

“DEACON JONES’ GRIEVANCE”

BY

PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

I ‘ve been watchin’ of ‘em, parson,
An’ I ‘m sorry fur to say
‘At my mind is not contented
With the loose an’ keerless way
‘At the young folks treat the music;
‘T ain’t the proper sort o’ choir.
Then I don’t believe in Christuns
A–singin’ hymns for hire.

But I never would ‘a’ murmured
An’ the matter might ‘a’ gone
Ef it was n’t fur the antics
‘At I’ve seen ‘em kerry on;
So I thought it was my dooty
Fur to come to you an’ ask
Ef you would n’t sort o’ gently
Take them singin’ folks to task.

Fust, the music they ‘ve be’n singin’
Will disgrace us mighty soon;
It ’s a cross between a opry
An’ a ol’ cotillion tune.
With its dashes an’ its quavers
An’ its hifalutin style—
Why, it sets my head to swimmin’
When I ‘m comin’ down the aisle.

Now it might be almost decent
Ef it was n’t fur the way
‘At they git up there an’ sing it,
Hey dum diddle, loud and gay.
Why, it shames the name o’ sacred
In its brazen wordliness,
An’ they ‘ve even got “Ol’ Hundred”
In a bold, new-fangled dress.

You ‘ll excuse me, Mr. Parson,
Ef I seem a little sore;
But I ‘ve sung the songs of Isr’el
For threescore years an’ more,
An’ it sort o’ hurts my feelin’s

Fur to see 'em put away
Fur these harum–scarum ditties
'At is capturin' the day.

There 's anuther little happ'nin'
'At I 'll mention while I 'm here,
Jes' to show 'at my objections
All is offered sound and clear.
It was one day they was singin'
An' was doin' well enough—
Singin' good as people could sing
Sich an awful mess o' stuff—

When the choir give a holler,
An' the organ give a groan,
An' they left one weak–voiced feller
A–singin' there alone!
But he stuck right to the music,
Tho' 't was tryin' as could be;
An' when I tried to help him,
Why, the hull church scowled at me.

You say that's so–low singin',
Well, I pray the Lord that I

Growed up when folks was willin'
To sing their hymns so high.
Why, we never had sich doin's
In the good ol' Bethel days,
When the folks was all contented
With the simple songs of praise.

Now I may have spoke too open,
But 'twas too hard to keep still,
An' I hope you 'll tell the singers
'At I bear 'em no ill-will.
'At they all may git to glory
Is my wish an' my desire,
But they 'll need some extry trainin'
'Fore they jine the heavenly choir.