

same source. As specimens of the hymns they sing the following may serve as examples :

Swing low, sweet chariot,  
Coming for to carry me home.  
I looked over Jordan, and what did I see,  
Coming for to carry me home?  
A band of angels coming after me,  
Coming for to carry me home.

*Chorus*—Swing low, sweet chariot,  
Coming for to carry me home.

Another,

Roll, Jordan, roll.  
I want to go to heaven when I die  
To hear Jordan roll.  
Oh, brothers you ought t' have been there,  
Yes, my Lord !  
As sitting in the kingdom,  
To hear Jordan roll.

*Chorus*—Roll, Jordan, roll, &c.

#### THE JUBILEE SINGERS.

ONE of the notable events in the musical world of the winter just passed has been the concerts given by the "Jubilee Singers," a number of young colored persons of both sexes from the South. The company consists of four men and five women, students of Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn.; and their concerts are given in the interests of that institution. They have been singing in New York and its vicinity, and are now traveling through New England. The writer went to hear them a few days ago in Worcester, Mass.

Their songs are chiefly of a religious character, and undoubtedly represent the best styles of plantation singing as performed by the negro population of the South. Seven of the nine were formerly slaves, and gained their freedom by the Emancipation Proclamation of President Lincoln. The other two were free born. The origin of their music is said to be unknown. The singers say it was never written, but was transmitted from generation to generation, by the quick natural ear and voice which the race is known to possess in an eminent degree. It is therefore more or less wild and uncultivated in its character. Its rhythm is peculiar and oftentimes wholly original, and yet it is touching and pathetic in the extreme. On this point Theo. F. Seward, editor of the *New York Musical Gazette*, says :

It is certain that the critic stands completely disarmed in their presence, (viz., the melodies of the Jubilee Band). He must not only recognize their immense power over audiences which include many people of the highest culture, but, if he be not thoroughly encased in prejudice, he must yield a tribute of admiration on his own part, and acknowledge that these songs touch a chord which the most consummate art fails to reach. \* \* \* The songs are never "composed" after the manner of ordinary music, but spring into life ready made, from the white heat of religious fervor during some protracted meeting in church or camp. They come from no musical cultivation whatever, but are the simple ecstatic utterances of wholly untutored minds. From so unpromising a source we could reasonably expect only such a mass of crudities as would be unendurable to the cultivated ear. On the contrary, however, the cultivated listener confesses to a new charm, and to a power never before felt, at least in its kind. What can we infer from this but that the child-like, receptive minds of these unfortunates were wrought upon with a true inspiration, and that this gift was bestowed upon them by an ever-watchful Father, to quicken the pulses of life, and to keep them from the state of hopeless apathy into which they were in danger of falling?

As to the words which accompany their songs, they are even more broken and irregular than is the music. The words and music were indeed made for each other, and cannot be consistently separated. Both probably originated from the

The success attending these concerts is remarkable. Thousands go to hear them, and are unanimous in their praise. The reason for this cannot apparently be traced to the superior talent of the singers themselves, although they sing well, and three or four of them have really excellent voices. Is not the cause to be found in the religious character of their songs, which they render with so peculiar an unction? I cannot explain the matter satisfactorily to myself on any other hypothesis. In a word, is not the religious the highest type of song, and do not the Jubilee Singers help prove it? It is quite certain that this company could not produce the effect they do by restricting their programme to secular music. They are capable of singing what is called "popular music," such as Scotch and other ballads, choruses from operas, etc., and do so to a certain extent in their concerts; yet it is their native, religious songs that stir the hearts of the populace.

It might be added that Biglow and Main, 425 Broome St., New York, have published a pamphlet edition of several of the songs as sung by the Jubilee Singers. The music was sketched by Theo. F. Seward, and may be considered reliable.

H. W. B.

#### *Oneida Community.*

Not long since a member of the W. C. Community attended a concert at New Haven given by the same "Jubilee Singers," and wrote an account from which we take the following enthusiastic paragraph :

"The concert was a great success, the singers surpassing my expectations. One of the women played the piano finely, and accompanied the singing of the others. Their songs were mostly of a religious character, and were evidently dictated in moments of pious fervor and enthusiasm. Their voices blended perfectly, and their singing seemed to me the grandest, the most touching and effective, of anything of the kind I was ever permitted to hear. They sang with genuine pathos and feeling, and rendered the words, as well as the music, with wonderful enthusiasm and power. I was particularly pleased with the expressions of simple-hearted faith in God which characterized the larger portion of their songs, and found many of them chimed in with my own feelings and desires. I have long thought religion the highest sphere of music, and have been ready to say with Carlyle, 'Music is well said to be the speech of angels; in fact, nothing among the utterance allowed to man is felt to be so divine. It brings us near to the Infinite; and we look for moments over the cloudy elements into the *eternal sea of light*, when song leads and inspires us. To sing the praise of God was and will always be the business of the singer.' Is it not surprising that this gift of song should be so richly bestowed upon the African race?"