

Rough Sketches

William Edward Burghardt DuBois, Ph. D.

By John Henry Adams



Du Bois at seventeen months old, and his mother

There are no hair-raising incidents running through the career of William E. Burghardt DuBois. It reads like the calm, steady, positive approach of a great *will* to do and live. His life is full of interest—not the sensational kind, but the kind that best serves as stimulus to the New Negro.

The drudgery of slavery, the slave market, the lash of the overseer, the midnight escape, the patrollers, the recapture, the blood-curdling reprimand, the second escape, the all night tramp through a black, muddy swamp, cold, hungry, naked, penniless, friendless: these were awful, hellish experiences, but they are of the past—dead. Let that history pass. The repetition of our ancestors' life stories only makes us mad and unfits us for the cool, resolute and determinate course by which only we can achieve the high mark set before us. Examples of opportunity taken and wisely used are what latter day young men need, and this is what Dr. DuBois' career is brimful of. This is one of the many reasons why his life is worth the telling, if such is possible.

The effort to relate the desperate upward struggle of the man who has everything in his favor is hard. But where at first is seen a condition which in itself makes the whole of life painful, distressing, doubly burdensome, how, after the man has achieved, may we reckon justly with the man's innate power and give the world the full benefit of the inspiring object lessons accruing therefrom?

The right purpose of biography is to lead, to teach, to inspire men; is to give hope to the faint heart, promise to the young and undeveloped character, strength to the weak and easily beset ambition, and good-cheer to the weary soul upon which has poured a continuous stream of bitter disappointment; and more, biography is a beacon light to the shipwrecked, the sinking, the almost lost: is a thunder voice speaking through the trumpet of example to the heedless prodigal, dissipater, gambler, murderer, suicide; is the nerve center by which this entire human family is moved with increased vigor and quickened step nearer and nearer to the realm of the infinitely good and beautiful.

Show me a boy that is full of purpose, whether



Du Bois at six years of age



DuBois in the Graduating Class of the High School, Great Barrington, Mass.
Mr. DuBois occupies the extreme left.

that purpose shows itself in his successfully robbing a bird nest, or in his standing at the head of his spelling class, and I will give you the cue to every great man and event since Adam. Purpose is the one great prerequisite to achievement. Circumstances might make possible a way to noble fame, heredity might pour in her fine blood and breeding and power, opportunity might be lavish in accrements and gracious in ripening and pruning occasion, but nothing—not one of these—can assure a man of enduring honor and power unless beneath the crossties of his ambition are firm and fast the ballast rocks of purpose. This is what no man can give to another. It cannot be inherited. You must find something to do; must find a wrong to righten, an evil to destroy, a caste and a class distinction to abolish, a name and an honor to reestablish, stolen rights and denied privileges to regain, persecutions and injustices to disclose and bitterly denounce. You must discover above all that a personal morality to improve, a personal ignorance to enlighten, a personal poverty to enrich, a personal character to develop and dignify, and a personal soul to Christianize and cleanse from all hate and malice, and all selfishness and prejudice. This finding of a large and

glorious work to perform is in itself the true and appointed mother of Purpose.

Who can say that William E. Burghardt DuBois has not found a work to do, and that the very finding of that work has not stamped him of great and enduring purpose?

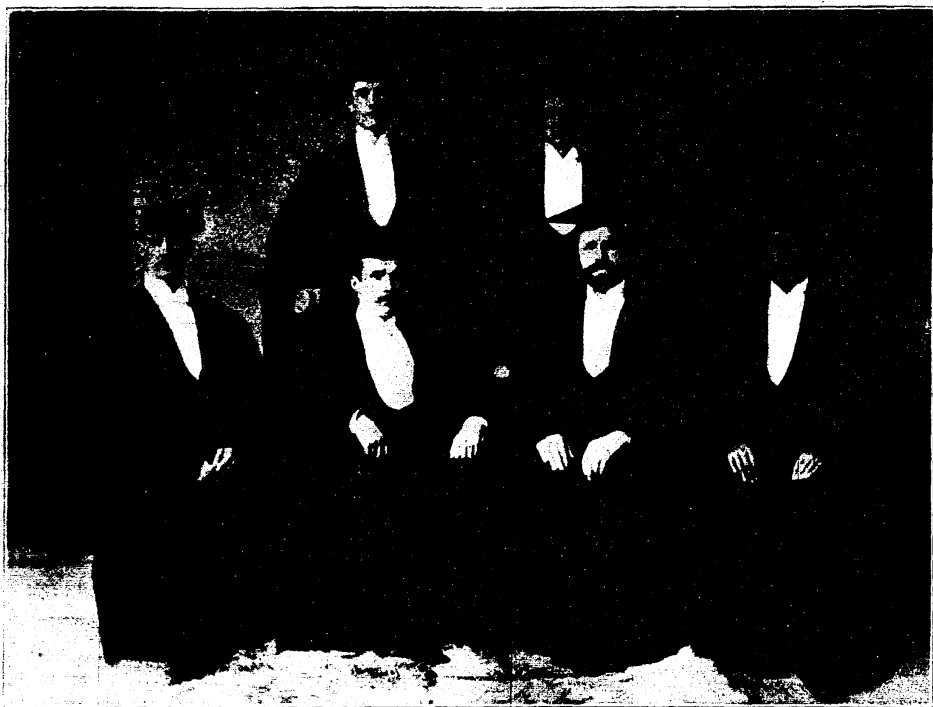
February 23, 1868, in the neighborhood of Great Barrington, Mass., Alfred and Mary (Burghardt) DuBois looked for the first time into the large brown eyes and upon the well rounded form of their baby and only son. At this birth dawned the new hope of the loving and handsome young couple. Alfred was a very ambitious and studious young man, and Mary Burghardt came of a family resident in Massachusetts two hundred years. She was of African and Dutch descent and of a dark brown complexion. Her grandfather fought in the Revolution and her uncle was one of the first American missionaries to Africa. Alfred's father was one of the founders of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, New Haven, Conn. His family was of African, West Indian and French Huguenot descent. With the strength, endurance, bravery and courage of the African; with the serious temper and unforgetful mind, loyalty and steadfastness of the Dutch; and with the sweet temperament, fore-

thought, jest, and in the time of war, warlikeness of the French, the DuBois of today represents the poise, the sweet nature, and the force of character out of which rise all true and enduring service.

Young DuBois entered the public schools of his native city at the age of five, and from the start showed an aptitude that at once secured for him the closest attention of his teachers. In his sixteenth year he graduated from the high school, and a year later entered the Fisk University, graduating at the age of twenty. Not satisfied at that training,

of Pennsylvania; President American Negro Academy. He is author of "The Suppression of the Slave Trade;" "The Philadelphia Negro;" "The Souls of Black Folk." Now Professor of Economics and History, Atlanta University.

Thirty-seven years in the making of one of the strongest characters in America; thirty-seven years in the lifting of an infant race out of the chaos of ignorance, superstition and poverty to the mental, moral, physical and social radiance of our day. This is the progress, the substantial progress, made



Du Bois in the Group of the Six Speakers at the Graduation of 281 Harvard Students

DuBois at once entered Harvard, graduating two years later from a class of 281 members. He was one of the six commencement speakers of his class.

Finding a need of broader research, Mr. DuBois went abroad and pursued his studies at the University of Berlin. On his return he became a professor at Wilberforce University. On May 12, 1896, he was married to Miss Nina Gomer, a beautiful and accomplished young woman of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He was for some time fellow in Sociology at Harvard; late assistant in Sociology, University

of Pennsylvania; President American Negro Academy. He is author of "The Suppression of the Slave Trade;" "The Philadelphia Negro;" "The Souls of Black Folk." Now Professor of Economics and History, Atlanta University.

In appearance DuBois is clean and neat. In height he is a little below the average, and weighs about one hundred and forty-five pounds. His body is symmetrical and well developed. A look into his face betrays the deep import of his cultivated mind. The face is oval, tapering toward the chin, and the richness of its brown color, together with the evenness of his features makes him rather handsome and attractive. His modesty and unassuming tone press themselves upon the most casual



DuBois at seventeen

observer, and when he has to come to the front, he comes with that positive manly address which is a mark of good breeding and race culture. There is never a time when one may not approach him if that some one has something to say or do, but Mr. DuBois shows little patience with the fellow who simply wants to be around and make himself *social*. Mr. DuBois is a busy man, a thinking man, and whether he is sitting quietly looking through the forestry from his office window, or taking his afternoon walk or ride, or tied down to his desk dictating to his secretary he is following up and working out some *new thought*, some race problem, some sociological investigation. And, as busy a man as he is, there is never a moment during the day that his soul cannot respond to the peculiar humor and awkward expressions of the green boys and girls and people generally with whom he is often surrounded. His gentle nature makes him enjoy to the fullest the sunnyside or jest and amusement. In his home one may oftentimes, "in season and out of season," hear the baby voice of Yolande calling—"Papa!" to which the affectionate father replies—"Come baby!" and, in delight the beautiful child totters to her father's knees where after a brief interval of loving embraces the child returns to mamma to repeat what papa said.

Mrs. DuBois is a domestician. Nothing interests her more than the duties of the home, that is

because in her own words: "No one can do for you what you see is needed to be done and do it effectually as you can. The home should always be a reflection of the ideas and tastes of the housewife, and no one can carry out her ideas for her. Servants are never housekeepers, but assistants to housekeepers." From this anyone can see the force of her personality and originality. Mrs. DuBois is of medium height, of excellent form and pleasing carriage. I did hear some ladies say she is a beautiful woman. When women make such an acknowledgement of one of their sex (jealous as they are) we men do not have to pass any further judgment. It is so.

No man is without faults. No man can steer himself clear of mistakes. No man can please everybody any more than he can have the personal acquaintance with everybody. The man's work and influence as well as the man himself are necessarily limited to a particular sphere and class. All within his sphere are touched directly by him and know and feel his power. They that are without see only the passing shadow of the man and are incapable of



DuBois spending a quiet half hour



Head Picture of the DuBois of Today at his Desk

either commenting or passing judgment upon him and his worth. Men are generally so narrow as to see only their personal predilections. "If you bow down to me you are *it* otherwise *no*." Church denomination and even "sectional" prejudices have gone so far in shaping the attitude of one man toward another that no matter to what eminence a man may rise, he is not accorded brotherly respect and fellowship unless **he** bends his knees to these denominational and sectional gods.

Dr. DuBois is a man as other men and wishes to claim no higher distinction. He delights in open

and fair criticism and indulges very freely in the *sport*. But he does not and will not bow down to gods. The work that he has outlined before him is large and great, and instead of courting the favor of men, white or black, Dr. DuBois is following his work to its happy end. What more do you ask of a man than that he do his work? Does not his reward depend upon that? When he was told that he is considered as one hard to approach DuBois said: "Why who thinks that thinks wrong. I am no harder to approach than the man who wants to approach me. If two men have a reason



DuBois Bracing a Stiff Breeze

for wanting to know each other it is as easy for the one as the other to become acquainted. Why the idea of such an opinion of a man. Only those who have not shaken his cordial hand, who have not sought the sunny side of his life and stood in the full radiance of it can say that Dr. Will-

iam Edward Burghardt DuBois is not a man of great intellectual strength and vigor, and excelling in those manly attributes which insure the support of enduring friendship and which will ultimately bring to him lasting honor and fame.



WHEN SPRING IS ON THE WAY

Oh, it's good to be a livin'
 W'en ole Spring is on de way,
 An' de birds in all de tree-tops
 Is a-singin' uv de May;
 W'en de v'lets in de gyarden
 Is a-bowin' to de sky,
 An' de sun th'oo all de snow clouds
 Is a-winkin' uv his eye.

Hurry 'long, ole Mistah Wintah—
 'Cause you sho done had yo' time,
 An' we's had enuff uv blizzards
 An' de sleigh-bells noisy chime.
 'Pears to me dat you is anxious
 Jes' to steal a slice uv Spring,
 Don't you know de folks is waitin'
 Fur de merry birds to sing?

Cost so much to live in Wintah—
 Ev'ything you has to buy;
 But in Springtime things is cheaper,
 An' de Summah's 'proachin' nigh.
 Thoughts uv peace an' monst'ous rapture
 Comes to Eph'um ev'y day,
 W'en de Wintah is a-passin'
 An' ole Spring is on de way.

Jes' beyon' de joys uv Springtime
 Many pleasures I kin see
 Whar de rabbits is a-runnin'
 An' de watahmillions be.
 So it's good to be a-livin'
 W'en de Spring is on de way,
 An' de birds in all de tree-tops
 Is a-singin' uv de May!