little-known documents

The Princess Steel

W. E. B. DU BOIS

INTRODUCTION BY ADRIENNE BROWN AND BRITT RUSERT

Introduction

IN HIS 1926 ESSAY "CRITERIA OF NEGRO ART," W. E. B. DU BOIS FAMOUSLY ARGUED THAT "ALL ART IS PROPAGANDA AND EVER MUST BE" (296). Du Bois's reputation as a fiction writer has long suffered because of his unwavering commitment to the propagandistic function of art. The Harlem Renaissance writer Wallace Thurman's 1928 claim that "the artist in him has been stifled in order that the propagandist may survive" (219) would be echoed for decades by critics who continued to view Du Bois's fiction as overly didactic, "insignificant and pallid" (Rigsby i), and bafflingly eccentric.[1] Recently scholars have begun to reverse this disparagement while excavating how Du Bois used fiction to test out and amplify his developing philosophical and sociological positions over the many decades of his career.[2] Du Bois's fantasy story "The Princess Steel," published for the first time here, provides another opportunity to consider Du Bois as a writer of fiction as well as an enthusiastic reader of genre fiction. This addition to the growing archive of Du Bois's fiction illuminates his use of speculative romance to explain not only the pitfalls of industrial capitalism but also the romantic possibilities of social revolution.

Du Bois wrote "The Princess Steel" between 1908 and 1910, during the final years of his first stint teaching at Atlanta University.[3] The edition presented here is a revised typescript draft of the story; an earlier draft, also a typescript, was titled "The Megascope: A Tale of Tales." Because "The Princess Steel" bears an Atlanta University stamp, we know Du Bois must have written it sometime before he left the school in 1910 to work for the NAACP in New York. Furthermore, in the earlier draft of the story, Du Bois set the opening in the Singer Building, which was not erected in New York until 1908.[4] There is no evidence to suggest that he tried and failed to get the piece published. In this way, "The Princess Steel" finds company with Du Bois's many other works of unpublished short fiction—in popular genres like romance, fantasy, science fiction, and mystery—that were composed as part of his ongoing practice of the craft of writing. The experimentalism and playfulness of these stories suggest that they were productions of Du Bois's leisure time.

"The Princess Steel" looks backward and forward: backward toward the mixed genre of *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), which moves among

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autobiography, essay, verse, and music and draws on myth and allegory to illuminate the superstructures of American racism; and forward to Du Bois's first two novels, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911) and *Dark Princess* (1928), both of which showcased the author's developing internationalist and Pan-Africanist sensibilities. Written just before *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* was published, "The Princess Steel" likely served as a model for the longer work, since these two fictions mirror and complement each other. Like *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*'s epic romance of the cotton industry, "The Princess Steel" is, to use Du Bois's phrase, an "economic study," accounting for the rise of American steel using a medieval allegory of primitive accumulation (*Dusk* 269). Centering on two knights battling for control of an African princess whose steel hair is ultimately "mined" for profit, the story extends—and revises—the early-twentieth-century naturalist tradition of exposing industrial capital's dark underbelly.[5] With its frame story involving an elderly black sociologist and his newly invented "megascope," "The Princess Steel" also registers Du Bois's challenge to the empirical myopia of academic sociology. Du Bois finds in speculative romance a method for rendering the feudal conditions of primitive accumulation more suitable than sociology, whose presentist empiricism he deemed less able to make the *longue durée* of capitalist conquest visible.[6] Indeed, the traditional tools of sociology were ultimately unable to grasp the scale of the "Great Near," which in the story refers to the epic timescale of capitalism—and its global imperialist methods—shaping the conditions of the present.

"The Princess Steel" also telegraphs Du Bois's affinity for reading and writing popular fiction. It's difficult to understand Du Bois's fiction in terms of the black literary canon as it has crystallized itself today without this popular context. Indebted to the serial romances and weird gothic magazine fiction of the early twentieth century, "The Princess Steel," like the serial fiction of Pauline Hopkins, begs to be placed in a broader landscape of genre fiction, granting Du Bois's tales of mythic love, magical bloodlines, and fantastic technologies further legibility. And yet in responding to the racism circulating in pulp fiction, Du Bois's genre work does more than challenge stereotypes with its royal black characters. It also reveals how the racial archetypes of primitives and mongrels often propping up these genres are themselves indebted to processes of primitive accumulation, imperialism, and racial conquest that become visible through the perspective of the "Great Near."

Instead of providing a weak articulation of the social theory Du Bois elaborated elsewhere, "The Princess Steel" turns speculative romance into an optimal means for perceiving material history.[7] His work in the fields of fiction, economics, sociology, and history in the early twentieth century ties the technics of romance to rapturous revolution. Such a link emerges in "Criteria of Negro Art," where Du Bois describes African Americans' new embrace of the past as their "remembering that the romance of the world did not die and lie forgotten in the Middle Ages; that if you want romance to deal with you must have it here and now and in your own hands" (292). He presents romance as a tactic of imagining historical change, a creative mode ready to be used in the present. Later in the same essay, Du Bois finds in the history of African resistance to colonization "the true and stirring stuff of which Romance is born and from this stuff come the stirrings of men who are beginning to remember that this kind of material is theirs" (294). For Du Bois romance describes the feeling of capitalism's dialectic history as it drives the present, retaining the revolutionary energy periodically flowering in the past.[8] Du Bois uses this story to disrupt the nationalist tenor of American labor fiction by situating the production of steel, "that skeleton of the Modern World," in a narrative of historical colonization. In its insistence on viewing slavery through the lens of primitive accumulation—represented most powerfully in the Princess Steel's imprisonment—this short story represents a lost touchstone of the histories of black Marxism, labor writing, protest fiction, and speculative fiction. In "The Princess Steel," Du Bois harnessed modern materials to narrate the epic tale of historical materialism.

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Notes

Brackets in the text of Du Bois's story indicate the correction of omissions in the original. Handwritten revisions by Du Bois have been inserted silently, and minor typographic errors and grammatical inconsistencies have been silently corrected. In some cases, the earlier typescript draft of the story, "The Megascope: A Tale of Tales," was used to clarify omissions and illegible text.

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1. See Terry 48 on the critical neglect of Du Bois's fiction and Edwards 127–28 on the many dismissals of Du Bois's trilogy *Black Flame*.

2. See, e.g., Tate's introduction to the 1995 edition of Du Bois's *Dark Princess*, Rampersad's introduction to the 2004 edition of *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*, and Gillman and Weinbaum's edited collection, *Next to the Color Line*, as well as Bhabha; Kaplan; Posnock; and Terry.

3. "The Princess Steel" is housed among the W. E. B. Du Bois Papers in the Special Collections and University Archives at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst (ser. 14, box 1/1).

4. We thank Jeremy Smith, the digital project manager for the W. E. B. Du Bois Digitization Project at UMass Amherst, for his help dating this story.

5. For example, there are resonances between "The Princess Steel" and the American naturalist Frank Norris's *The Octopus* (1901) and *The Pit* (1903). Upton Sinclair's naturalist exposé, *The Jungle* (1906), was also published shortly before Du Bois started writing "The Princess Steel."

6. Bentley has similarly called Du Bois's unpublished short story "A Vacation Unique" a "racial scientific romance" (212–17).

7. As a speculative romance that narrates, among other things, the role of black labor and Africa itself in a large-scale economic shift, Du Bois's story follows Jameson's argument that the "ultimate condition of figuration" for romance "is to be found in a transitional moment in which two distinct modes of production, or moments of socioeconomic development, coexist" (148).

8. Building from Tate's argument about the connections among eroticism, politics, and propaganda across Du Bois's work ("Race"), Weinbaum finds that Du Bois articulates romance as both the subject and method through which "black life is expressed and lived in rebellion" (100).

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The Princess Steel

"IT IS PERFECTLY CLEAR," SAID MY WIFE, POINTing to the sign on the door. "It is perfectly absurd," I answered and yet there it stood written: "Prof. Johnson, Laboratory in Sociology. Hours 9 until 3." We were on the top story of the new Whistler building, or rather tower, on Broadway, New York, and we had come on account of a rather queer advertisement, which we had seen the night before in the *Evening Post*. It had said "Professor Hannibal Johnson will exhibit the results of his great experiments in Sociology by the aid of the megascope at two tomorrow. A few interested parties will be admitted." Now my wife and I were interested in Sociology; we had studied together at Chicago, so diligently indeed that we had just married and were spending our honeymoon in New York. We had, too, certain pet theories in regard to sociological work and experiment and it certainly seemed very opportune to hear almost immediately upon our arrival of a great lecturer in Sociology albeit his name, to our chagrin, was new to us. I was disposed to regard it as rather a joke but my wife took it seriously. We started therefore early the next morning, ascended to the forty-third story or rather "sailed up" as she said, chaffed each other a bit and laughed until sure enough we came to the door.

We knocked and entered and then scarcely looking at the man at the door, we uttered an exclamation of wonder. The wall was dark with velvety material shrouding its contents in a great soft gloom except where, straight before us, the whole wall had been removed leaving one vast window full 40 by 20 feet, and through that burst suddenly on us the whole panorama of New York. We rushed forward and looked down on seething Broadway. "The river and cliffs of Manhattan!" said my wife. Then with one accord, bethinking ourselves we turned to apologize to the silent professor and with surprise I saw that he was black. It never occurred to my little Southern wife that this was aught but a servant. She simply said, "Well, uncle, where is professor?" "I am he," he said and then it was our turn to be not only surprised but rather disagreeably shocked. He was a little man in well-brushed black broadcloth with a polished old mahogany face and bushy hair; he stepped softly and had even a certain air of ancient gentility about him. His voice was like the velvet on the walls and his movements precise and formal. One would not for a moment have hesitated to call him a gentleman had it not been for his color. His voice, his manner, everything showed training and refinement. Naturally my wife stiffened and drew back and yet she felt me smiling and hated to acknowledge the failure of our expedition. I [was] about to suggest going when I noticed that what I had taken to be a velvet covered wall was in reality the velvet bound backs of innumerable tall narrow books all of about the same size. I was struck with curiosity. "You have a fine library," I said tentatively. "It is the Great Chronicle," he said motioning us gently to chairs; we cautiously sat down.

"I discovered it," he said, "twenty-seven years ago. This is a chronicle of everyday facts, births, deaths, marriages, sickness,

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houses, schools, churches, organizations, the infirm, insane, blind, crimes, travel and migration, occupations, crops, things made and unmade—just the everyday facts of life but kept with surprising accuracy by a Silent Brotherhood for 200 years. This treasure has come to me, and forms," he said, "the basis of my great discovery. See." We looked round the room—there were desks and papers, machines apparently for tabulating, a typewriter with a carriage full five feet long, and rolls of paper with figures; but past these he pointed to a great frame over which was stretched a thin transparent film, covered with tiny rectangular lines, and pierced with tiny holes. He pulled his chair nearer and spoke nervously and with intense preoccupation:

"A dot measured by height and breadth on a plane surface like this may measure a single human deed in two dimensions. Now place plane on plane, dot over dot and you have a history of these deeds in days and months and years; so far man has gone, though the Great Chronicle renders my work infinitely more accurate and extensive; but I go further: If now these planes be curved about one center and reflected to and fro we get a curve of infinite curvings which is—"—he paused impressively—"which is the Law of Life." I smiled at this but my wife looked interested; she had apparently forgotten his color.

The old man rose and reached up to the gloomy ceiling—we glanced and saw a network of levers and wires and a great bright silent wheel that whirled so steadily it seemed quite still till ever and again its cogs caught a black ball and sent it whirling till it stopped in the faint tinkle of a silvery bell. The old man seized a lever and swung his weight to it—click-click-clank—it said. We heard the slow tremulous sliding of a great mass. "Look," he said. We looked out the great window and there hanging before it we saw a vast solid crystal globe. I think I have never seen so perfect and beautiful a sphere. It was nearly fifty feet in diameter and seemed at first like a great ball of light, a scintillating captive star glistening in the morning sunlight. "This," he said, "is the globe on which I plot my curves of life. You know in the Middle Age they used to use spheres like this—of course smaller and far less perfect—but that was mere playing with science just as their alchemy was but the play and folly of chemistry. Now my first series of experiments covering the last 20 years has been the plotting of the curves which will give me the Great Curve but—," and here he came nearer and almost whispered, "but when I would cast the great lines of this Curve I was continually hampered by curious counter-curves and shadows and crossings—which all my calculations could not eliminate. Then suddenly a hypothesis occurred to me. Human life is not alone on earth—there is an Over-life—nay—nay I mean nothing metaphysical or theological—I mean a social Over-life—a life of Over-men, Super-men, not merely Captains of Industry but field marshalls of the *Zeit-geist*, who today are guiding the world events and dominating the lives of men. It is a Life so near ourselves that we think it is ourselves, and yet so vast that we vaguely identify it with the universe. I am now seeking these shadowing curves of the Over-life. But I go further: I will not merely know this Over-life. I will see it with my Soul. And I have seen it," he cried triumphantly with burning eyes. Then, feverishly: "I want today to show you one of the Over-men—his deeds, his world, his life, or rather Life of lives—I can do it," he said and drew his chair nervously toward us and looked at us intently with his dark weak eyes. "I can do more than that," he said. "You know we can see the great that is far by means of the telescope and the small that is near by the means of the microscope. We can see the Far Great and the Near Small but not the Great Near." "Nor," I added, finding my voice for the first in a vain effort to break the spell, "the Far Small." He beamed—"Yes—yes, that's it," he said, "and that will come later—Now the Great Near! And that problem I have

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solved by the ~~microscope~~ megascope," and with one more swinging of the lever there swept down before the window a great tube, like a great golden trumpet with the flare toward us and the mouth-piece pointed toward the glit[t]ering sphere; laced round it ran silken cords like coiled electric wire ending in handles, globes and collar like appendages. "See," he said: and lo! on the burning sphere a snake like shadow traced itself under his rapid fingering of the machinery—"it is the Curve of Steel—the sum of all the facts and quantities and times and lives that go to make Steel, that skeleton of the Modern World. We will look through here and if all is well behold the Over-world of steel and its Over-men."

I shook my head in vague assent and looked out of the corner of my eye at my wife for I saw that we [were] dealing with a crank, not with a scientist, and I was wondering just how far we should let it go. He, however, was working feverishly. He had placed three luxurious chairs before the shining trumpet and arranged the pieces and the silken cords.

"Now," he said in a whisper almost fierce, "my first experiment will begin. We shall behold the Spirit of the wonderful metal which is the center of our modern life, and the inner life of the Over-life that dominates this vast industry—the great grim forces of men,—in fact," and he lowered his voice, "We shall see the Over-men."

I smiled. The thin dark curve blazed on the flaming globe. With a sweeping bow he conducted us to the great tube which was now pointed on this light. Carefully he adjusted it. Then he raised the silken cords with what I now saw were head and eye and ear and hand pieces and placed them on my wife. She did not hesitate but eagerly stared into the tube. I did hesitate but at last followed suit. The things I touched seemed tremulous, alive, pulsing. "Now," said his hollow voice, "the experiment begins—Look—feel—see!"

A little tremor of half fear came over me. I put my foot out to touch my wife's toe but she seemed reconciled. We were hidden as it were from the outer-world in these tubes and ear pieces, looking at the sphere which faced Broadway. At first I could see nothing—all was darkness. Then at last far, far away yet painfully distinct I saw Broadway—"the river and cliffs of Manhattan," as my wife had called it. I watched it idly, dreamily as it faded darker, and yet strangely more intense, and then suddenly flashed into murmuring darkness—then to black silence. The silence grew intense. Then came a vague quickening as of wandering winds beating and whirring over rock-ribbed moors. I could hear the lonely chirp of a cricket. The wind rose higher, the crickets chirped louder and lonelier; then I heard waters rushing on, nearer and nearer, swelling and roaring. Lights began to appear and I saw great crags beetling above the rushing waters. It seemed a narrow stream that struggled and foamed as it came down its broad straight way. The crags that soared above were crowned with great castles and up through the castles and under and over the crags ran ever threads—little silver threads that went out through the broad empty country side, out far, far away until they seemed all to meet on a great misty hill to westward. "Those are the hills of Pittsburg," cried the hollow voice of the old man. I laughed. The idea of seeing Pittsburg from Broadway, and yet I strained my eyes. In the pale but glowing light that waxed more and more brilliant I could see distinctly, above the hills, the forming of a vast bluish radiance of silver hair, a pale blue face crowned with silver light, radiant like the rising of the moon. On went the rolling waters, the land around seemed to quiver, even the great crags. And the castles were not castles they were mills—Mills of the Gods, I whispered. Everywhere were moving Things, first I thought them men, women and children—I even caught the babel of voices—but no—they were I came to feel but the Things of this New World, the World of Steel; they came down the waters, they rolled

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along the land, they followed the silvery threads and came on and on until all seemed to choke through a great crag-like narrowing in the river, above which beetled the tallest and most sinister of the castles that seemed, with its great whirling wheel, a mighty Mill for some new meal. As yet I had seen nothing really alive, only the moving of Things until looking narrowly I saw below the castle just at the portcullis, where the great drawbridge stretched across the narrow throat of the gorge, the form of a huge armored knight. His visor was down and he sat on a horse, vast and silent, watching the ever moving mass of Things that rolled past him down the gorge, through the great hopper of his mill where they left their Souls—while their Bodies went whirling drunkenly on. Sometimes the Things choked in the grinding, and the water roared and foamed on the rocks, but then he would strike his spear angrily on the great Wheel and with frightened roar it whirled the faster as the stream moved on and the pile of ground and bolted Souls grew higher.

"Who is he?" I asked. "An Over-man—Immortal—All Powerful" came from a disembodied Voice. "Rhythmic with youth and age just as earth is with night and day, and yet never dying." "Look," I said, "See!" Across the plain beyond came tripping four armored knights. Their visors were down, their spears couched, their horses careering madly and their bannerets flying. The first knight threw a shrewd look over his shoulder, turned and gathered his arms. His eyes flashed darkly beneath his helmet. The clash was coming—there was fury in the air, when suddenly I heard the Voice: "Listen! You cannot understand this conflict until you hear of the story that goes before. This man here is the Lord of the Golden Way and what he has done and how he came to be here, commanding the silver threads and keeping toll over the Great River of Things, I know not, but I ween and so I have constructed in my own way a tale of his past which my little viewing and measuring of his life makes plausible. Listen. Once upon a time there lived an Over-man, Sir Guess of Londonton. He was a man of thought and study and ever his eager brains were pounding at the riddles of the world. As he wondered and wandered he found and captured the black Witch Knowal. Fearful she groveled before him. 'My husband is the Ogre, Evilhood, and if Thou dost me no harm and bringest me to his cave I will make him tell thee a secret, a marvellous secret of a captive maid whom thou mayest loose and have.' So Sir Guess of Londonton took her to the Ogre and the Ogre said in thanks: 'To westward lie hills, and in the hills the Pit of Pittsburg, and in the pit dwelleth captive the dark Queen of the Iron Isles—she that of old came out of Africa. But she hath,' said the Ogre, 'a secret of which men have not dreamed. One of the greatest of the world's great secrets but not the greatest. When the Queen was captured she was heavy with child by the Sun-God; and when that daughter was born, fearing lest daughter like mother should be slaves to men, she hid the child, enchanting it, in her arm; but if thou goest, and callest her up from hell and strikest her right arm with the Golden Sword, then the enchanted daughter may be yours, she and her Treasure. More, too: if she be burned then and there, in the fires of Hell, she will become immortal and be the most wonderful princess of the princesses of the world, the Princess Steel!' 'She and her Treasure,' but she said not what the Treasure was. 'Where is the Golden Sword?' cried Sir Guess of Londonton, but Evilgood and Knowal were gone.

"So Sir Guess hastened away westward toward the Pit, seeking as he went word of the Golden Sword where-with he might strike the right arm of the queen. Now the Golden Sword belongs to the Lord of the Golden Way and the Lord warding the way of his winding river (a pitiful dwindling river in those poor days) saw the young wanderer and wormed his secret; he was amazed and interested and spoke sweetly to the young man and said, 'I

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land, they followed the silvery threads and came on and on until all seemed to choke through a great crag-like narrowing in the river, above which beetled the tallest and most sinister of the castles (That seemed with its great whirling wheel, a mighty Mill for some new meal). As yet I had seen nothing really alive, only the moving of Things until looking narrowly I saw below the castle just at the portcullis, where the great drawbridge stretched across the narrow throat of the gorge, the form of a huge armored knight. His visor was down and he sat on a horse, vast and silent, watching the ever moving mass of Things that rolled past him down the gorge, through the great hopper of his mill ~~and left their~~ where they left their Souls — while their Bodies went whirling drunkenly on. ~~their golden toll piled up at his feet.~~ Sometimes the Things ~~stopped~~ choked in the grinding ~~moving toward him~~, and the water waved ~~choked~~ and foamed on the rocks, but then he would strike his spear angrily on the great Wheel ~~hand~~ and with frightened roar the stream moved on and the pile (of ground + bolted Souls) grew higher. it whirled the faster as

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will follow and help you, and when we have gained the Princess Steel, she shall work for us.' 'Nay, nay,' said Sir Guess, 'the princess herself shall be mine, but her Treasure I will give you'; and the Lord of the Golden Way gladly consented. So he unlocked the Golden Sword (now the Story of the Golden Sword has not been told as yet) and they travelled over great waters and wild lands, hills and vales and faced westward ever westward, until one twilight time they came to the Pit of Pittsburg. Great clouds hung over it, dashed with the red of the dying sun, strange murmurs rose from the earth, black smoke and yellow fire. They felt the very ground beneath them tremble and groan; almost they were afraid to enter, yet Sir Guess never doubted and followed by the Lord of the Golden Way at midnight they climbed the hill and crawling, climbing, squirming, dropped into the bottom of the Pit. Or ever they touched earth, with thundering scream, the great dark form of Queen Iron rose all about them and above, and bent over them and enveloped them. 'Who art thou that bravest me, here in my prison walls?' she said. 'I am Sir Guess of Londonton,' answered the knight bravely, 'and I have come to free the daughter whom thou hidest,' and with the word there came a wail upon the night that thrilled all earth and heaven, the wild and curdling cry of mother panting for child. She swept her hands across the black and lurid heavens, and grasped for the bold knight, clutched his fingers and as she clutched, the Iron gripped his soul. Almost he died with the pain of that fierce grasp. His head whirred and his heartstrings hardened. Yet he gathered himself and left-handed raised the Golden Sword, while his companion crawled and whimpered to the dark,—twice he whirled the sword and it sang in the air, twice again it circled about the great dark head of the queen, and then the fifth time hissing it gripped and bit the flesh, gnawed and craunched the bone; it drank the dark oozing stream of her blood, till the swollen right arm burst, and out rolled and fell a dull, leaden, image like thing, inert, dead, heavy. Down shot the wounded woman with a great gasping cry that set the ocean twanging and hill a-trembling; up flew the fires of Hell. The two men rushed forward and seizing the grey image, rolled it in the soft cold clay, and straining and sweating, swung it above the fires that were bursting from below. It seethed and hissed and burned—it glowed and screamed and shivered; black fiends [rose?] covered and beat back the flames. Off shot the leaden lid: a gleaming hissing scintillating brilliance flooded the cave; a great mist curtained the Incarnation and then when it fell away, the two knights staggered backward and sunk face forward to the dust.

"Naked she stood, lithe and yet nobly formed. Her flesh was the soft blue brilliance of the moon-light—her hair was the bright glistening of silver—her eyes the pale gold of the sunlight on a dying day—her face in its dark blue wonderful radiance seemed at first strange and uncanny; and yet there was in its brilliance a beauty such as mortal never wore. She stepped forward, poised, unconscious, listening. Above between the smoke and grime of the Pit peered the blue sky. She looked toward it, 'Mother,' she said softly. A little star paced slowly by. She hesitated—watching it greedily. 'Sister, sister?' she asked. Then quickly, swiftly she climbed, groping but ever more and more lightly, gliding, until at last she stood upon the mighty hill and raised her golden eyes toward the great blue dome of the sky beneath the twinkling radiance of the stars. The tears streamed down and she lifted her voice and sang: 'Life, Life, Life!' Then all silent she stood, enraptured, worshipful. Out of the east came light; a white grey brilliance began to unfold. She turned upon it wonderingly and watched it with great eyes; the east glowed and reddened and she cowered almost in terror;—long barbed spears of light flashed across the world and killed the stars; the winds waited, the birds sang, twittered, the princess

Page 12 of "The Princess Steel" with Du Bois's handwritten emendations. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Libraries.

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trembled in wild confusion, until above the earth shot the great red glory of the sun. Then she rose and danced and in sudden great good laughter lifted up her voice and cried in ecstasy: 'Father, Father, the Prince of the Princess of Africa!' Ever she laughed and twirled and danced upon the hill until suddenly her eyes fell upon the crouched form of Sir Guess of Londonton and she stood very still. He seeing her for the first time in the broad brilliance and beholding that beautiful face, rose with a wonder in his soul; rose and half timidly, half beseechingly stretched his arms. She looked at him in fright, amaze and sympathy; a softness crept into her eyes. Her bosom heaved. She gathered the silver of her hair around her, shading her lithe limbs and heaving breasts, and then with sudden abandon cried, 'I love thee.' He started toward her. 'Hold.'

"It was the cry of the Lord of the Golden Way as he groped from out of the Pit, tired, dirty, fearsome. 'What will you?' asked the younger lord. 'Our bargain,' muttered the other. 'Where is it?' cried the youth—'Look fool! her hair is silver and her eyes are golden, and,' he whispered 'mayhap there be jewels crusted on her heart.' For a moment [they] gazed at each other. 'Wouldst murder my bride for silver and gold?' cried Sir Guess. 'The Treasure,' growled the lord doggedly and his greedy eyes shifted and caught the gleam of the Golden Sword where it lay between them. He bent stealthily toward it. 'Back,' cried the other. 'We fight with iron and who so wins, his be the Princess, Treasure and All.' Out sprang the iron broad swords and made morning music on the hills. Three times the Lord of the Golden Way slipped to his knees and twice the younger, slighter man grazed death; finally lunging forward the Lord struck Sir Guess heavily upon his shoulder and the knight slipped and fell along the mountain way; ere he could rise the Lord threw away his iron and seized the Golden Sword. Twice he twirled it and twice again and then with a[n] oath drove it through helm and corselet and the younger warrior with gurgling burst of hot red blood, fell at the maiden's feet while the other sick with his fighting dropped fainting to his side. The maiden had at the first onset stood like a stone, then slowly she wakened, at first bewildered, then half confused at the quick wondrous dancing of the men. Then she became grave, excited, mad: her voice came forth in little sharp cries and faint sweet moans. Pain and sorrow wrote themselves on her face. She threw her hands, wildly unloosed and tossed her silvery hair until it went whirling like a great white misty web above her dark blue glowing face and golden eyes and to her face struggled the memory of other worlds and other battles; so from the face of a maiden it became a woman's face and with a woman's great bereaved cry she threw herself on her fallen lover, ripped off the helmet and tore aside the breastplate staunching the blood with her silvery hair, and lay panting and murmuring above him. Then the hair seemed to her coarse. She rose, hesitated and stood there all silver until she spied a thin round stone lying in the dust. With deft strength she clove a hole in its middle and gripping it lightly in her fingers wheeled and whirled it and so spun a strand of her hair to a long thin beautiful thread and wove it carefully round and round the bloody body in cunning fashion until it lay there hearsed in burning breathing silver.

"The Lord of Golden Way awoke, gasped and painfully dragged himself to his knees. He saw the wonderful covering and he knew that the treasure he wanted was the spun hair of the maiden. The sweat of greed oozed on his forehead. He crept forward, stealthily, silently. The maiden never deigned to notice him but crouched there all clothed and gowned in her burning curls. She watched the wan cold face of her lover's, whispering to him and making mystic passes above his bier. Stealthily, silently the Lord crept on till he had seized lightly a single strand of her hair; then he slipped quickly and more quickly down the hill, toiling and trailing after him.

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"Then came long days of work and sweat; he rigged a great wheel and spun the silken steel—clumsily and coarsely but finely enough to joy him to ecstasy. Upward he crept stealthily and seized another strand and spun it; and another and another; and then bold and ever bolder he seized a great curl and setting up a mighty loom wove to a great tough solid mat that rang and pealed till the Lord screamed with greed and joy. And yet ever the maid sat, silent, save for the mystic whispering; motionless, save for the mystic waving of her hand above the bier, there on hills over the Pit of the imprisonment to which her spun hair held her as it stretched across the world. "I bent forward and watched her—There it was I first saw her" said the Voice—that bluish radiance above the western hills, wondrous beautiful, all crowned in silvery cloud and I caught the low full voice in some language of all Languages:

"I watch and ward above my sleeping lord till he awake and then woe World! when I shake my curls a-loose."

I started for I too heard those mystic words and the answering voice of the old man, from afar: "What then? O Princess?" She laughed. Her laugh was like the beating of the billows on the bar, angry with softness. One hand flashed up and with a quick sharp grasp she pulled a single curl. I watched where the curl wended its way past Chicago, past Omaha, past the great plain and the sad mountain and the rough roaring of lands toward the sea and San Francisco; and suddenly the world whirled in San Francisco. The fire burst, the earth trembled, buildings fell, great cries rang round the world. Only the Steel stood silent and grim in the treacherous innocence—I gasped in fear—again flashed that blue and fatal hand: another curl trembled and far down in Valparaiso the earth sighed and sank and staggered, and the steel stood cold and grim; again, and the Isles of the Sea quivered, a great ship shivered and dove to it[s] death. Again—but I cried in horror "Hold—hold O Princess—" the hand sank and low the voice came sad and full of awful sweetness. "I watch and ward above my sleeping Lord till he awake and then woe World! when I shake my curls a-loose." The voice ceased but on the plain where the Lord of the Golden Way held the mill and guarded the things that rolled thither on the silver threads, I heard the crash and roar of battle as the four robber knights bore down upon him. "How will it end?" I cried to the Voice at my side. "I know not nor shall we know in many hundred years. For a day to the Over-World is a thousand years to us and even the megascope is slave to Time."

I dropped the ends of the machine and sat back astonished. My wife sat looking at me curiously. "Well what on earth have you been doing?" she said. "Didn't you see—didn't you hear?" I cried. "I've been watching Broadway." "But the cliffs? Saw you not the cliffs and castles and the Lord[?]"—I hesitated. "I saw only the great towering cliff-like buildings," she said. "Did you not hear the roar of the waters?" "I heard the roar of passing wagons and the voices of men." "And the space above the hills? Did you not see that?" "I saw clouds and the rising moon—for really Robert, it's late and we must go—."

"It was not tuned delicately enough for her," said the old man—"Next time—" but we greeted him hurriedly and passed out.

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