

SAPHO: PARISIEN MANNERS

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Sapho: Parisian Manners by Alphonse Daudet & Henry Frith

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ALPHONSE DAUDET & HENRY FRITH

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MANNERS**



S A P P H O

With Illustrations by
Rossi, Myrbach, &c.

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"Look at me!—so! I like the colour
of your eyes! What is your name?"

"Jean!"

"Only Jean?"

"Jean Gaussin."

"From the South, I perceive. How old
are you?"

"Twenty-one."

"Artist?"

"No, madame."

"Ah, so much the better."

These scraps of sentences, almost unintelligible amid the exclamations, the laughter, and the dance-music of a fancy ball, were exchanged—one night in June—between a *pifferaro* and a Fella woman, in the conservatory, filled with palms and tree ferns, which formed the background of Déchelette's studio.

To the pressing questions of the Egyptian woman the *pifferaro* replied with the ingenuousness of youth, and with the freshness and vivacity of a Southerner who has been long silent. A stranger in that crowd of painters and sculptors, lost since his entrance to the ball-room by the friend who had brought him thither, he had been wandering listlessly around for two hours, displaying his handsome fair face browned by the sun, his hair in curls as close and short as his sheep-skin costume, while a murmur of admiration, of which he scarcely seemed conscious, arose around him as he proceeded.

He was bumped by the dancers, ridiculed on account of the bagpipe which he

was carrying so awry, and for his mountain costume, so heavy and uncomfortable on a summer night. A Japanese lady, with eyes of the faubourg, hummed teasingly, "Ah, how handsome he is, how handsome is this postillion;" while a Spanish novice attired in white silk lace, thrust her bouquet of white jasmine beneath his nose, as she was passing by on the arm of an Apache Chief.

He did not understand these advances; feeling extremely ridiculous he took shelter in the cool shade of a glazed gallery, bordered by a wide divan beneath the greenery. He was immediately joined by this woman, who came and sat down close to him.

Young? Pretty? He could not have told you. From the long blue woollen costume which fell over her rounded form, two well-formed rounded arms extended, bare to the shoulder; her small hands were laden with rings; her large grey eyes wide open, and gaining greater prominence by reason of the fantastic iron ornaments which hung upon her forehead, completed the harmonious whole.

An actress no doubt. Many of the

profession came to Déchelette's house ; and this reflection was not calculated to put him at his ease, for he had rather a fear of that class. She began to talk to him very

familiarly, her elbow on her knee, her head supported by her hand, with a sad sweetness, a little sense of languor. "From the South, really? And with such fair hair too! What an extraordinary thing!"

Then she wanted to know how long he had been in Paris, if the examination for the consular service for which he was preparing was

very difficult : whether he knew many people, and how it had come to pass that he found himself at Déchelette's party in the Rue de Rome. So far from the Latin Quarter too!



When he told her the name of the student who had brought him, "La Gournerie, a relative of the author—she knew him no doubt"—the expression of the woman's face changed, grew suddenly clouded: but he paid no attention to that, being at the time of life when the eyes sparkle without seeing anything. La Gournerie had assured him that his cousin would be there, and that he would introduce him. "I am so fond of his poetry; I should be so glad to know him!"

She had a smile of pity, and a pretty shrug of the shoulders, for his ingenuousness, even while she held back the bamboos and looked amid the dancers, to see whether she could not find out the great man for him.

The dance was just then in full swing, it was like a fairy scene. The studio, or rather the hall, for scarcely ever was any work done in it, was raised to the full height of the mansion, and made one immense apartment of it. From the light gauzy hangings, the blinds of fine straw or gauze, the lacquered screens, the various coloured glass, the clusters of yellow roses which decked the high Renaissance fireplace, the varied and fantastic light of innumerable Chinese, Persian, Moorish, and Japanese lanterns was reflected. Some of these in iron