

PREFACE.

IT has occurred to me that, in view of the extraordinary sensation created by Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt whenever and wherever she has hitherto appeared, a sketch of her life would prove interesting to Americans, to whose judgment she will shortly appeal for a ratification of the unanimous verdict of enthusiastic approval passed upon her startlingly realistic impersonations by the patrons of the stage in half the capitals of Europe. I am fully conscious of the crudeness of the sketch, but if I have succeeded in giving the reader an idea of the irresistible power, the strange fascination, and the innate inspiration that enables this remarkable woman to defy criticism, and carry her audience as it were out of themselves, to revel momentarily with her, if only as spectators, in scenes displaying the utmost height and the lowest depth of the purest as also of the vilest attributes of our nature, my primary object will have been attained. I must not omit to make my acknowledgments to Mr. Arthur J. Marrin, who has been of the greatest assistance to me in collecting the information and making the translations I have taken advantage of in compiling this brief sketch of the most gifted daughter of the Comedie Francaise.

F. RIDGWAY GRIFFITH.

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