

Before entering on an examination of the reforms accomplished by Luther in connection with the Church song of his time, it may be well to note the exact musical capabilities of the Reformer, as far as these are known to us. As a boy he showed undoubted musical talent ; and having a good soprano voice he was readily admitted to the school choir, as a member of which he would be taught at least the elementary principles of music. "School choirs, known as *Currende*, were instituted some years prior to the Reformation, and were attached to most churches in Germany. The *Currende* consisted of a number of boys who, led by a cantor or precentor, joined in the congregational hymn, and oftentimes assisted the regular choir at certain Church services, morning and evening prayer, baptisms, marriages, and interments. As a general rule the *Currende* boys were of the poorest class, and gained a scanty pittance by street singing in all weathers." According to Luther himself, the boys of the choir, at the time that the festival of Christ's birth was celebrated, went from house to house, and village to village, singing popular Christmas carols in four-part harmony. From this it may be inferred that the education in the school was not altogether of a superficial character.

The musical studies of the great Reformer would, however, appear to have been followed out to most advantage during the years which he spent in the cloister. In the monastic institutions of that time the most intricate branches of musical theory were studied as a daily exercise ; and there is every reason to believe that it was at Erfurt that Luther gained that knowledge of music which in after years, in the reforming of the Church service, proved of such value to him. In the monastery it was customary for him to while away some of the weary hours by playing on the lute ; and it is related that he handled this instrument so well as to attract the attention of passers-by as he journeyed to Worms. The flute also he played with no little skill, and the instrument was his companion on not a few occasions of sore trouble and anxiety. As a singer he was gifted with a clear, deep, and powerful voice, which he retained till nearly the close of