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A Practical Discourse on Some Principles of Hymn-Singing

By Robert Bridges

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An excerpt from the beginning of the book: What St. Augustin says of the emotion which he felt on hearing the music in the Portian basilica at Milan in the year 386 has always seemed to me a good illustration of the relativity of musical expression; I mean how much more its ethical significance depends on the musical experience of the hearer, than on any special accomplishment or intrinsic development of the art. Knowing of what kind that music must have been and how few resources of expression it can have had, being rudimental in form, without suggestion of harmony, and in its performance unskilful, its probably nasal voice-production unmodified by any accompaniment, one marvels at his description, What tears I shed at Thy hymns and canticles, how acutely was my soul stirred by the voices and sweet music of Thy Church! As those voices entered my ears, truth distilled in my heart, and thence divine affection welled up in a flood, in tears overflowing, and happy was I in those tears. St. Augustin appears to have witnessed...



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