

**THE STABAT MATER  
SPECIOSA  
AND THE STABAT  
MATER DOLOROSA**

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The Stabat Mater Speciosa and the Stabat Mater Dolorosa by Franklin Johnson

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**FRANKLIN JOHNSON**

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THE  
STABAT MATER SPECIOSA  
AND THE  
STABAT MATER DOLOROSA

*Die Organe der Stabat Mater, op. 22, 1840*

TRANSLATED BY  
FRANKLIN JOHNSON

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1845

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

PHOTOGRAVURE REPRODUCTIONS FROM PAINTINGS.

THE SISTINE MADONNA . . . .	<i>Raphael</i>	. . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
ECCE HOMO . . . . .	<i>Guido</i>	. . . .	Facing 15
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## INTRODUCTION.

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### I.

#### THE HYMNS.

I **HERE** present to the reader, in the original Latin and in English translations preserving the measure of the Latin, the two most tender hymns of the Roman Church, the *Stabat Mater Speciosa* and the *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*, or, as they are frequently called, the *Mater Speciosa* and the *Mater Dolorosa*. They are closely related: in metrical structure they are alike, and much of the language is the same in both. But though they thus resemble each other in external features, they differ in spirit and aim. The first is a pæan, the second a dirge; the first is adapted to Christmas, the second to Good Friday; the first contemplates the cradle of Christ, the second His cross; the first rejoices in the birth of the Divine Babe, though its happiness is dashed with tears as it looks from the glad beginning to the tragical end, from Bethlehem to Calvary, from the manger to the tomb, while the second exhibits throughout a heart broken by the anguish of Mary and her Son.

Did either of these sacred poems stand alone, it would be regarded as an original work of the highest beauty and pathos; but a comparison of the two renders it evident that one was derived from the other. Dr. John Mason Neale, the eminent translator of Latin hymns, assigned the priority to the *Mater Speciosa*; but Dr. Philip Schaff, with more reason, expresses the contrary opinion, and observes that the *Mater Dolorosa* was suggested by the prophecy of Simeon in Luke 2 : 35, and the incident related in John 19 : 25, "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother." If the *Mater Dolorosa* were the offspring of the *Mater Speciosa*, it would probably not have struck its roots into these minute details of sacred history. But granting that the *Mater Dolorosa* is the earlier, it is easy to see how the *Mater Speciosa* grew out of it.

## II.

### THE FAME OF THE MATER DOLOROSA.

THE Stabat Mater Dolorosa is much better known than its companion hymn, owing perhaps to its theme; since the death of Christ possesses an interest for the disciple which even His birth cannot match. It has long been sung in the Roman churches on the Friday in Passion Week, and on the third Sunday in September. In many places its separate stanzas are interposed between the divisions of the Stations of the Cross. In the Sistine Chapel it is used as an offertory on the Thursday of Holy Week. It has inspired the genius of the greatest musicians. Pergolesi composed his Stabat Mater on his death-bed, and produced a work justly celebrated for the depth and sincerity of its pathos. There are two Stabat Maters by Palestrina, "either of which," it has been said, "would suffice to immortalize him." One of these is employed in the Sistine Chapel. The Stabat Mater of Hayden is "a treasury of refined and graceful melody." That of Rossini is more artificial,