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NEGRO SPIRITUALS

Every people has its group expression in its folk-songs. Those of the Negro are known as Spirituals or sorrow songs.

These songs are made whereby the group expresses its joys and its sorrows, its laughter, its hate and its tears.

One peculiar feature, however, of the Negro Spirituals is that they are singularly devoid of any expression of hate.

The Negro folk-song, the rhythmic cry of the slave, stands today not simply as the sole American music but also as the most beautiful expression of human experience born this side of the seas.

It has been neglected, it has been, and is half-despised, and above all, it has been persistently mistaken and misunderstood; but notwithstanding it still remains as the singular Spiritual heritage of the Negro people.

What are these songs? And what do they mean? They are the music of an unhappy people, of the children of disappointment; they tell of death, suffering and unvoiced longing toward a truer world of misty wanderings and hidden ways.

Through all the sorrow of the sorrow songs there breathes a hope, a faith in the ultimate justice of things.

The minor cadences of despair change often to triumph and calm confidence; and sometimes it is faith in life, sometimes faith in death; sometimes assurance of boundless justice in some fair world beyond. But which ever it is, the meaning is always clear; that sometime, somewhere, men will judge men by their souls and not by their skins.

What is the secret of the wide variety and perennially fresh appeal of the Spirituals? How is it that an audience can listen to them for two hours without interlude and without boredom or satiety? The Negro took as his basic material just his native African Rhythms and the King James version of the Bible and out of them created the Spirituals; how then was he able to produce a body of 5 or 500 religious songs with so little monotony of treatment and effect? One explanation is the fact that, although

the Spirituals in a general classification fall under the heading "religious songs," all of them are by no means religious in a narrow or special sense.

All of them are by no means songs of worship, although having a religious origin and usage. In the Spirituals, the Negro did express his religious hopes and fears, his faith and his doubts. In them he also expressed his theological and ethical views, and sounded his exhortations and warnings.

Songs of this character, constitute the bulk of the Spirituals; but in a large proportion of the songs the Negro passed over the strict limits of religious and covered nearly the whole range of group experience—the notable omission being sex.

(To be continued)

ATTAIN 'NOTE' IN BROADCASTS

"The Southernaires" gifted quartet, heard every Sunday over an NBC-WEAF network at 10:00 a.m. Eastern Standard time, have made an enviable reputation in their rendition of Spirituals and Negro Melodies, many of them old tunes which have been almost forgotten. "The Southernaires" have become one of National Broadcasting Company's most popular features. In addition to their singing on the Southland Sketches Program on Sunday morning, they are also heard in "Careless Love," a series of dramatizations of Southern Life broadcast over the NBC network on Sunday afternoons.

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