

SAPPHO: A TRAGEDY

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649764693

Sappho: A Tragedy by Franz Grillparzer

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
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FRANZ GRILLPARZER

**SAPPHO:
A TRAGEDY**

S A P P H O

A TRAGEDY.

BY FRANZ GRILLPARZER.

TRANSLATED BY L. C. G.

Lady Caroline Kemble

EDINBURGH: THOMAS CONSTABLE AND CO.
HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO., LONDON.

MDCCLV.

" I HAVE read the Italian translation, by Guido Sorelli, of the German Grillparzer. * * * With all the allowance for a translation * * * with every allowance for such a disadvantage, the tragedy of Sappho is superb and sublime! there is no denying it. The man has done a great thing in writing that play. And who is he? I know him not; but ages will. 'Tis a high intellect.

" Grillparzer is grand—antique—not so simple as the ancients—but very simple for a modern. * * * Altogether a great and goodly writer."—*Extract from a Letter of Lord Byron's to Thomas Moore.*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

SAPPHO.

PHAON.

MELITTA.

RHAMNES.

EUCHARIS.

CITIZENS, FEMALE SLAVES, ETC., ETC.

SAPPHO.

ACT FIRST.

An open country: in the back-ground the sea, whose otherwise flat shore rises to the left of the scene into rocky shelves. Close to the shore an altar to Aphrodite. To the right of the foreground a grotto, whose entrance is overgrown with brush-wood and ivy. Further back the end of a colonnade, with steps leading to Sappho's dwelling. To the left of the foreground a tall rose-tree, standing upon a grassy bank.

SCENE I.

Cymbals and flutes, and confusion of voices in the distance.

Enter in haste RHAMNES.

Up from your slumbers, up! She comes, she's near!
Oh that our wishes had a gift of wings,
To bear our feet as well as hearts away!
Come forth, ye loitering maidens. Quick, I say!
Who called youth *eager* did not paint you true.

Enter EUCHARIS, MELITTA, and other slaves from the colonnade.

MELITTA.

Why do you chide us? Here we are!

RHAMNES.

She comes.

MELITTA.

Ye gods, who?

RHAMNES.

Sappho's near.

(Shout from within.)

Hail, Sappho, hail!

RHAMNES.

Right! Sappho, hail! ye loyal people, hail!

MELITTA.

But say, what means all this?

RHAMNES.

Now, by the gods,
What wond'ring question would the maiden ask?
She is returning from the Olympic games,

Where the triumphal garland she has won.
 Before the presence of the whole of Greece
 Assembled there to judge the noble strife,
 The prize of poetry, of song, was hers !
 And hence our citizens pour forth in crowds
 To meet the favoured one, and raise her name
 On wide-spread wings of gladness to the clouds :
 And mine the hand, and mine the tongue, that first
 Revealed to her the language of the lyre,
 And taught, by harmony's sweet rules, to bind
 The wild unshackled liberty of song !

PEOPLE, *from within.*

Hail, Sappho ! Sappho, hail !

RHAMNES, *to the maidens.*

Rejoice ye too !

See you the garland ?

MELITTA.

I but Sappho see !

We will to meet her.

RHAMNES.

No, remain, remain !

What the poor tribute of your joy to her ?

She is accustomed to far higher praise.

Rather make ready all within the house ;
 You best by service will your homage pay !

MELITTA.

But see'st thou at her side—

RHAMNES.

Who ?

MELITTA.

See'st thou not

Another radiant form rise proudly there
 Like *his*—the god of golden Lyre and Bow,
 As pictures paint him.

RHAMNES.

Yes, I see ; but go.

MELITTA.

This moment thou didst call us.

RHAMNES.

True, I call'd ;

'Twas right that you should know your mistress near ;
 Right you should learn your duty to rejoice ;
 But your rejoicings must be held at home :
 Man's love may shew itself by greetings loud ;
 Woman's by silent service to the loved !