematic gerrymandering."

The pageantry and patriotism of Germany in 1892 astonished me. In New England our patriotism was cool and intellectual. Ours was a great nation and it was our duty to preserve it. We "loved" it but with reason not passion. In the South, Negroes simply did not speak or think of patriotism for the nation which held their fathers in slavery for 250 years. On the other hand we revered rebels like Robert Dale Owen, Henry George or Edward Bellamy. When I heard my German companions sing "*Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles in der Welt*" I realized that they felt something I had never felt and perhaps never would. The march of soldiers, the saluting of magnificent uniforms, the martial music and rhythm of movement stirred my senses.

Then there was that new, young Emperor, "*von Gottes Gnade, deutsche Kaiser, König von Preussen*" [blessed by God, German Kaiser, King of Prussia], who led and pinpointed the pageantry. Ever and again he came riding ahead of his white and golden troops on prancing chargers through the great Brandenburg gate, up the Linden "With banners gaily flying, with trumpet and with drum!" I thrilled at the sight even though I knew of that shriveled left arm and of his impossible demand for supreme power. I even trimmed my beard and mustache to a fashion like his and still follow it. If I a stranger was thus influenced, what about the youth of Germany? I began to feel that dichotomy which all my life has characterized my thought: how far can love for my oppressed race accord with love for the oppressing country? And when these loyalties diverge, where shall my soul find refuge?

Germany took up my music and art where Fisk had left me; to religious oratorio was now added opera and symphony, song and sonata. I heard cheaply and

often from the balcony seats offered students, the great music of the world: but I heard it in reverse; I heard Wagner before Verdi; I listened to *Tannhäuser* before *Il Trovatore*. Nevertheless my delight in good music was signally increased.

The many vacations of the academic year I used for trips in Germany and to other parts of Europe; but I missed after the Summer in Eisenach, the companionship of close friends. I kept up my older habit of traveling alone.

I had some student companionship in Germany and might easily have had more. I was invited to join a *Gesellschaft* for study of comparative international law; I found there some good companions and we talked and published a set of bylaws. To this we added a song book, to which at unanimous request I added a translation of the then popular "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay!" Nevertheless I took my first excursion alone and chose the Hansa cities of northwest Germany. I planned this trip for March, but before leaving there came my 25th birthday on February 23. I asked in no companions.

It was in the long, dark winter of northern Germany, and while I was comfortable, I felt a little lonesome and far away from home and boyhood friends. I arose at eight and took coffee and oranges, read letters, thought of my dead parents, and was sorry. The night before I had heard Schubert's beautiful *Unfinished Symphony*, planned my celebration and written to Grandma and Mabel and had a curious little ceremony with candles, Greek wine, oil, and song and prayer. I wandered up to the reading room, then to the art gallery, and finally had a fine dinner with Sonderhof over a bottle of Rudesheimer and cigarettes. Then we went to Potsdam for coffee and saw a pretty girl. We came back to the Seminar, took a walk, supped on cocoa, wine, oranges and cake and I came home alone. I had candles in my room on Schönburger Ufer, and a dedication of my small library to the memory of my mother; and I wrote something rather sentimental about life in general:

"Night—grand and wonderful. I am glad I am living. I rejoice as a strong man to win a race, and I am strong—is it egotism—is it assurance—or is it the silent call of the world spirit that makes me feel that I am royal and that beneath my sceptre a world of kings shall bow. The hot dark blood of a black forefather is beating at my heart, and I know that I am either a genius or a fool. O I wonder what I am—I wonder what the world is—I wonder if life is worth the *Sturm*. I do not know—perhaps I never shall know: But this I do know: be the Truth what it may I will seek it on the pure assumption that it is worth seeking—and Heaven nor Hell, God nor Devil shall turn me from my purpose till I die. I will in this second quarter century of my life, enter the dark forest of the unknown world for which I have so many years served my apprenticeship—in the chart and compass which the world furnishes me I have little faith—yet I have nothing better—I will seek till I find—and die. There is a grandeur in the very hopelessness of such a life—Life? And is life all? If I strive, shall I live to strive again? I do not know and in spite of the wild *Sehnsucht* [yearning] for Eternity that makes my heart sick now and then—I shut my teeth and say I do not care. *Carpe Diem!* [Seize the day!—that is, enjoy the present.] What is life but life, after all? Its end is its greatest and fullest self—this end is the Good: the Beautiful is its attribute—its soul, and Truth is its being. Not three commensurable things are these, they are three dimensions of the cube. Mayhap God is the fourth, but for that very reason he will be incomprehensible. The greatest and

fullest life is by definition beautiful, beautiful—beautiful as a dark passionate woman, beautiful as a golden-hearted school girl, beautiful as a grey haired hero. That is the dimension of *breadth*. Then comes Truth—what is, cold and indisputable. What is *height*. Now I will, so help my soul, multiply breadth by height, beauty by truth and then goodness, strength shall bind them together into a solid whole. Wherefore? I know not now. Perhaps infinite other dimensions do. This is a wretched figure and yet it roughly represents my attitude toward the world. I am striving to make my life all that life may be—and I am limiting that strife only in so far as that strife is incompatible with others of my brothers and sisters making their lives similar. The crucial question now is where that limit comes. I am too often puzzled to know. Paul put it as meat-eating, which was asinine. I have put it as the (perhaps) life-ruin of Amalie which is cruel. God knows I am sorely puzzled. I am firmly convinced that my own best development is not one and the same with the best development of the world and here I am willing to sacrifice. That sacrifice to the world's good becomes too soon sickly sentimentality. I therefore take the world that the Unknown lay in my hands and work for the rise of the Negro people, taking for granted that their best development means the best development of the world. . . ."

I was considerably alarmed at the end of my second semester toward the middle of the year 1893 when no word arrived as to re-appointment to my fellowship which I had confidently expected. I cabled without success. Finally this rather casual reply came from the President of Johns Hopkins, D. C. Gilman:

The Slater Trustees have renewed your appointment with the understanding that you should give a note for one half the sum as before. You will presently hear from Mr. Strong representing the Treasurer.

A telegram was received here May 8th, reading: "Was Du Bois reappointed?" without signature. I answered it and there came back a dispatch from Berlin, saying that the message was undelivered. I did not repeat the message.

I shall hope to hear from you after receiving this note, and to have the semi-annual letters in the coming year as in the past.

The Christmas holidays of 1893 I spent in making a trip through south Germany. Three of us visited Weimar, Frankfort, Heidelberg and Mannheim. From Christmas Day to New Year's we stopped in a little German "Dorf" in the Rheinpfalz, where I had an excellent opportunity to study the peasant life closely and compare it with country life in the South. Three of us started out—a Scotsman, an American and myself. The American was descended from German immigrants to the United States and had relatives in the Rhineland in southwest Germany. We spent Christmas in the village of Gimmeldigen. What a lovely holiday, visiting and feasting among peasant folk who treated me like a prince! We visited perhaps 20 different families, talked, ate and drank new wine with them; listened to their gossip, attended their social assemblies, etc. The bill which my obsequious landlord presented on my departure was about one-tenth of what I expected. We stayed in Naustadt a week, with a family whose dead father had driven the first locomotive into France at the opening of the Franco-German war. The daughter was a fine, homely young woman who did everything to make us comfortable.

We then went to Strassburg, Stuttgart, Ulm, Muenchen, Nuremberg, Prague and Dresden. In those places we stayed from one to five days following our Baedekers closely and paying much attention to the Muenchen and Dresden art galleries. The whole trip cost me about \$80. We parted from our American: he was a good-hearted but rather vulgar man, with an education that left no visible results. John Dollar, my British companion, and I got on famously together because we were so opposite in temperament. He was coldly and conventionally British in dress and speech. He paraded more than he walked, hated Catholic priests for no reason which he ever stated and was constitutionally afraid of women. With this went a strange simplicity and deep sympathy with human suffering. Later we decided to go down to Italy; to Genoa, Rome and Naples and then over to Venice and Vienna and Budapest. On this trip we used German instead of English because as Dollar assured me it would be much cheaper. He was quite right. We went over the vast barrier of the Alps gazing up on its heaven of snow and sky and then down on the incomparable beauty of the Italian lakes.

These were troubled days all over Europe. Switzerland was following socialism by adopting social insurance and was on the brink of buying up her railroads. Humbert I and Leo XIII were at loggerheads over papal territory in Italy. Crispi had risen, fallen and come back to power, and was now heading for the fatal Ethiopian war of 1896. We went to Genoa and Turin; to Florence, Rome and Naples. I saw for the first time some of the world's great sculpture and painting; its historical monuments; I sensed the difficulties between France and Italy when Dollar and I, mistaken for Frenchmen, were stoned by youth in the Roman Forum. We lived cheaply and fared bountifully. We saw Naples, free, lovely and dirty, in all the gay abandon of the *fin-de-siècle*. It was a great and inspiring trip. We turned back north and saw Venice with its doves and the Palace of the Doges, and then went northeast to Vienna.

This was Vienna in its glory, not at its height but still magnificent. I remember the great Opera House and the way men stood in their seats and looked the audience over; the leisurely way in which we all promenaded in the wide and long halls and lunched at will; and then the finely conducted music and acting. It was one of the world's greatest and most influential cities. Here Dollar left me. I do not think he liked Austria as much as Rome and also his engagements called him.

As for me I had further scenes to examine. While at Berlin, I found myself once explaining to a schoolmate, Stanislaus Ritter von Estreicher, the race problem in America. He was not as impressed as I thought he should be. He said: "I understand only too well; but you should see the race antagonism in my home. Come to Krakow and see the clash of German and Pole!" I promised that I would visit him when near. So now I travelled alone into Hungary, with the object of turning north through Slovenia and over the Tatra mountains into Poland. It was a journey with a hint of adventure and with a far-off likeness to my American South.

In Budapest I was struck by the hostility to German Austria. This was four years after the suicide of Crown Prince Rudolf at Meyerling. Taaffe was prime minister and had sought to placate the rising Hungarian drive to greater independence by grant of manhood suffrage. But the Hungarians were asserting

their desire for independence. In the post office, they pretended not to understand German even when I tried to buy stamps. It would be the very next year that Kossuth was to die in Italy and increase the demand for Hungarian independence from Austria.

I fared north over that great plain along which the Magyars came west a thousand years before. I had glimpses of Hungary as I traveled slowly by third-class railway coach, stopping to spend a night here and there. A Hungarian peasant wrote later of conditions in Hungary at the time: "Come with me in the Spring and hoe for 16 hours for 12 cents a day; eat dry bread and rotten bacon, sleep in a hole dug with his own hoe for six hours. We work even longer in summer. On the *putzas* four families, 20 to 25 people, live in one room. I have seen men collapsing on the street from starvation. Such things are not exactly calculated to make one enthusiastic about the Fatherland. Do our lords think we shall starve to death without a word?"

All this I did not actually see, but I heard its echoes; my dark face elicited none of the curiosity which it had in blonde north Germany, for there were too many dark Gypsies and other brunettes. I saw poverty and despair. I was several times mistaken for a Jew; arriving one night in a town of north Slovenia, the driver of a rickety cab whispered in my ear, "*Unter die Juden?*" [among Jews]. I stared and then said yes. I stayed in a little Jewish inn. I was a little frightened as in the gathering twilight I traversed the foot-hills of the dark Tatras alone and on foot. I crossed into Poland and stopped to go down into the salt mines of Wielitza.

Finally I came to Krakow and my friend. It was an interesting visit and an old tale. Tyranny in school and work; insult in home and on the street. Of course here, in contrast to America, there were the privileged Poles who escaped personal insult; there was the aristocracy who had some recognized rights. The whole mass of the oppressed were not reduced to one level; nevertheless the degradation was only too familiar. The venerable librarian of the university treated me to Polish *schnapps* which nearly choked me. The family made me most welcome. I never saw my schoolmate again, but I heard later that in the Second World War, the Germans tried to make him a Quisling for them. In 1940, von Estreicher died in a German concentration camp, after he had refused to be one of Germany's puppet rulers of Poland.

I came back to Berlin by way of Prague and Dresden and started my third and final semester. Schmoller wanted to present me for my doctorate, despite the fact that I had not finished the "triennium" required in a German university and my work at Harvard was not recognized. The faculty was willing in my case but was restrained by the professor of English who threatened to push the similar claims of several Britishers. I therefore regretfully had to forego the chance of a German doctorate and wait for the degree from Harvard.

As a farewell to Germany, I made the *Hartzreise* in the Spring of 1894. Again I went alone, but with my now familiar German and wide experience of travel, I felt at home. I kept no diary of this trip, but started west from Berlin to Magdeburg and Halberstadt in Saxony. I passed the splendid seat of the Prince zu Steinberg-Wernigerhode. Then I climbed to the Brocken and lived Walpurgis night again; I forded streams and climbed mountains until in full darkness I came to an old inn.

I ordered beer and *kalbsbratten* and dined alone. This was my perfect farewell to a Germany which no longer exists.

I stayed in Europe as long as the last penny allowed—eager for work and home and yet reluctant. My old pal Dollar wrote me from England and we planned to meet in London before I left for America.

I now turned home. If I had spent a fourth semester at Berlin, that would have not only exceeded my funds covering two years of work but also have taken me up to Christmas and made the securing of work in America for the next year unlikely. A better alternative occurred to me and that was to spend the Spring in France. The years of preparation were over and life was to begin. I computed my balance of funds carefully. I could go first class to London, spend a short time with my friend Dollar and then take first class cabin accommodation to the United States. Or by carefully husbanding my funds, riding third class on railways and returning steerage to New York I could spend a month or more in France. My earlier idea had been to spend a year in Germany and a year in France in graduate study; but I had to choose between a more complete German experience and two incomplete glimpses of both countries. So I spent nearly all my time in Germany. But here at the end was an opportunity at least to have a glimpse of France and then rough it home. Of course if I had intimated my need for further funds to Dollar he would have been willing and able to make me a loan. But here my New England frugality stopped me. I already was in debt for half of my fellowships; I had no job; and I had lived well enough in Europe to endure for a week the experience of immigrants to America. Even they on arrival might easily have a better chance for life than I in my own country.

I went to France and saw Paris; wandered wide and deep and made my French fairly understandable. I sensed the everlasting lure of Paris, three years after the suicide of Boulanger and the year of the final completion of the Franco-Russian alliance. It was also the year President Carnot was assassinated and Dreyfus condemned for treason. But these events gained only my passing attention. I was fascinated by the glory of French culture in painting, sculpture, architecture and historical monument. I saw Sarah Bernhardt; I haunted the Louvre.

In June I met my friend Dollar in London for a few days of a last farewell. Dollar, dear old boy, hadn't the slightest idea that I was going steerage and prattled finely about "selecting a cabin" and all that. We wandered about the depot, watching the crowds, edified by Dollar's explanation of the station until finally I entered the carriage, bade my good friend adieu and rattled off.

We stopped at Southampton in a sort of flurry, nobody, not even the guards seeming to know what we were to do next. As we stood helplessly on the platform the guard suddenly screamed "second cabin passengers this way" and left us steerage people alone. Finally they called us and grabbing our luggage we followed our guide who led us through the streets in one long line to a small brick shed about a mile off, where we deposited our baggage in the ante-room and entered. Within the walls were white-washed bricks, the ceiling wooden and iron and wooden columns in the center. At one end there was an alcove where several cooks were busy and distributed through the room were long wooden tables and benches on which not over-clean tablecloths were spread.

It was a most miscellaneous crowd: men, women, children, girls, husbands, wives—and as I should judge about an even mixture of honest people and rascals. Let me describe some types about me: opposite me a good-natured, honest, red-bearded Englishman, well dressed—paper collar, silver ring, etc. Tells me he's been in America before and talks sensibly. Beside me a short bull-necked candidate for states prison, drunk and sleeping with his head on the table; on the other side an ill-smelling old man with chin beard, good-natured and a bit stupid. Yonder is a tall girl—rather good looking, a bit tawdrily dressed—afraid for her future. There is a motherly old lady in black with a look of sorrow on her face—poor thing. They're eating now—grabbing things and swilling tea.

Well there we sat in this great bare room that whole afternoon: the ship would not sail till the morrow and we must of course sleep there unless, as the steward gently hinted, we went to a hotel. By careful maneuvering I secured a doorless compartment alone and an ill-smelling bunk. A rather restless night it was however—the smell, the noise of the drunken roisterers and the thoughts of the wild trip I was about to take. Two of the roisterers came staggering in about midnight, mistook my compartment for theirs, staggered about, guffawed, hiccoughed and joked and at last managed to tumble to their own bed. Then I was waked again by one of them crawling through the hall on his knees with a lighted match, seeking a penny he'd dropped—not exactly a comfort-giving exhibition in a dry, wooden hovel. Finally my troubled morning dreams were mingled with the stench of the beer which his poor stomach refused longer to hold. This was too much—I could not eat breakfast but rushed out of the fetid atmosphere of the crowded hall into the wet misty atmosphere of Southampton.

It was early Sunday morning and all shops were closed—oh what a dreary lonesome feeling that was! At last I bought an indifferent breakfast for tenpence and then returned to the "barracks" to find that we would not sail before afternoon. In despair I started off again and succeeded in finding a more interesting wandering. Southampton is in many respects a fine old town with its historic gates and old bits of town wall and I enjoyed this all thoroughly. Finally I returned to dinner—a jam and a crowd which I joined with loathing. Then came a baggage van and away we straggled to the quay amid the undisguised amusement of the inhabitants—and it was a picturesque and laughable crowd—young and old—lame and well—rags and fine clothes—Jew and gentile, Russians, English, Americans, Negroes, Poles, Germans, French, Greeks, Austrians—all running and waddling along. Ah—it was funny and yet sad—this great stream of hopes and longing, of disappointment and sorrow, of happiness and crime about to turn itself into Americans. At the quay we were hemmed in by ropes for about a half or three-quarters of an hour and a big red tag with the stamps of the U.S. Consul attached to our bags certifying that he had inspected us—which was of course a lie. Finally we showed our tickets and came on board. In a few minutes, the two tugs started with us in tow and we had embarked.

I'm not myself of the seasick getting kind but I must confess that the next morning as I felt the ship rising and fading away under my feet and rolling from side to side with something more than ordinary enthusiasm, I felt a certain settled

melancholy which compelled me to confine my first breakfast to an orange and rush in rather undignified haste from the dark dungeons below onto the wet and dirty deck. I was not sicker than this, missed no meals and gave up no further offering to the sea; but it was a trying time. The sea was very choppy, even a bit stormy. Then in addition to that, the filth and nastiness of the people about me, the small amount of deck room—that was enough to cause the stoutest stomach to revolt, even on land. And the people were sick—oh so sick, it was pitiable to see them and yet at the same time so laughable. In spite of the efforts of the crew it was well nigh impossible to keep the deck clean, everywhere lay unsightly messes; as one fellow said as I told of the good dinner we'd had: "Yes, I saw a lot of it up on deck." One can hardly realize how sick it's possible to get. Some of the pale, drawn faces looked quite deathlike and the whole tone of melancholy hopelessness that pervaded the crowd was most remarkable. Some made no attempt at first to come on deck and after a few days I was continually surprised by the appearance of new faces which until then had lain low in the cabins below. Such a sort of universal sickness, however, is a strange opportunity to view human character: these 350 human beings so accidentally thrown together learned to know each other first amid pain and suffering and the little friendships made there, the little deeds good and bad, sank deeper into their souls than usual. It is perhaps this circumstance that gives a sea voyage its most peculiar flavor.

On this, our floating island, the world is much simpler than usual. First it consists of us and the trembling world of cabins, decks, masts and chimneys. Then there is a great circle of dark blue waters stretching away, away evenly in a circle until meeting with the sky in the dim and misty distance it becomes one with the sky world and its clouds and pale day moon. Our ship is a fairly large one, not very swift and a bit old—the *Chester* of the American Line with, all told, some 800 souls aboard. My first work in the morning is to get a slight bath, a thing of no ordinary difficulty for steerage passengers. I generally get up on deck a bit early. A bell rings and I hasten down two rickety pairs of steep stairs, two stories below the deck where our cabins are. This is a long room, perhaps 15 yards long and as wide as the ship. The sides are taken up with the bunks, leaving a space perhaps 15 feet in the middle through which a long narrow table of plain boards runs lengthwise. Beside this are narrow stationary seats without backs. The whole room is lighted by only a half dozen small port holes and kerosene lamps giving it a rather gloomy appearance. It is fairly well ventilated, considering its depth below the world. We range ourselves by the tables each bringing the utensils delivered to him by the steward at the beginning of the trip—a tin plate, cup and spoon, and a knife and fork. The breakfast consists of rather poor coffee (with milk and molasses already in) plenty of good bread and fair butter, and good porridge or stew: a breakfast which in spite of the noise, the broad talk and the very primitive table manners of my neighbors, I generally enjoy. The next duty is to wash your own dishes for which a can for slops and a can of hot water is provided, the dish cloth being furnished by the passenger. As usual, some omit even this bit of trouble and have apparently not washed their plates since starting.

There are five Negroes aboard. We do not go together, indeed have not all spoken together, but I think all have had a pleasant voyage with little cause to

complain of any prejudice. Of course we awakened more or less curiosity with some and I fancy something of dislike in others. Yet I find us all talking to the women and one, especially from his good-heartedness, seems a general favorite; in fine, in a gradual line of individuals here the blacks would by no means stand at the bottom of the row. What I notice in all the passengers is their good-heartedness, their straightforwardness. There is not a trace of deception and desire to injure or envy others. A people with such hearts do not deserve annihilation. Society: What happens when 350 people of the lower classes are for nine days thrown together with very little outside government? The answer to this can be seen on this voyage and is most interesting. We have here of course all grades of society but a majority of what must be called lower. Yet I think that the better classes here, the better and more orderly elements though scarcely greater in numbers, have been distinctly more influential. The experience has proven in a degree what I have always thought, that the number of "estates" becomes unlimited in a sense. One can scarcely bring any sort of a crowd of people together without finding a large number of distinct classes. Then again the number of estates is quite limited, for the several classes here developed differences in no great degree different from the classes elsewhere in the world—it is the same old strife of finer souls against brutality.

We have of course strange divisions here: that of education, that of wealth, that of life object, that of nation, that of language and that of color. There is here a great number of half-educated men—men who for lack of opportunity or perseverance have but tasted the beginnings of life. They are, when not dogmatic and conceited, most interesting men and in all cases studies in human nature. They are often compounded of opposites: an intellectual acumen and desire to learn with low habits and even brutality; then again there are embryonic cranks.

After a week we began to become tired and uneasy. We wanted Life to end and begin. A new land loomed there beyond the horizon and we began searching the skies. I who was born there was also approaching something new and untried after 24 years of preparation. At last it loomed on the morning when we saw the Statue of Liberty. I know not what multitude of emotions surged in the others, but I had to recall that mischievous little French girl whose eyes twinkled as she said: "Oh yes the Statue of Liberty! With its back toward America, and its face toward France!"