

**SAPPHO, A
TRAGEDY.
IN FIVE ACTS**

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Sappho, a Tragedy. In Five Acts by Stella

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STELLA

**SAPPHO, A
TRAGEDY.
IN FIVE ACTS**



Portrait of a young woman

1850

SAPPHO

A TRAGEDY

In Five Acts

BY

STELLA

AUTHOR OF

'RECORDS OF THE HEART' 'THE KING'S STRATAGEM'; OR, THE
PEARL OF ENGLAND' ETC.

SECOND EDITION



LONDON

TRUBNER & CO., 57 & 59 LUDGATE HILL

1876

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Malone J. 248.

TO
ADELAIDE RISTORI DEL GRILLO

THE GREATEST LIVING TRAGÉDIENNE

This Drama is Dedicated

BY HER DEVOTED FRIEND

THE AUTHOR

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Vertical line on the right side of the page.

PREFACE
TO
THE SECOND EDITION.

IN the following Scenes the Author has adhered closely to the best authenticated accounts of the Lesbian Poetess.

Her life is involved in great obscurity, and no two biographies of her are identical in data.

That she was born at Mitylene in the sixth century B.C., and held Greece rapt in the spells of her lyre; that she was beloved by Alexus, and was married to Cercolas, from whom she was soon separated by death or some other cause; that she founded a school for Poetry at Mitylene, and won the Laurel at Olympia; that she met a youth who inspired her with a deathless passion, and followed him to Sicily, are facts drawn from a hundred sources. She was revered by her countrymen. They stamped her image on their money as if she had been their queen, and gave her the title of 'Tenth Muse';

nor was her honour impugned till more than two centuries after her death.

In this Piece the Author has sought to bring the Lesbian Muse within the sympathy and understanding of Humanity by placing her on a level with it, and giving to her tumultuous feelings that simple, frank expression which is the necessity of great emotional natures. Joy and sorrow smite their hearts as the steel the flint, and the fires burst forth with the spontaneity of the lightning.

Heretofore, Sappho has found no interpreter among her own sex; she was left solely to the unpirage of coarse, sensual men who could not understand her for the want of a common organ of perception. They judged her by the samples of womanhood within the range of their comprehension, and rendered a most cruel and unjust verdict which the foul breath of slander blew from century to century.

A few high-minded scholars of the present age have essayed to mollify the revolting scandals contained in Bayle's Dictionary and other publications, by saying that there were two Sapphos; that greater freedom of expression was permitted to the Lesbian women than to the women of Attica, who were not allowed to overstep the domestic circle; that the *refined* Comedians of Athens, therefore, mistook the frankness of genius in the Lesbian Poetess for the boldness of the courtesan. This is nonsense. There was but one Sappho—the great inspired, outspoken Lesbian Muse. Why do not these good and wise men *fearlessly* crush these slanders

by making a law (as did Solon) to put to death the libellers of the dead, and the promulgators of such libels? An excess of punishment is awarded for striking from behind, for hitting a foe when he is down; but the dead have no protection against the cowards who strike through the grave with intent to kill a name, dearer than life.

This Drama was the earnest labour of years, pursued in different lands; and to the many who have found in it good work, have praised it, and have bought it, throughout Europe and America, the Author here tenders her heartfelt thanks. She also excuses the few who essayed to show their *learning* by finding fault with words.

Censors found that 'Endor' in Sappho's mouth was an anachronism. The *learned* critics meant to say that in the last half of the sixth century B.C. the Greeks could have had no knowledge of the story of 'Endor' either from tradition or from the Holy Scriptures. History shall be the arbiter.

1055 years B.C.—nearly four centuries prior to Sappho's time—'said Saul unto his servants (1 Sam. xxviii. 7), Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her; and his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at En-dor.'

The reply of the King's servants is in evidence that the Witch at Endor had a reputation for divination prior to her interview with Saul.

They had heard of her—meaning that her name was