

**THE HUMAN
TRAGEDY: A POEM**

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The Human Tragedy: A Poem by Alfred Austin

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ALFRED AUSTIN

**THE HUMAN
TRAGEDY: A POEM**

THE
HUMAN TRAGEDY.

A POEM.

BY
ALFRED AUSTIN,
AUTHOR OF "THE SEASON: A SATIRE."

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1862.

280 - a. 11.

THE HUMAN TRAGEDY.



5 CANTO I.



THE
HUMAN TRAGEDY.

CANTO THE FIRST.

I.

OF continental cities that are known to me,
In this decrepit, money-ridden, crass age,
Although the best of them can scarce atone to me
For the discomforts of a sea-sick passage,
Now that the world's grand sights and sounds
have grown to me
Less sweet than in a younger and more rash
age;
The one, when there, I hold in least abhorrence,
Is ex-grand-ducal, Arno-girdled Florence.

II.

I give the go-by to Cisalpine cities :

I loathe the Germans, though we call them
cousins.

Spa, Hamburg, Baden-Baden, each but fit is
For feathered fools ; you see 'em by the dozen.
Others there be my pen in passing pities,
Which you may find the Gaul, the Turk, the
Russ in,

Where rogues and dolts of fashion, courting ruin,
Were but too happy to take me or you in.

III.

And as for Switzerland, 'tis well enough

For restless folk insanely fond of climbing,
Who care not if the roads and fare be tough,
Nor seek for names convenient for rhyiming.
We all go once : our wives would cut up rough
If we refused that right of early Hymen.
There are not many who repeat the visit ;
The recollection 's not so pleasant—is it ?

IV.

I speak of gentle cities further south,
Where kindly actions done to you no debts are
Where syllables as sweet as rain in drouth
Lisp liquid thanks "per tua gentilezza;"
Where woman's full-orbed eye and crescent
mouth
Provoke and swift repay the hand that pets
her.
Of these, of which it is so sweet to tell, are
None to compete with Florence, hight *la bella*.

V.

Ferrara bears her sorrows too sedately,
And Genoa now looks scarcely *la superba*;
Bologna, though she burst her fetters lately,
Shows yet the rust of bonds that used to
curb her;
Ravenna sits aloof so cold and stately,
You almost dread with footsteps to disturb her.
She looks as though she never would recover
From the forced touch of her detested lover.

VI.

Rome has its ancient quarter and its modern ;
The one is unromantic, t'other triste ;
And though you see full many a tomb and odd urn,
Busts, statues, halls,—its king is still a priest.
And Naples, though no longer Bourbon-trodden,
Goes on fermenting, just like so much yeast.
I frankly hope they will be independent ;
But neither you nor I can see the end on't.

VII.

And by her Adriatic wave-struck strand,
Venice, like Chryses for his stolen daughter,
Bewails her freedom reft by regal hand,
And prays the Gods to venge her wrongs with
slaughter.
She, too, by Smintheus' crown and sceptre grand
Has sued aloud. *His* failure should have
taught her.
Heaven hears the prayer which could not nations
harrow,
And on their counsels speeds the poisoned arrow.