



THE JUBILEES.

By Rev. Theodore L. Cuyler.

It was a grateful surprise to the multitudes who thronged Lafayette-avenue church on Sabbath evening last, to see the Jubilee Singers rise at the close of the sermon and pour forth their inspiring hymn "I've been redeemed." It was not merely a song of deliverance from human bondage, but the pean of praise to Christ as their liberator. These simple, devout disciples sang from the heart. We all felt how tame are Italian trills when compared with such hallelujahs.

On Tuesday evening the Jubilees gave a concert in our church, and it was a sort of ovation. Every inch of room was packed, and hundreds were refused admission. There is always an inspiration in singing or preaching to a sympathetic crowd; the whole assembly becomes like an instrument on which singer or preacher plays at his own will. Half the battle with Jenny Lind was that every heart-chord vibrated to her voice. As soon as the Fisk vocalists struck the notes of their opening piece, "Steal away to Jesus," the house became like a great melodeon. Then came their plaintive "We shall walk through the valley," which started the tears. For such strains I could long at many a funeral service.

Pathos is the *forte* of the Jubilees, as it is of John B. Gough. Their fun is only the sparkle on the surface; it is such genuine sounding forth of soul-melody as "Swing low, sweet chariot," or "I've been redeemed," that captivated kings and scholars and connoisseurs beyond the sea. The greatest triumphs of these children of nature have been among the most cultivated classes both in Europe and America. After singing for President Hayes the other day, they were invited by Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia to come and sing in his room. They so charmed the former slave-master of Georgia that he wrote for them a long expression of grateful eulogy. But while Loudin's manly voice was singing the anthems of freedom, must not a strange wonder have come over the old Georgian's mind that he ever fought for a perpetual manacle on such a man as that!

Mr. Loudin is the hero of the troupe—an educated Ohio negro with something of the electricity of Fred Douglass in him. His "laughing song" is enough to cure a heart-ache. But when he makes a speech, as he did the other night on presenting a framed picture of the troupe, he did it with a grace and a richness of voice that any Caucasian orator might covet. Spurgeon's voice is no match for his baritone. He ought to be put into some Southern pulpit. Loudin showed me an autograph volume which he has been enriching with such names as the Crown Princess Victoria, the Princess Alice, Mr. Gladstone, and other celebrities, and with poems by Whittier, Holmes, Emerson, and several Dutch and German writers. Why should not wits and scholars pay such honor to Loudin and his associates when the royal family of Germany entertained them in the old palace of Frederick the Great!

These Jubilees have carried over to Europe the best specimen of what is really our only native American school of music. We have no other. Most of our music is either an importation or an imitation. The most severely critical musical journals of Berlin acknowledged the original power and the high artistic talent of the Jubilees, and admitted that "the *crescendo* and the *pianissimo* of such a piece as 'Steal away to Jesus,' might excite the envy of any choir-master." The best German critics were free to acknowledge that "their musical ideas had received an enlargement." Wherein lies the peculiar charm of our wild negro airs, it is not easy to describe in words; yet they have characteristics that belong to them all just as distinctly as does "the Scotch snap" to the tunes which Burns chose for his national songs. Whether this school of Southern music will long outlive the era of slavery, is not so certain; but it has reached its highest mark in the skilled performances of the Jubilees. Let our countrymen enjoy it while they can.

There is one grand result that may attend the visits of these remarkable people to our various cities; and that is a deepened interest in the Southern freedmen and their elevation. This band of singers are really itinerant missionaries stirring thousands of hearts and kindling a fire of enthusiasm in behalf of that long-suffering and cruelly-wronged race which they represent. Such a woman as Miss Porter and such a man as Mr. Loudin are living arguments in behalf of Lincoln University, Fisk, Hampton, and the other schools for the development of our negro countrymen. There was a fresh pathos and power in the words when Loudin said the other evening, "In the last day our Lord may say to you 'Inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto Me.'"