

# FORUM FACT and OPINION

(This column represents the personal opinion of Dr. DuBois and in no way reflects the personal opinion of The Pittsburgh Courier.  
—The Editor.)

## About Vacations

The time to discuss vacations would naturally be vacation time, but there are difficulties. At vacation time everybody is on vacation and all mistakes have been made, but after the days of rest and when work is in full swing is surely a good time to take up this matter of recreation. This summer I have had a month of real rest. I have planned it often before, but somehow I never got it. Even encircling the globe was not as restful as one might imagine. There was too much of interest, too much to see and do. But this summer I drove North along the sky-line drive of the Appalachians, stopping before in Asheville and Bluefield, and then rolling these sixty miles of some of the most beautiful scenery in the world, and on a road where actual stopping places were provided for automobiles without compulsory tribute to hot dog stands. Why is it that on all the fine motor roads of America there is usually no place to stop, no place to rest, no place to turn around unless one pays for it?

Then for the first time I visited Greenwood Lake and spent a week on an estate of lordly proportions, and there, as afterwards at Lake Coboseecontee far up in Maine, I got acquainted with grass and trees and frogs and crickets. Nothing is so astonishing that in this wide-empty land so large a proportion of the people live within brick walls and narrow streets and amid nerve-wracking noise and without the opportunity for sleep and with no fresh vegetables. It may be that it is a rest and recreation for a countryman to come to Atlanta, or Chicago, or New York to see and get some conception of these wonder cities; but for those of us who live in towns and cities, vacation means, or should mean, a quiet sojourn in the country with water and mountains about. And so for three weeks I walked from two to five miles a day; I swam a half hour in the lake; I rowed an hour on its bosom, and, above all, I lay in the air and rested, and went early to bed to sleep.

## The Card Players

The astonishing thing, however, is that so many people who need such rest and change refuse to get it even when it is at hand. Once upon a time I went to a beautiful lake for a summer's outing. It was lovely beyond imagination, remote, quiet, clean, with a purity in air and milk that I had not recently known, and with vegetables so fresh that they were an entirely different kind of food. I arose with the dawn and jumped into the lake, I walked and talked and read, and then at nine o'clock I went to bed, but I did not sleep. No, sleep was quite impossible; because most of my fellows who were enjoying a vacation with me had a singularly different idea of what a vacation meant. Of twenty persons, not more than three could swim. The vast majority did not even bathe in the lake. Instead of row boats they preferred motor boats; walking was not on their program, and at about nine o'clock at night when I was ready for bed they were ready to play cards; and the first night they had a hilarious game which lasted until two o'clock in the morning! I was ready to pack up and leave. I have no prejudice against cards. Intricate, interesting, and satisfying games can be played with them. But why in the name of God must cards be played at midnight? How about a game at ten o'clock in the morning or three in the afternoon? What was really happening, of course, was that these men were unconsciously projecting their city habits into the country and seeking a night life, and a recreation suitable only for city life, and suitable then because nothing better was offered. But here everything better was offered free. I packed up, but I did not go home, for I discovered a tent, pitched it in the quiet woods and slept there in peace and happiness while my companions played contract.

## Quiet and Solitude

I can begin to see why it is that so many of the world's philosophers have praised silence and sought solitude; why age after age men have walked out into the desert, and into the forest, and through the wide plains. As cities grow larger and noisier, we will expect more of this sort of thing. It is the noise of the modern city that is unendurable. City-bred or once used to it, and the inhabitant of London, New York and Los Angeles tends not to notice it, but if he goes away into silence and then returns, the crash of it is terrific. It shatters his nerves. What chance is there for thought and reflection and dreams, and, therefore, the city does not think; it acts. It does not reflect; it rushes. It does not dream because it cannot get enough sleep.

## Where to Rest

That brings to each of us the question as to where we should spend our vacations, and how, in order to re-build strength and calm our nervous system and think this thing of life over carefully and quietly. No sooner do we pose such questions, then there comes problems: where should I go; where as a colored person can I go? If I go among white people, how much rest is there going to be under real or fancied or non-existent but anticipated discrimination? If I go among colored people, what kind of colored people are they going to be? Am I going to meet educated and well-bred folk, or am I going to run into gamblers and makers of eternal whoopee? I fancy that most of our time between vacations could well be taken up considering and seeking an answer to these problems.