

STABAT MATER.

This most pathetic hymn of the Middle Ages is not so well known among Protestants as it ought to be. "The vividness with which it pictures the weeping mother at the cross, its tenderness, its beauty of rhythm, its melodious double rhymes, and its impressiveness when sung either to the fine plain song melody or in the noble compositions which many of the great masters of music have set to it, go far to justify the place it has long held in the Roman Catholic Church."

It dates in its present form from

Stabat Mater dolorosa
Juxta crucem lacrymosa,
Dum pendebat filius,
Cujus animam gementem,
Contristatam et dolentem
Pertransiit gladius.

O quam tristis et afflicta
Fuit illa benedicta
Mater unigeniti,
Quæ merebat, dum dolebat
Et tremebat, dum videbat
Nati pœnas inclyti.

Quis est homo, qui non fletet,
Matrem Christi si videret,
In tanto supplicio ?
Quis non posset contristari,
Piam matrem contemplari
Dolentem cum filio ?

Pro peccatis suæ gentis
Vidit Jesum in tormentis
Et flagellis subditum :
Vidit suum dulcem natum
Morientem, desolatam,
Dum emisit spiritum.

Fac me vere tecum flere,
Crucifixo condolere,
Donec ego vixero ;
Juxta crucem tecum stare,
Te libenter sociare
In planetâ desidero.

Fac me cruce custodiri,
Morte Christi præmuniri,
Confoveri gratia.
Quando corpus morietur,
Fac, ut animæ donetur
Paradisi gloria.

about 1150. It was written by Jacopone, Jacobus de Benedictis. It has been translated seventy-eight times into German, and many times into every other language. It has been set to music by Palestrina, Pergolesi, Haydn, Rossini, and Dvorak. It has been Protestantized by mutilation in "Hymns Ancient and Modern." We give six stanzas of the original, and a translation, which misses, however, the sweet lyric beauty of the Latin text :

At the cross her station keeping,
Stood the mournful Mother weeping
Close to Jesus to the last ;
Through her heart his sorrow sharing,
All his bitter anguish bearing,
Now at length the sword had passed.

Oh, how sad and sore distressed
Was that Mother highly blessed
Of the sole-begotten One !
Christ above in torment hangs,
She beneath beholds the pangs
Of her dying glorious Son.

Is there one who would not weep,
Whelmed in miseries so deep,
Christ's dear Mother to behold ?
Can the human heart refrain
From partaking in her pain,
In that Mother's pain untold ?

Bruised, derided, cursed, defiled,
She beheld her tender child
All with bloody scourges rent,
For the sins of His own nation,
Saw Him hang in desolation,
Till His spirit forth He sent.

Let me mingle tears with thee,
Mourning Him who mourned for me.
All the days that I may live :
By the cross with thee to stay,
There with thee to weep and pray,
Is all I ask of thee to give.

Christ, when Thou shalt call me hence,
Be Thou only my defence,
Be Thy cross my victory ;
While my body here decays,
May my soul Thy goodness praise,
Safe in Paradise with Thee.