

**Cambridge Plain Texts**

ALFIERI  
LA  
VIRTÙ SCONOSCIUTA

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## NOTE

VITTORIO ALFIERI, creator of a new school of tragic drama in Italy, was born at Asti in Piedmont in 1749 and died at Florence in 1803: his *Saul* still holds the stage. Heralded by Parini, Alfieri's terse, nervous, virile style finally sweeps away the last vestiges of Arcadian trivialities and pomposities. "Alfieri," says Leopardi, "was a philosopher rather than a poet. By his daring formation of words derived or composed from our own Italian he endowed our language with one of the most useful qualities of Greek. He proved how many subtle or rare shades of meaning, or things most difficult or indeed almost impossible of expression in any other way (even by using foreign words), might be expressed with ease, clearness and precision, and without soiling the purity of our idiom."

Alfieri's importance as a master of Italian prose has been overshadowed by his fame as a reformer of the tragic drama. The dialogue, which first saw the light at Kehl in 1786, is here reprinted from the Pisa edition of the *Opere*, vol. IV, and dated 1805. It was printed in Baskerville type and is characteristic of the lofty diction of him who said, *Il dire altamente alle cose è un farle in gran parte*.

THOS. OKEY.

May, 1921.