

**FROM THE ASOLAN
HILLS: A POEM**

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From the Asolan Hills: A Poem by Eugene Benson

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EUGENE BENSON

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HILLS: A POEM**

•• *Only Three Hundred copies printed.*

FROM
THE
ASOLAN HILLS

A POEM BY
EUGENE BENSON

" . . . our delicious Asolo,"
ROBERT BROWNING.

" *Asolo vago e piacevole ca-
stello posto ne gli stremi gioghi
delle nostre Alpi sopra il Trivi-
giano.*"

BEMBO.

LONDON
ELKIN MATHEWS
AT THE SIGN OF THE BODLEY HEAD
IN VIGO STREET
1891

23 x 35, 80

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PREFACE.

SOME fifteen years ago the Italian poet, Carducci, sauntering with a friend over the Asolan hills, turned to him and said: "Your old land is very beautiful and rich in memories; I will write a poem about it." Again some two years later, at Castelfranco, he was stirred to say he would write an ode about Giorgione. The promised poems remain, I believe, unwritten, and Carducci's friend¹ is dead. But all that moved both on the Asolan heights, overlooking the whole *Marca Trivigiana*, is there still for the seeing eye, for the living mind, a part of nature, or of the story of the country; and much, if not all of it, imposed itself upon me long before I knew of Carducci's promise, or of his friend's enthusiasm so pleasantly expressed in the little book he wrote now ten years ago entitled *Asolando*:²—a title wherein he anticipated that of Mr. Browning's last volume of verse.

The wish to evoke the majesty of long buried life, the thought of it all, came to the Italian poet and his friend;

¹ The lamented Signor G. Valerio Bianchetti.

² *Asolando*: Note inutili di viaggio di Giuseppe Valerio Bianchetti, Venezia, 1881.

both imaginative enough to respond to the charm of old dead loves, to feel the intense interest of old dead hates, the passion of long ended struggle. Doubtless they evoked the Ecelini, watched the weird Adelaide, followed Cunizza, touched Giorgione's brief life, understood Colonna's "Dream," and knew Fra Gioconda's worth, there, on the Asolan hill, contemplating the very theatre of so many interesting lives, the very cities, or ruins, that yet keep some memory of them, in the enchanting land that lies between the Piave and the Brenta. The last glow of Provençal song was shed over it. It inspired some of the late Mr. Browning's early poetry, and at Asolo he wrote his final verse. I have tried to imagine the aspect of the old Venetian land, seeing it from Asolo as it must have appeared in the very dawn of its history. Beginning with the awakening of Spring, I have looked back to the remote time, when, probably, the famed "Amber Isles"¹ were to be seen from the Asolan hills. And from these same Asolan hills, I seemed to behold the whole drama of the story of the *Marca Trivigiana*, of the ancient Veneto, or Venetian mainland, in the very places it once filled with life.

To express something of it all as it came to me there is both the purpose and the argument of the following pages.

¹ *Insulae Electrides.*

FROM THE ASOLAN HILLS.

*" Il cantar novo s' l pianger degù auelli
In sul di fanno risentir le valli
E' l mormorar de' liquidi cristalli
Giù per lucidi freschi rive e snelli."*

PETRARCA.