

solstice ¹—is of immemorial antiquity ; and it was celebrated with a blending of riot and sacrifice to tribal divinities, such as is still found among barbaric races. Very early the Church issued a series of repressive decrees which indicate somewhat the character of the revels. In 408, stage plays were forbidden on the Lord's Day and other solemn festivals ; in 425, on the Nativity and other Church feasts ; in 578, disguisings were condemned on these occasions ; in 614, "filthy plays" were prohibited on the Kalends of January.

With the era of St. Augustine, in England, came the policy of substitution in place of prohibition, and so gradually the theory was evolved : if the people must have plays for Christmas, let them be plays of divine mystery and miracle ; if they must have songs, let them sing music of the Church.

How far this theory became explicit I do not know ; it was certainly acted upon. The drama grew up within the Church, outgrew its bounds, and by a curious sort of compromise, when it reached the streets and market-places, took on much of the secular character that centuries before had led to decrees against it. Similarly, the carols that developed out of the Latin festival hymns, after they had grown somewhat away from their models, were presently found in the same manuscripts with songs of purely pagan origin.

The relationship of the early carols to the Latin hymns is unmistakable. They are at first macaronic, like the thirteenth century *Mater Salutaris*,² the Latin element

¹ In the *Saxon Chronicle*, as late as 1154, Christmas is called "mid-wintermas."

² P. 3.