

L. J. H.

NOVA SCOTIA  
**Church Chronicle.**

VOL. III.

HALIFAX, JUNE, 1867.

No. 6.

*"Ad profectum sacrosanctæ matris ecclesiæ."*

THE PLAIN SONG OF THE CHURCH.

In accordance with the wish of an esteemed correspondent we propose to offer a few observations on Ecclesiastical Music, giving such explanations of the ancient musical staff of four lines as will enable any one acquainted with the common American system of Solmization to sing at sight from this ancient staff with its few simple musical characters.

The great object of Theology, and therefore of all true ecclesiastical art, is to train the thoughts from earth to heaven—from nature to God. We must therefore take man as we find him—in his twofold nature of body and soul—and in our ecclesiastical training observe most carefully the rule that body and soul must each have its "portion of meat in due season," as otherwise religion will degenerate into Puritanism on the one hand or superstition on the other, and man will in the end most certainly reject that which is not suited to his needs.

After a long trial of the sensuous Grecian and Italian styles of architecture, the instinct of our twofold nature has brought about the gradual rejection of these and the restoration of the Pointed—or what is erroneously called the Gothic—style. And why? Because in the latter every arch, every point, every device, every ornament carries the eye and the mind upward, and by these "sermons in stones, and good in everything" the thoughts are wafted to the Three—One God, and to the mansions of the blest. By their liability to wandering thoughts, even in worship, holy men in all ages have discovered and bewailed that natural weakness which is so easily drawn away by surrounding circumstances. It has therefore always been the aim of the true Christian philosopher so to combine and arrange outward circumstances as to help rather than to hinder devotion. This is the ruling principle of the Pointed style in Architecture and in the ancient or Plain Song of the Church.

In the stained windows of the Early and Middle Pointed churches, there is a certain disregard of exact and artistic proportion and finish in the drawing of the figures. And yet pictures in the books and tapestry of the same periods on secular subjects exhibit a far superior style and proportion. The reason is obvious. In the church-window the Scripture subject was so drawn as to merely suggest the inspired story, and then no longer detain the thoughts on man's arts and devices, but suffer them to soar up to the heavenly theme itself.

And so it was with early ecclesiastical music. The design of the composer was not to draw attention exclusively to the sweetness or ornaments of his composition, but to suggest heavenly aspirations. There is a solemnity and grandeur about the ancient music of the Church which may perhaps fail to attract the giddy and