

AUTOBIOGRAPHY*

Dear Daniel:

1. The blunt and unclearing skies have covered an open fair weather. It reminds me of the postcard you sent which was somewhat artistic. In its care and pure appreciation for good conduct it gave a tinge of joyous flattery. To tell you that proof is better than question is fine certainty. Your question contained a strong desire of careless love; even *that* can't escape in this manner of heavenly faring like under tree and rock, building and yard, schoolhouse and playground, where I occupied a spirit with the rest of my companions in the streets of New York.

Vienna is a dim symphony, so this note can halt even the strength of memory; although I have practiced poetry and art, they cannot assist me in the rare movements about the Austrian capital, for you know how young I was at the time of departing hence. . . . Some slight agreeable adventures when Adolf took me to the forest: the fantasy of ghost stories overwhelmed my conscience. They left me alone in the woods but returned to find me crying in utter despair of fear, "Morris!"

2. Who thought my reverence was high enough for Emperor Franz Joseph in the hof of Kaiser and Koenigliche? I tipped my cap suddenly as the carriage of the King and his men passed by—but the faint smile of the Kaiser Franz Joseph is still clear and distinctly felt by me in this anxious affair of waiting to see him roll by as we deeply hide in gentle honor.

Vienna seems a big city when we recall the railings and squares, such as the Prater. That gives a little touch to the realism of my present belief. I can yet feel the clean streets, the finest ways of the

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languid German accent of politeness, the post where the historical memories loom—oh yes—bicycle-riding boulevards and the long way to the school gate. The classrooms are perhaps improved. Since I can see but weakly through nature, I behold a boys' assembly with a teacher, as in the U.S., at the head of the room, fairly large enough for us. But the light and working of the furniture were not so agreeable—as if you were living in a room made of panels.

3. Here I may inspect a personal relic. The tale that father told afterward about the Vienna rolls that the bakery messenger left on the sill was a spark of fine comfort to me and sad enjoyment:

till the moving from a place to the Josephine Gasse,
and the birth of our beloved delicate Celia
was a curious shout about the bird in the olive pond
who brings babies back and forth,
until I was sick of childish, unreal, wondering disgust.

My nose was plaintive, of unusually large play, a sight for those who wished to wipe it when the nostrils relieved tears.

There was a house that had windows facing the open street in which we lived: the holy family of embroiderers. We were somewhat acquainted with a gang of stray alley Arabs, but they were unfit for moral speech—used to shout our names from a street off the main passing street, in that alley like a street. They sat on logs which were prepared for telegraph purposes. This often was mingled with the bravery of stealing apples from stands near grocery shops; it led to our dignity a hate and we soon reformed, omitting their acquaintance.

4. Well, dear Daniel, it is unfortunate to write in bed. I can yet feel the music and the dingy room with music copies laden, where Clementi and Czerny were so sweetly chanted and practiced until late in the night; an oaken piano and many people shuffling here and there in warm cozy corners. As of Beethoven flame they sang and watched you perform. Candles and low divans and carpets gave a glow of life and cheer to such environment, which is as much out of habit nowadays as dictation.

I have rested from writing at the end of "dictation." The plain
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fact is I like to steal a bit of personal instinct from some unusual feeling like talent or gift and terms of such meanings that may lead me to some deeper insight as to what justice the soul can demand; so in this retreat I see a sunset,

a bloody ruby glass of flat diamond mystery
underneath a fleece of fair purples,
and pale, placid yellow gold
clouded in the rounding of a horizon
of great fool-cast of illumination
resting unknown, cerulean,
between spattered, archaic, dead blue hues.

5. After our ways and cares at that time when life grew to its height, a dispersal or a waver of happy opinion of the riches in the west brought to a conclusion a large amount of stuff that had to be sold—and nice things we lost and almost for nothing gave away.

Daniel, that theater of toys was your masterpiece in life's youth. Adolf was appointed to lead the show, a real comedy; and the end was we were a bit confused as to the price of dealing and selling the pantomimic amusement. However, the notion was auctioned and the \$50.00 was an addition to our fund for travel—fifty dull dollars.

Well, we gathered our things as well as we could and sent our great man, the old soul of peace (God knows what purity he was then—and is now!), to the United States of America. Here I may be mistaken: Jacob Greenberg was capable of mastering his own independence. And he sailed before we did and took no money from the family. But we disposed of the house articles later and sailed with mother only; who is the heroine of life's care and great insight of love to me.

6. It really is amusing to request information through advanced classic lore. Education seems never to give enough! So it is the plight of unrelieved wisdom and cure of character. I still can say that I wear an air for a tear, or a tear for a mirror, enjoy content and continue doing so.

On the trip across the ocean there was little for me to see, for I was too ill to stir on my feet. I know that Daniel ate more fish and
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cabbage than any of us on the steamer—not a bad name for a ship—*Lake Ontario*. And so we departed—from the old world to the new.

But still my eye sows back to the east of marvel and justice of natural honor; so it returns to my point of sentiment and fancy. Of the friends you had, some were artists, some were of excellent families, etc. However, we seem a bit doubtful as to my age to depict adventures abroad, again must admit premature occurrence.

How about the landing on the shores of Columbia?

Well, it seems I must stop; my bed is being placed in open air for night's rest.

7. From the miniature of writing thoughts that have and will give brighter resource to my mind and perhaps leave a stronger phase of pleasing attitude:—It was morning; a chill hung in an airy altitude, but soon after the hot and silent beverage I turned my gaze upon this regarded medium which perhaps *may show*. A good deal in this showing desire rests with me. Thus ends certain dislikes and graces which contained the source of expression in early childhood.

The arrival of the ship *Lake Ontario* was very careless. In its entering the port, the dinner below the deck seems to have been neglected. As we arrived, the mere serving of coffee or cocoa by a colored man was a bit late; and mother, who was of quick insight, noticed that we were disregarded—especially I, who stood on one end instead of the middle. Well, it was a peculiar moment. Both Morris and I had sailor suits of bright and cheerful aspect. At the tumult in landing shipments, we were all in the midst of drinking coffee and cocoa. Passing under the Brooklyn Bridge was almost fatal. Adolf, who slept near me on a large casing or wooden box, suddenly fell off. The reason was soon enough discovered: a father of vapors shared the river of light through its opening way . . . and perhaps many more were hurt upon the boat.

We did not stay too long and were soon landed, examined, thoroughly questioned. Mother had her hair unloosed while I had my mouth examined, and so forth with the rest.

8. Quality answers for quality. In my development through man-

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ners and unguided ways of youth I found slow progress in meeting the people who would lead me to the proper swing and crest that would bring the true harmony within and without: there is no complaint.

Soon enough I was admitted into the public school by some difficult detailed event. Both father and mother anxiously endeavored to make rare conclusion of the excellence I showed in the European classes, with papers of the immigration and the health certificate shown to principal and teacher, who gladly appeared to accept foreign characters.

By the fancy problems and abnormal cheer of the large display of classroom and polished desks, I soon was a contender to a chair of philosophy and science. Ah, I can clearly remember the letters of the alphabet written upon the blackboard and being told to make a copy of it to take home and rehearse. Here I soon became acquainted with girls as well as male companions, who were willing to assist me in school lessons at home, but it never occurred to me that they were anxious to follow friendship in secret service through fairy-land development. My route to the academy of class 1A in the street of Suffolk, School 160, was soon a cozy environment. Early morning before the opening of the gates we obtained a delicious breakfast from a candy stand—a penny a cake, and a cup of cocoa adding two pennies . . . eh—good omens.

9. In the handsome path of 1901 and 1907 I was a reaper of hard fact and geographical bliss; a whole world of purity and history was given to me to take home and examine at my interest. It was an unusual thanks-given material that served as an unconscious guide in my spiritual labors.

There were many who wished that we stay away from school, for the very day of fairness itself was enough to educate a lizard. At certain times it was indeed very tempting, and I made an hour in the morning a king's absence from his throne. My step was really not dangerous; all I cared for was to indulge in the liberties of the national sports that the boys create between classes. Well, much to my disappointment I was always alone—alone.

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But as soon as I was told that school was over!—an unusual pride in the exercise of ball games took place in the mud of the gutter, where I was a constant menace to the shopkeeper and passer-by—and almost led to arrest, this wild stupid desire of play, at which I was a rank phantom of grace and easy applicant. Yet 'tis not a loss; the immortal assistance is still at large. The very game is an unusual sport, like wisdom, and seems to give me great truth when I lose myself from life.

10. The transfer of scholarship was very sensitive to me. I often even disliked to be promoted in a new room merely because it was a new room.

Strangeness was becoming an awe of interest in watching women in pretty gowns with men on the streets. I sometimes would be influenced to fight another boy of my physique, or lured to show my exposing talents with a pair of leather worker's ivory sticks and create a rhythm that negroes and Indians would highly demand.

Well, I was not so old during the time of the Roosevelt election. My task was to sell posters:—"I told you so"; also wickedly filed my way through Chinatown. I have not a clever memory to describe the little adventure. It is a fact that Japan and China were a mist of wild fear to me. The feeling of the earthly care became so dull, all that was the East Side history became a laurel of use to keep me from abnormal craze.

11. I'm still in school. Christmas was a very beautiful observance of kindness. Visitors came from all parts of the city to give little gifts. The children were delighted to return their ways toward the teacher's care and make amends by buying silk kerchiefs in neat wrapped bouquets and ribboned parcels; and so bended a curious circle which became a tame class the following day.

Once more my night has come to finish this informational page. A bed of rare gift, unknown to me as never joyless, will try to keep the pretty thoughts from escaping unnoticed, so that we shall decide in real life where the judge of compensation lies.

Happy in an absent state of mind I gave vent to copying Lincoln

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and Washington statues, which was soon noticed by the schoolmaster, who said I should go to drawing academy and gave me a name: Cooper Union. I never was anywhere from home to dome!

I return to tell that conditions changed, and I was promoted to higher honors, which was in a street called Attorney near Rivington. There I kept learning arithmetic, spelling, reading, and the teacher was very anxious to have me draw Lincoln.

12. The mornings lead to fatal inspiration. It is thought that gives memory the charm of desire.

Here I may say I still devour peaceful askance for desire's notice. The picture that gave me fame among my street companions was a water color drawing of a ballplayer in his uniform.

Since then nothing more occurred regarding the opinion of art, but I kept on receiving the courtship of social entertainment from fellow men of the dime novel nobility.

There grew a curious zealous appetite for the Boy of '76: a hero who never fails in his attempts, nor finds his way safe in all battles, but still creates wonderful results with pure clean ladies kissing him for his earnest cheer.

Many secrets and deep meditations as to how my money should be accumulated for books gave me a greed of retiring selfish impulse and amusement. There was an instant or a happening between business hours which was deeply offending—O this keeping life in daily appreciation of financial necessity, that kept me from my reading—perhaps was a friend although felt keenly as an enemy! My father, who needed certain materials for working purposes in the line of embroidery, gave me a path into his secrets of buying fine bullion and silver thread. That alone was feignedly encouraging to drive me away from my novel interest, but I felt angry. So did father, and I had to go away to relieve kindness and reason.

I soon was a victim to other insults because of these sloppy books and sloppy thoughts for which were no mortal judges of enjoyment and protected influence from natural dangers. I was often with Morris, a brother of luck and ambition, who took pleasure in the

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frantic chase for compositions toward classic melody and rhythm, chanted rare music which would keep me like a moth near a lamp to the piano he played. He never liked such books.

13. Well, still in a close term—to add a sentence of redeemed or unredeemed life.

The beauty of kindness in our household was at its height, even as a noble stirs in a castle of embellishments:

Plush of red, plush of green

And spangle brilliancy glimmering here and there,

As the sea sand and a summer,

Shining silver light destroying love and thought,

But bringing sober lust into the hearts of dreamy temper.

We often found our father laboring over a frame of gold—a real act so easily remembered—some working maidens at his side; and perhaps even our mother took part in the exquisite handling of thread and stitch. Some pure Hebrew atmosphere gathered between our doors. Rabbi and priest, negro and Greek, such fathoms of character sprang up between the embroidery tasks. Such were the emblems of far and wide doings that have passed through our environment. There were some great things produced during the time on the East Side with the workings of gold and silver lining, which were given to churches of the finest temples.

So, with an empty head full of no aim, I wandered here and there, from one window of toys to another, but nothing was so deeply set as the leisure crave, or perhaps unresisting helplessness that gave me an upward gaze to become independent.

Yet school meant nothing to me, not even when I heard the piano at its wild, sonorous display.

We had beautiful visitors, since the lessons which Daniel taught to pretty ladies became a languid familiarity and friendly concerts at home. This raised curiosity and a pleasant thrill that I might become a listener to the music they performed.

Singing and dancing, weddings and masquerades, card-playing neighbors, landlords, holidays vanishing like food on a plate.

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14. It does me good to begin digging and adjusting past charms of action. The nights at home were in some respects comfortable. There were often discussions with artists, which brought Daniel into the painting habit. We closely watched him perform near a big canvas, which was being carefully prepared and often observed as a piece of talented labor. We thought the same way—bought canvas and brushes and began smearing, although I did not begin to care for fine arts until later. Morris, whose pearly fingers exhibited rare eyesight, gave me an example of artistic insight.

Do you remember, O Daniel of name and nation, the concert you gave in a hall—a hall which educated the public of east New York in general discipline? The concert was a healthy one, but I came near not seeing it performed. The day was a pleasant one and even street babies wanted to know if I was your brother: a stroke of precious flint here and now which gave me an absorbed countenance and perhaps leads to this memory of present script. The nocturnal eve was a dreary one when the hour of dress and bustle carried your first charm to the stage of this country. But even this honor fled!

15. Life was now a spongy condition. Our mother gradually became ill: ear trouble, germ trouble, nose trouble, skull trouble—death trouble resulted and the family buried her somewhere on Long Island, where a cemetery called Washington was the grave for many poor victims, as our unpraised love was settled. We returned to a café near the doom place, where gathered a party of thirty or more, ate cheese and eggs with a schooner of beer and coffee. The rituals of the Jewish religion demand that one remain seated for seven days upon the floor. Well, we sat on soft cushions (the angels of wealth!). Thus ended a sorrowful, meaningless jubilee in an empty, beautiful world, with scarce a flower knowing joy.

It grew lonesome and cold in the last place of the Suffolk Street apartment. A large one it was, I remember. All became numb and poor and soon the vast poverty settled and someone auctioned us out.

16. In the street of Suffolk, corner of Grand, we lived for ten years. The poverty and insult of life cannot find sufficient words on

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paper; it was a struggle for decency for which we were usually gifted, but which soon drew to a conclusion. Fact seemed to be too earnest with our delicate household of nice parlor antiques.

We were a record-breaker to the moving man as the hour came which cannot be forgotten, the most dismal of happenings in my life—furniture and rats, filthy kitchen and ugly corner room that I occupied during the night.

We got ready to depart, watching the bags of silver plates, gilded cups, rare pillows, mattresses. We woke in a dreary, cold web: sleeping-cave of rats and cabbage, sawdust floor—smelling sulphur fumes in an empty musical tomb.

Father, who left the home to see our things made ready to leave, was deeply sorrowed over many ways and often mentioned our mother's name—what she would think of this predicament. However, we got past with a moving van.

We must tip our hats to a Russian gentleman whom we called Ike Mass. Ike Mass was a mystic to me. I often felt his goodness to an extraordinary degree. All there was to do was to see the articles properly handled and safely removed into the new place of living. The street was Rutgers Square, and another religion prayed.

17. In Rutgers Street was something regarding me. The mornings were as the mornings of school days—walking from Rutgers Street along a street called Division up to Chambers Square to a shop of leather workers or traveling bag makers; there I worked for over a year and a half.

The picture of sadness and unyielding perseverance led to my doing things between times of labor. Often I would sit and draw from rare postcards, which were then obtained or bought at the Metropolitan Museum. Brother Morris did a great deal of thinking in the musical world and often through that freedom managed to see my attention upon the prints, which set on me an absorbed silence and assiduity. He also showed me how to get in it proper grace of delineation. It soon came to a decision that he would take me to a friend who practises and teaches pupils in painting old masters.

The afternoon was sunny and warm, anxious weather. Morris and

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I were on an elevated train—but how my heart fluttered in pure fear of meeting classic masters of rare ability! We rang a bell on Park Avenue near 93rd Street: Frances Keller. But said Morris, "Mrs. Keller has a daughter you will go mad over. Such pure and brave character is seldom met in the world of painting."

Soon enough I was admitted into an apartment of pictures which hung about the wall—copies of Corot and Titian, etc.

18. A worker and a student laid bare the manner of introduction, where I took my lessons in paintings during evenings and practised the technique of brush and palette handling—also temperamental qualities and freedom of touch.

But I began to understand wise pleasure's curation through the observing quantity from a natural secrecy. But it is all known; the truth is, you must sit and work out your own idea of feeling and grace of finish. It is not the discipline that decides artistic genius, for that is a thing in real existence, a fact of self-character. I thought well on my own stupid behalf. I soon gave it up, for I was too poor to assist in this abnormal creative formulation; there were other beautiful things to learn, even friendship and reading.

"Concentration of study in the science of various inventions, astronomy, surgery, dentistry, floor sweeping; and stick to the habit of the quality that would shine for you until the end of your life." Thus spoke Diane, the teacher of art at the Park Avenue studio. "Keep up a heart for the marvel of expression and self-realization wherever you will stay. It will recuperate any bad memory to cheer." And it really seemed to be the fact, as we believed it to be in our self will of grace and nature. I often paid many personal visits to her, and found her to be a powerful miniature absorber to a religious conscience and to pay attention to instant care of aesthetic sentiment, relieving doubt.

19. I'll whisper a prayer, for it is time to retire—not yet from the place of writing—only a little hint to tell me the last of my foreign culture and present satisfaction in pain and rest.

My vocabulary has a great memory for foolish bliss, rather poor in careful selection and of grammatic assistance unguided. I did punish

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a philosophy of the Herbert Spencer style, but then a feeling for poetic insight began to accumulate. I wrote anywhere, read merely to gain letters for the sake of rhyme, rewrote books, recited in a furnished room all alone, as fast as the life of an epicurean in a tower of scientific perseverance. Indeed no foolish path, but it was not public preparation. It was a self-gathering of natural prevention in the ways of life's action.

However, many things of importance have passed my mind—composition as well as poetic attempts. My teacher was drawing my temper to a perfection of height to do. Many a time my strolls were between the room I had and Diane's studio. It soon was old in hours of love; everything became silent and familiar. I often met friends that knew my instructor, and we went together to see her to whom everybody was a spectacle of beauty and a model.

One day in a greeting at the museum, Mrs. Keller, who copied there—who is still copying—told us that Madame Diane had died.

20. After a sorrowful trail to find refuge in the art of music, I understood its proper detail and the power of practise; we cannot forget the visits to the Opera House of the Metropolitan. I know we liked it better than life! However, inspiration did not linger (it comes to whom it calls for), so I began writing plays, thinking to get to some rare operatic conclusion or real acquirement in the Bohemian circle of divine composition.

The days were dreary and poor. Sickness closed in with its careful teeth, and I landed in the nearest insane bureau on an island for a year. Then things were calmer and my mind grew to be what it was, stupid and wanting to labor at the old shop of traveling bag making.

And it happened again that the old story of weakness returned. I was taken to the hospital of descending charity, where things became a careful selection through sanitation and rest. Where was school? O what I would give for the knowledge of grammatic truth! But I saw that science is perfection as long as the world exists. I sat down and wrote a paragraph of sonnets under the title of "Apology" and a play called "Alma"; they were nonsense to real literature of careful

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justice. This little world of my own makes biography important to handle.

So I continued with the spirit of fine arts, writing to friends once in a while, also feeling delighted to indulge silence.

21. My last effort to reply: certain events which have occurred during the year of 1916 were satisfactory to me, but not to those who missed me.

Pianists and artists were now becoming too dull, and I sat down to find the very core of my boring opinion, finding a name for a play in which I can interpose my finest illusion of philosophy and presence of mind from my point of view only. It soon came to me to choose a fancy simplicity called "Capablanka"—well, not so deep as it is shallow—chosen in a melancholy stupor of fame and fortune and lofty peace and hope!

My self-want became intuitive, a wild desire to understand the talent of natural taste. I soon found Daniel listening to me with faint interest, but dear for helping me to live; he has often visited me in my rare, lonely days, which thought became a vague rest to be any kind of contender in this world of joy and familiar manifestations.

Art has mended my insane danger feelings, owing to the memory of writing things which is not common to thought in real life of action. I must say I possess the peace of love which robs me from pain and existence.

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