

thoughtless, but which can stir the soul of the earnest, the penitent and the sorrowful with a power that will never die. At the Lord's Table or on the sick-bed these are the strains that touch the heart of the Christian and waft his thoughts to the better land. "Compared with these, Italian trills are tame,"—said a true poet,* and therefore a true and close observer of human nature. After the tempestuous tossings of this troublesome world, the ancient song of God's Church soothes the soul like a mother's lullaby—not so much by its beauty as by its pathos.

There must always be a substratum of this Plain Song in our Church music, or its devotional character is soon lost. Why is it that in churches in which modern and florid music alone is used, tunes are so frequently changed that none but the members of the choir can pretend to join in the singing, and thus the congregation of the Lord is robbed of its share of one of the most delightful parts of the public worship?

The reason of these frequent changes is that the choir themselves soon tire of those "pretty tunes," as they are called, for they are of the earth, earthy—and the principle of immortality is not in them. They tickle the ear for a little time but do not touch the heart. And it must sometimes be rather mortifying to the admirers and introducers of those "pretty tunes" to find that their own taste soon agrees with the general verdict and heartily tires of the quondam favorites. So generally is this felt that but few will venture to pronounce strongly for or against any new tune, but will await the verdict of time.

But is there no way of educating the public taste in this matter? Is there no standard by which church music may be estimated?

Yes, surely. Some tunes have stood the test of centuries, and so far from dying out are now as great favorites as ever. They are of the solemn, sober kind—plain and simple in structure, not reaching beyond the compass of half a dozen notes—quite within the power of any voice and memory in the congregation. They are those which are known as our old, standard metrical tunes. But whence were they derived? Singing in the public worship is as old as congregational worship itself. What was the style of congregational singing among the Jews, and afterwards among the primitive Christians? It was chanting, for rhyme is a thing of modern invention. Chanting or musical reading was the primitive music of God's Church.

The oldest religious chants known to us are those called the Gregorian Tones. They are so ancient that it is now impossible to ascertain their exact origin, and indeed some writers do not hesitate to assert that they are derived from the music used in the Jewish worship in the days of David and Asaph. They were reduced to a regular system in the fourth century by St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, and still further systematized and varied by St. Gregory, Bishop of Rome, in the seventh century. It was from the last named bishop that their name is derived, because by his judicious rules and variations he increased the number of those Tones from four to eight. In all ancient noted service-books of the Church of England these Tones are set either to the Psalms or Canticles, or both, and from them the Anglican Chants, so called, are mostly derived,—as also indeed, as we before observed, are very many of our best and most ancient metrical tunes.

In these Gregorian Tones—as a rule—the music must bend to the words, whereas in the Anglican Chants the words must give way to the music in any case of contraction or extension. The Gregorian Tone is therefore by far the most flexi-

* Burns.