

THE
JUBILEE SINGERS,

AND THEIR.

CAMPAIGN FOR TWENTY THOUSAND DOLLARS.

BY G. D. PIKE.

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WITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY BLACK.

BOSTON:
LEE AND SHEPARD, PUBLISHERS.

NEW YORK:
LEE, SHEPARD AND DILLINGHAM.

1873.

during the first year. And how prominent the idea of the need of conversion has been made in the history of the school, may be inferred from its report in 1871, where we read, 'Of the ninety-nine pupils who share the blessings of the Home, thirty-two have become Christians this year, and forty-one were already professors of religion, most of them through the influence of the school in former years. It is worthy of note that all the young ladies and misses are professors of religion.'

"So much respecting the ideas of the founders of the University.

"In order to give a correct estimate of the progress of the educational work at this institution, it must be stated that the Fisk University was developed from the Fisk School, which was opened in 1866, and named for General Clinton B. Fisk, who was for a time in charge of the work of the Freedmen's Bureau, at Nashville. Large military hospital buildings were converted into school-rooms, and opened as a free public school. The attendance averaged over a thousand pupils a year until 1867, when the city made some provision for public schools where colored children might be educated. After this change, which relieved the Fisk School of many of its students, a portion of its buildings were transformed into students' dormitories. A dormitory for girls was constructed, a comfortable chapel built, and students

eager for a higher education began to gather from abroad. The annual attendance since that time has been over four hundred, about one hundred of whom have been from abroad, and boarded at the institution. In 1870 and 1871 the number of boarders was greater than could be comfortably accommodated, and enlarged facilities, both for boarding and instruction, had become a necessity. Temporary relief could be afforded by erecting additional buildings upon the present site; but this would only postpone the crisis, as the location, which had been favorable for six years of initiatory work, was very unsuitable for the permanent work of the University. It was clearly seen and keenly felt, by trustees, teachers, and students, that a new site, appropriate and ample, must be secured, and suitable permanent University buildings erected in place of those fast falling into decay, or the development of the institution checked, and the bright promise of its growth and usefulness delayed, if not defeated in its fulfilment. The perplexing question was, 'How can the large amount of money required for these purposes be secured?' The circumstances and the times did not seem favorable for an attempt to raise the money by personal solicitations in the North, nor was there a suitable person at command to undertake the agency. The success of the past, and the golden opportunities of the future, made it evident the work must go forward; and God's hand was so

apparent in all that had been done, it was believed he would make it possible for the friends of the University to secure the money needed. So, at the anniversary exercises in June, 1871, the absorbing thought was concerning the manner in which God would provide the means to equip the institution for its great work. The answer came from within the institution, through Professor George L. White, the Treasurer, and a number of students, who volunteered to go out with him for a season, and earn money by giving concerts.

“The amount they should attempt to raise was not determined, as the enterprise would be but an experiment, the issue of which none could tell.

“The volunteers prepared themselves during the summer vacation, and on the 6th of October started for the North, and remained in the field till the first of May the year following, when they returned with \$20,000 as the financial result of their venture. At this time, the permanency of the University was assured, and a desirable location for the new buildings placed within reach of the trustees, by the American Missionary Association, to be occupied according to their pleasure.

“I will not take your time by speaking of the College Freshman Class of the University, of the great success of the students from this school who have gone out to teach, or by enlarging upon the Sabbath

school or church work, under the able management of Rev. H. S. Bennett; but will close with a brief statement of its present plans and prospects. First, it is proposed to erect 'Jubilee Hall,' at a cost of about \$45,000, which will be the Ladies' Seminary building, containing the dormitories for girls, and the boarding arrangements for the institution. This will be followed by a second building, containing dormitories for young men, with school-rooms; and, in time, a third building will be erected, especially for school-rooms, library, cabinet, etc.

"It is expected that 'Jubilee Hall' will be dedicated at the annual Commencement, in 1873. The providence of God alone can determine how soon the erection of Jubilee Hall shall be followed by the other buildings. It is hoped that the Singers who have consented to sing another year, may earn an amount sufficient, together with the \$20,000 already raised, to pay for the site offered them, and the construction of Jubilee Hall; and upon their endeavors to do so they invoke the blessing of God and the sympathies and prayers of all good men."

When I had said this, and was about to take my seat, a brother asked if I would favor them with the names of the Faculty and Trustees of the University; to whom I replied, "The teachers for 1871 and 1872 were, —