

HEARD ABOUT TOWN.

"Curiosity led me into a meeting in one of the city churches the other evening, the attraction being the announcement that there would be singing by the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Here is a chance, I thought, to hear some thoroughly characteristic negro singing such as I heard while in the South during the days of the war. I had tired of the rag-time songs one hears everywhere and positively yearned for some of the old-time negro melodies." It was a member of the Loyal Legion who was talking with a comrade of the changes he had found in the South on a recent visit and of the apparent extinguishment of the negro of the days before the war. "I had in remembrance the Fisk Jubilee Singers of a quarter of a century ago, who made a trip through the North and aroused such an interest as enabled them to raise money enough to pay the debt on their school. Those singers had all the unction and the genuine twang of the plantation hands, and it was a treat to hear them in such things as 'Swing low, sweet chariot,' 'The Gospel train am a comin',' 'Roll, Jordan, roll,' 'Hain't got long to stay yere,' and others of that type that were full of quaint melody and were characteristic. I never was more disappointed in my life than at the result. The singers I heard had trained voices and all that sort of thing, but they knew nothing of the swing and the fervor with which their parents or grandparents used to sing those old hymns. Education had spoiled them completely for that sort of thing, and there was not a trace of the old-time revival and camp-meeting spirit in the way they sang. They are like most of the darkies of the late generations in that they have had all of the 'nigger' educated out of them. Lew Dockstader, with his face blacked, knows more of the way in which those old camp-meeting tunes should be sung than do any of the jubilee singers of to-day. Down in Southern Georgia in a little schoolhouse one Sunday this Winter I found a congregation of old-time darkies who sang those queer songs with all the fervor of their daddies, such as we used to hear in our days of campaigning. The new negro there knows nothing of that sort of thing, and as a jubilee singer is a miserable failure. I have heard boys sitting on the old Yale fence sing those plantation songs 100 per cent. better than the educated negro of to-day knows how to do it, and most of them were never south of Washington."

Proprietors of the French table d'hôte establishments in the vicinity of Madison Square are just now overrun with customers, male and female, who insist upon chatting in French with the waiters and cashiers. "They are Americans who are going to Paris this Summer," explained the proprietor of one of these places, "and they come here to try what they have learned of French on us. They tip the waiters liberally and try all sorts of funny questions about all sorts of things, none of which have anything to do with either the restaurant or our business. We know what they want and let them instruct the waiters to order cabs, buy dress goods or clothing, give them directions as to how to reach Versailles, and all that sort of thing, because if we did not they would go elsewhere to talk their very funny French. Most of them have been taking lessons at the schools where they teach you French in from twelve to twenty lessons, and from some of the dining room French spoken I should think their instructors had been Germans who had learned their French from a book. It is all very funny, but as it is profitable we have no cause for complaint."

"Just as has been the case ever since we have had poultry shows here," said a Cortlandt Street dealer in poultry supplies, "there is just now an unusual demand for incubators. Men see them work at the show and decide to try one at their own homes, and we can trace many of our orders to the interest aroused in the machines at the recent show. It is a fad that will die out, of course, and I suppose barns in near-by towns are littered with the remains of the machines that other men in past years have bought and tried and got sick of when the novelty has worn off. The great trouble with these purchasers of incubators is that they have neither the time nor patience to attend to them, and when they fail to hatch out the limed eggs these buyers are apt to test them with, they throw the blame on us. Experimenters don't care to pay fancy prices for fertile eggs, and try any they can get in the markets, and, of course, fail. Some succeed so well, however, that they keep up the amusement until unclean coops bring disease and trouble or their chicks get sickly or die outright, and then they give it up as a game that is not worth the kerosene, so to say. But the business is booming just now, and the chicken fever will be virulent until it has run its course for some one of the reasons I have named. Then there will be a lot of incubators that can be bought for a song. As a rule, it is Jerseymen who have this experimental disease the worst, and also as a rule they are the first to tire of the sport. The Long Islanders are the most tenacious at the incubator game, and so I suppose the most successful. I speak now not of the farmer, but of the man who owns a place in the country with a little garden and yard that gives him room to raise a little poultry. The out-and-out farmer never buys an incubator until he has made up his mind that he is going to make a success of poultry raising. It is a fact, too, that women who get the incubator fever succeed better than do the men. They have more time to attend to the machines, I guess, and as the fever does not wear away so quickly with them as with the men, they succeed in getting at least something like satisfactory results from their experiments."

"Here is something not generally known that is decidedly interesting in its way," remarked a broker while he was chatting about the work that remained to be done on the Third Avenue Railroad system. "When the road has completed work on the big power house that will supply power for all their lines, there will be installed in that house in the annexed district machinery that will produce over 100,000 horse power of energy. Have you any idea of how much power that is? Very few persons have. Here is a handy comparison that may be used to make people appreciate it. Most every one has heard of the 'harnessing of Niagara' and the utilization of its water power to produce electricity for lighting and as a motive power for both trolley lines and factories. Now the power that will be produced in the Third Avenue power house will be double that now produced by Niagara Falls, which latter is used to run trolley lines in Niagara Falls and Buffalo, to light both places as well as Clifton on the Canadian side, and also to furnish power to a score of factories. That comparison will give one an idea of the magnitude of the scheme that the railroad company has undertaken."

If you were a commuter on the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad you would understand why every trainman begins to get mad just before he reaches Woodlawn station. To the occasional passenger on those trains the reason is a mystery, though the fact is perfectly apparent that the brakemen hate to see the train approach that point. One of the commuters tells the reason for it. Woodlawn is a station at which the New Haven Road may let passengers from up its road alight, but under the terms of its lease of the track into this city, it cannot take up passengers there, as those are the spoils of the Harlem Division of the New York Central. People who travel little on this line, know nothing of this arrangement. So if they happen to be at the Woodlawn station and a New Haven train comes along and stops there to let passengers off, there is a rush for the train by those who want to get to New York in a hurry. Just here is where the trouble for the train hands comes in. A brakeman stations himself at each car entrance, and from the time the train stops until it starts again is kept busy fighting off would-be passengers who cannot understand why they are not allowed to board a New York train. Time was when the brakeman tried to explain things to the angry and disappointed people. That was when travel was much lighter than it is now, and when trainmen had more time. Now there are always a lot of people who insist upon boarding the trains, and there is no time to explain, only time to fight them away from the cars, which often requires a considerable amount of force. It is this daily fight against would-be passengers that makes every brakeman act as if his hair was being combed the wrong way just before his train approaches Woodlawn station. His daily squabble is inevitable, and he is merely getting into the proper sort of temper for it.