

**EMINENT WOMEN
SERIES: RACHEL**

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Eminent Women Series: Rachel by Mrs. Arthur H. Kennard & John H. Ingram

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MRS. ARTHUR H. KENNARD & JOHN H. INGRAM

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RACHEL

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RACHEL

BY

MRS. ARTHUR KENNARD.

LONDON:
W. H. ALLEN & CO., 13 WATERLOO PLACE, S.W.

1885.

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P R E F A C E .

WE offer this sketch of the life of Rachel to the public without comment or palliation. The great tragedian's name is one that still arouses varying emotions and reminiscences in those that knew her, or remember to have seen her on the stage. To the outside public she was a Fury, a Pythoness, almost superhuman in her passion and her genius. To her intimate friends she was a lovable, fascinating woman, in spite of all her faults. At times generous, loyal and devoted; mean, jealous, and vindictive at others. To her family and children she was ever an affectionate, self-sacrificing daughter, sister, and mother, and it is this side of her character that has been revealed to us by the correspondence lately published by M. Heylli, from which we have given numerous quotations, hoping by their charm and the warmhearted affections they evince, to engender a kindlier and more charitable view of her stormy, unhappy life.

From Jules Janin's *Rachel et la Tragédie*, we have collected most of the information concerning the professional portion of her career. Arsène Houssaye, for some time director of the Théâtre Français, and an intimate friend of the actress, has, in a volume just published, given some piquant anecdotes to the world, which are amusing, but not always distinguished by loyalty to the memory of his dead friend. Madame de

B.'s *Memoirs of Rachel* are avowedly hostile, and therefore to a certain extent valueless as a trustworthy biography. All other information respecting the tragedian can only be culled from the columns of the newspapers of the day, and one or two contemporary pamphlets. We fall back on her letters, therefore, as the true key to this extraordinary woman's character. Written in moments snatched from the arduous duties of her profession, or in the rare periods of rest she allowed herself from the fatigues of her unceasing wanderings to and fro, they show no signs of premeditation or pedantry. She wrote, as we imagine she talked, easily and wittily. How deeply pathetic and sad they become, however, towards the end, when touching on her own suffering, her disappointed illusions, or her fears and hopes for the children she loved so well!

We have tried to extract the poetry and romance there is to be found in this life, rejecting what is base and unworthy. There is something that ever kindles enthusiasm in energy or devotion to an object outside the area of our petty cares and thoughts. And surely there is enough poetry in the mournful history of this genius and passion burning up the body they animated, as a flame burns up a candle; enough romance in the perseverance and constancy of the little Jewish girl who, uneducated, unbefriended, unbeautiful, made the world thrill with her name, solely by the might of her inspiration and eloquence.

NINA H. KENNARD.

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NOTE ON PORTRAITS.

MANY portraits of Rachel were attempted by contemporary artists. Horace Vernet, struck by the Oriental picturesqueness of the type, attempted to perpetuate it; but she only consented to sit once to him, so that in finishing the likeness he lost the individuality and made it a replica of the innumerable Rebeccas and Esthers in his studio. Geffroy introduced her into both his celebrated pictures, representing the Comédie Française in 1840 and in 1852. "I would like you," she writes to a friend, "to see the portrait that my colleague Geffroy has done of your *tragédienne* in her ermine robes as La Czarina." The portrait will last longer than the play, than the woman, or than the memory of either. A sketch of Rachel, after death, made by Madame O'Connell, was given by Sarah Félix to Émile de Girardin, who in turn gave it to Sarah Bernhardt. The best portrait, however, that was done of her is by Müller, now belonging to her son Alexander Walewski. The whole history of the woman is written in the deep sadness of the eyes, the waxen pallor of the brow and cheeks, which seem worn with the passions and exertions that every night tore the fragile body to pieces, while the tender softness of the expression round the mouth bespeak the mother who wrote: "Come into my heart, dear little one, and find there all the tenderness of which there is an unlimited supply for my sons. It is riches without end that God gives mothers who love their children."

N. H. K.