

THE NEGRO'S GIFT OF MUSIC

America has had a wonderful gift in the deep, rich, beautiful voices of her Negro children. In his African home the Negro worked and prayed and feared. There was always a song on his lips. He sang when he worked, when he fought, when he loved, or when he hated. In his own way he was content, but one day something terrible happened. A strange-looking white man captured him. He was bound and foot and taken to a boat. After a time he was taken from the boat and put into the dark hold of a slave ship. Then came a voyage, long and dreary. By and by he was landed in a strange country, about which he had never even heard. Then something else new and strange happened. From the slave ship he was led up into the town. He was placed upon a block and auctioned off. He could not even understand what was said when the highest bidder claimed him and carried him away, he knew not where. Do you think he did not miss the beautiful forests through which he had roamed all his life? Do you think he did not miss his comrades and his children? Most surely he did. Our hearts would have been broken, so most likely was his.

But God saw him and knew his distress. Of course, this African did not then understand about this new God, but by and by he began to learn the strange language of his new home. Then he learned a new story—the story of Jesus, a more beautiful story than any he had ever heard. It made him repent of his sins. It comforted him. It made a new hope creep into his heart. Then, little by little, the songs that he had sung back in Africa began to change their words. The tunes were much the same, but the words were different.

Many were the songs that grew right out of their hearts. Did I say grew? Yes; for they were not made all at once. One person would make a line and sing it over and over, then by and by another person would add another line, and so they grew. In the days of slavery these songs were preserved only in the memories of the people, for few of the slaves could read. But now they have been gathered and put into a book. There are many beautiful stories telling just how they grew. One of these is about how the well-known song, "Steal away to Jesus."

On some of the plantations the overseers were wicked men. They told the slaves that they must not hold meetings of any kind—not even prayer meetings. So in order to pray together, they often stole away in the dead of night to some spot in a lonely swamp. These meetings were not announced with the ringing of a bell, but by singing

"Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus,
Steal away, steal away home;
I ain't got long to stay here!"

When the workers in the corn and cotton fields took up the song, they were telling the slaves on the neighboring plantations that a secret prayer meeting would be held that night.

How the song, "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," was composed is another interesting story. Sara Sheppard belonged to a master on a Tennessee plantation. Her husband, the coachman, had bought his own freedom for \$1800. He was saving money to buy his wife and only child. This child was a little girl named Ella. He was so happy with his family until Ella was about three years old. Then there came some very bitter news. The master had bought a

new plantation down in Mississippi. He was going to move away and take Ella and her mother with him. The father had saved money enough to buy their freedom, but the mistress refused to give them up. Sara felt that she would rather die than leave her husband; so she decided to drown herself and her baby. She wrapped Ella in an old shawl, hugged her closely to her breast, and started for the Cumberland River. An old mammy, called Aunt Jane, saw her hurrying to the river. She knew the sad story, so she followed her. Laying her hand tenderly on Sara's shoulder, she said: "Don't do it, honey. Wait 'til the chariot of the Lord swings low. God's got a great work for this baby to do; she's a-goin' to stand befo' kings and queens. Don't you do it, honey." The mother stopped and listened, then went back home. She told her mistress that she would go with her to Mississippi, but the mistress must let Ella's father buy his little girl and keep her in Tennessee. This was agreed to, and the broken-hearted mother was taken away. Sara never forgot the words the old mammy said to her: "Swing low, sweet chariot." That thought kept ringing in her heart, until one day she commenced to weave it into a song. This song kept on growing as it passed from one to another. This is the chorus as we know it:

"Swing low, sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home;
Swing low, sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home."

The baby Ella grew to womanhood, married, and made her home near Fisk University. What do you think she did as soon as she was able? She went down into Mississippi, found her lonely old mother, and brought her home with her. Then one day the chariot swung low, and Sara was carried to her heavenly home.—By Estelle Haskins in *The Boys' Friend*.

THE LONE WAY

Dear reader, have you offered yourself a love-slave to the lowly Nazarene? Have you chosen "the lone way with Jesus?" If you have, the blessed Holy Spirit, who has come into your heart to abide and to be your Comforter and Guide, will also be your Guardian and He will be very thorough with you and entirely faithful to the best interests of your soul. I have no doubt that He will draw you aside from diversions, companionships, and even practices which you do not count positively harmful, but which do not tend directly to the glory of God.

As you look at this or that thing that you have been accustomed to do, you will begin to realize that in many things you have not been jealous of God's glory, and, that to please Him perfectly, you will have to reconsider many questions.

There are many diversions and much reading, as well as some friendships, which are not in themselves hurtful, and, considered aside from the fact that every moment of your time and every energy of your being is pledged to Him, do not seem objectionable to you. But, in that crucial hour when you went down with Jesus into the valley, you promised Him that every thought of your heart, every power of your soul, every moment of your time, every friendship of your life should be subject to the test—"for the glory of God." And so He is but reminding you of your own choice to walk the rest of the way with Jesus.

You will find, too, if you are faithful to Him, that you cannot follow people or measure yourself by other Christians. You will be startled to realize some day that God is holding you to a course of action that He does not require of other Christians. He may even call you to some service that He does not ask of those about you. He may give you the opportunity of sacrificing greater things for Him than many other good people do. It may be that you will be confined to a very narrow place in this world. Riches, fame and popularity may be—yes, are apt to be—so far removed from you that you will have the blessed privilege of depending upon God day by day for your daily bread, that you may thus be reminded that your Father thinks of you every hour, and that He will "supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Jesus Christ."

You may, too, learn to have that precious communion with Him which only they have who have been scorned or misunderstood by friends. It may be that Jesus will draw you into that inner circle to whom He promised "houses and brethren and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions." If so, beloved, do not fail to "rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven."

Again, He may let other good people do things which you cannot do. This will puzzle you, but, remember, you do not have to understand the reason for everything that He tells you to do or not to do. If He sets a seal upon your lips in some particular way, or limits your movements in a certain direction, or seems to narrow your sphere of service by some command which reaches the inner ear of your soul though it does not seem to be specific to others, do not question His wisdom or His love. Others may—you cannot—never mind. There are a thousand things which puzzle you that you may never understand. Only obey His voice unquestioningly, and He will guard you with such zealous love, and guide you into so much joy that you will praise Him for this blessed personal guardianship of the Holy Ghost over your life.—I. D. V., in *Heart and Life*.

CORRESPONDENCE

Port Maitland, N. S.

Dear Brother Trafton: Just a few lines to report the tent meetings at Carleton, N. S. We began the services July 20 and continued them over five Sundays. The last service was Sunday night, August 17. Brother Rue Ingalls was with us three weeks as song leader and soloist. We appreciated his help and enjoyed his message in song. The preaching was done by Rev. H. C. Mullen, Rev. L. J. Sears, Rev. Mr. Gordon, of Deerfield, N. S., and the writer. God was with us and owned our efforts by bringing precious souls to the altar. During the weeks our crowds were not very large. On Sundays the tent was nearly full. We would liked to have seen more results. Many that were touched did not seem to press through to as good an experience as they may have obtained. Yet we believe that seed was sown that will yet bring forth fruit to the glory of God. We did not keep account of the number of souls seeking help, but there was a good number, and we believe some really got help and were blessed in their souls. We thank God for all that was accomplished and give Him all the praise.

HARTLEY E. MULLEN.