

NARRATIVE POEMS

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Narrative Poems by Alfred Austin

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ALFRED AUSTIN

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POEMS**



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NARRATIVE POEMS

BY
ALFRED AUSTIN

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AND NEW YORK
1891

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DEDICATION

TO

SIR JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS, R.A., BART.

MY DEAR MILLAIS,

In tendering you the dedication of this little volume, with Florence basking below me in the sunshine, and within an arrowshot of the villa where Lorenzo died, this very day, close on four hundred years ago, I am vividly reminded of that Renaissance of Art with which their names are for ever associated, and which, after a brief span of dignity and splendour, lapsed into florid effeminacy and social degradation.

In your brilliant boyhood there occurred in our own land an *Æsthetic Revival*, and with the sensitiveness of genius you experienced its attractive and, within proper limits, its salutary influence. There are those, I am told, who reproach you, because, in the gradual develop-

ment of your powers, you liberated yourself from its sway. To me, it seems, it is your distinctive and abiding glory.

In Art, as in life, and whether the art be painting, poetry, or music, there is the masculine element, and there is the feminine element. Both are good, but surely only on condition that the masculine element predominates. The feminine note is a lovely note, an indispensable note; but it should be the pathetic minor, not the dominant key.

Something of the masculinity of your work must be attributed to your own robust nature. But, in common with more than one of your contemporaries whose productions have added grace and lustre to the Victorian Era, you doubtless owe it, in the main, to the indestructible manliness of our race. There is no fear lest English painting, or English literature, should decline into a languid æstheticism; or that, subjugated by a feminine fondness for detail and lack of breadth, we should forget to allot to the various influences that underlie life, and that minister to art, their due place and proportion.

It is interesting to note that, thoroughly English painter as you are, you have been instinctively drawn

to the instructive companionship and loving delineation of external nature, so that your loveliest canvases seem to savour of the heather and to resound with the brawl of mountain torrents. There lies the cure and corrective of that paralysing despondency which is engendered by the incessant nervous activity of urban existence. There lurks the source and sustenance of that cheerful gravity which extracts from life its soundest interpretation, and which invests painting with a nobility of aspect that more than atones for the inevitable absence of moral purpose.

Believe me, My dear Millais,

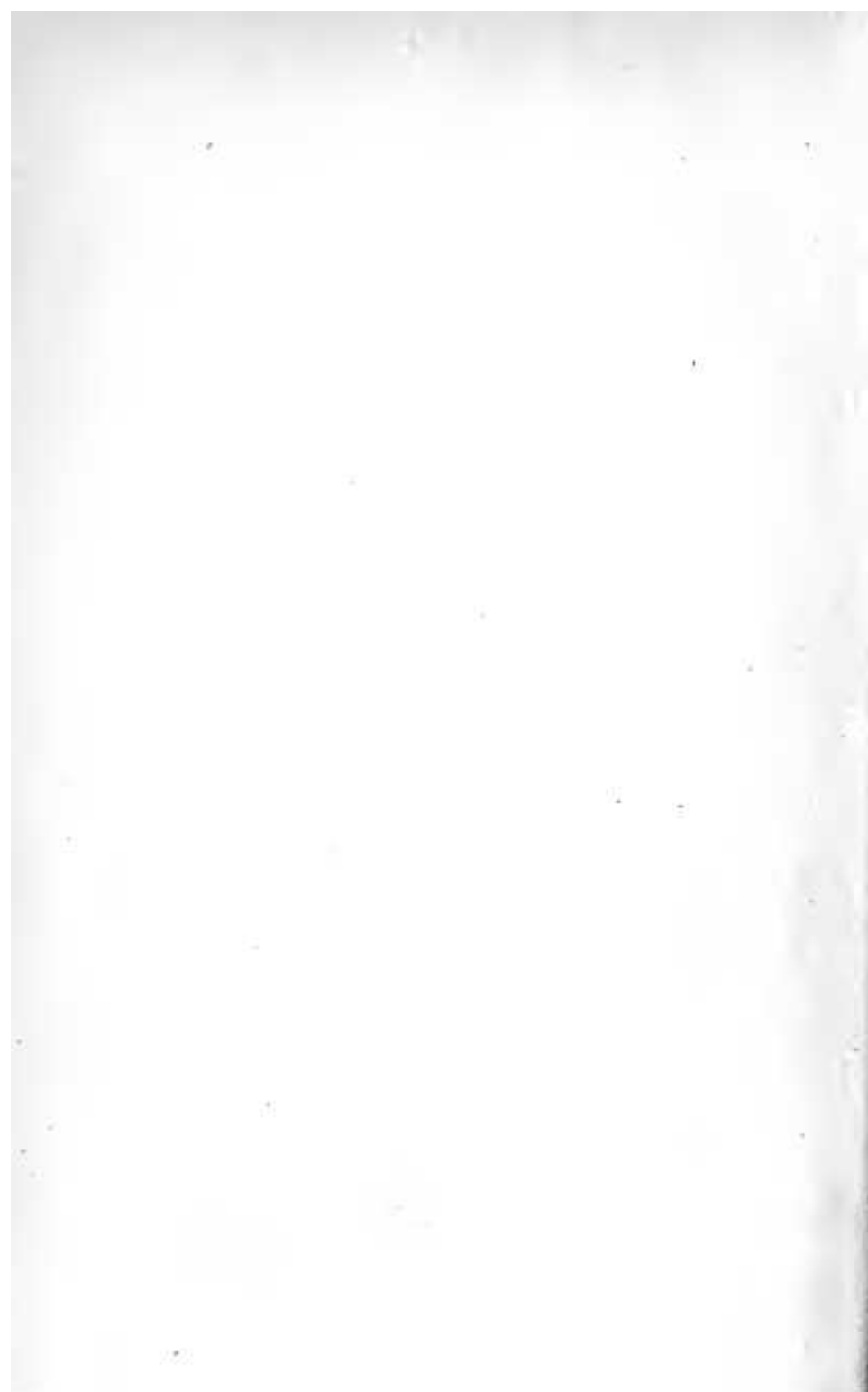
With cordial greeting,

Yours very sincerely,

ALFRED AUSTIN.

LA CASA NUOVA, CAREGGI,

April 7, 1891.



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