

CHARLES G. LELAND

ARADIA
GOSPEL OF
THE WITCHES

**THE SACRED BOOKS
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#427

Aradia - Gospel Of The Witches

Charles Godfrey Leland

Contents:

CHARLES GODFREY LELAND - IN PHILADELPHIA AND LONDON

Aradia - Gospel Of The Witches

PREFACE

CHAPTER I - How Diana Gave Birth to Aradia (Herodias)

CHAPTER II - The Sabbat: Treguenda or Witch-Meeting-
-How to Consecrate the Supper

CHAPTER III - How Diana Made the Stars and the Rain

CHAPTER IV - The Charm of the Stones Consecrated to
Diana

CHAPTER V - The Conjunction of the Lemon and Pins

CHAPTER VI - A Spell To Win Love

CHAPTER VII - To Find or Buy Anything, or to Have
Good Fortune Thereby

CHAPTER VIII - To Have a Good Vintage and Very Good
Wine by the Aid of Diana

CHAPTER IX - Tana and Endamone, or Diana and
Endymion

CHAPTER X - Madonna Diana

CHAPTER XI - The House of the Wind

CHAPTER XII - Tana, The Moon-Goddess

CHAPTER XIII - Diana and the Children

[CHAPTER XIV - The Goblin Messengers of Diana and Mercury](#)

[CHAPTER XV - Laverna](#)

[Comments on the Foregoing Texts](#)

[The Children of Diana, or How the Fairies Were Born](#)

[Diana, Queen of the Serpents, Giver of the Gift of Languages](#)

[Diana as Giving Beauty and Restoring Strength](#)
[Note](#)

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CHARLES GODFREY LELAND - IN PHILADELPHIA AND LONDON

To describe the home of a homeless man is not over easy.
For the last sixteen or eighteen years Mr. Leland has been

as great a wanderer as the gypsies of whom he loves to write. During this time he has pitched his tent, so to speak, in many parts of America and Europe and even of the East. He has gone from town to town and from country to country, staying here a month and there a year, and again in some places, as in London and Philadelphia, he has remained several years. But, as he himself graphically says, it is long since he has not had trunks in his bedroom.

However, if to possess a house is to have a home, then Mr. Leland must not be said to be homeless. He owns a three-storied, white- and green-shuttered, red-brick house with marble steps, of that conventional type which is so peculiarly a feature of Philadelphia — his native town. It is in Locust Street above Fifteenth — one of the eminently respectable and convenient neighborhoods for which Philadelphia is famous, with St. Mark's Church near at hand and a public school not far off. But besides this respectability which Philadelphians in general hold so dear, Locust Street boasts of another advantage of far more importance to Mr. Leland in particular. Just here it is without the horse-car track which stretches from one end to the other of almost all Philadelphia streets, and hence it is a pleasant, quiet quarter for a literary man. Here Mr. Leland lived for just six months, surrounded by all sorts of quaint ornaments and oddities (though it was then years before the mania for bric-a-brac had set in), and by his books, these including numbers of rare and racy volumes from which he has borrowed so many of the quotations which give an Old World color and piquancy to his writings. It was while he was living in his Locust Street home that his health broke down. His illness was the result of long, almost uninterrupted newspaper work. He had worked on the Bulletin and on New York and Boston papers, and he had edited Vanity Fair, The Continental Monthly, Grahams Magazine and Forney's Press. In addition to this regular

work, he had found time to translate Heine, to write his "Sunshine in Thought," his "Meister Karl's Sketch-book," and his "Breitmann Ballads," which had made him known throughout the English-speaking world as one of the first living English humorists. But now he was obliged to give up all literary employments, and, having inherited an independent fortune from his father, he was able to shut up his house and go on a pleasure-trip to Europe, where he began the wanderings which have not yet ceased.

Nowadays, therefore, one might well ask, "Where is his home ? — in a Philadelphia hotel or lodgings, or at the Langham, in London — in a gypsy tent, or in an Indian wigwam ? — on the road, or in the town? But, *ubi bene, ibi patria* ; where a man is happy, there is his country ; and his home too, for that matter ; and Mr. Leland, if he has his work, is happy in all places and at all times ; and furthermore, ever since his health was re-established, he has found or made work wherever he has been. He is a man who is never idle for a minute, and he counts as the best and most important work of his life that which has occupied him during the last few years. Consequently, paradoxical as it may sound, even in his wanderings he has always been at home. During the eleven years he remained abroad he lived in so many different places it would be impossible to enumerate them all. He spent a winter in Russia ; another in Egypt ; he summered on the Continent, and in the pretty villages or gay seashore towns of England. At times his principal headquarters were in London, now at the Langham and now at Park Square. It was at this latter residence that he gave Saturday afternoon receptions, at which one was sure to meet the most eminent men and women of the literary and artistic world of London, and which will not soon be forgotten by those who had the pleasure to be bidden to them. The first part of his last book about the gypsies is a pleasant, but still imperfect,

guide to his wanderings of this period. There, in one paper, we find him spending charming evenings with the fair Russian gypsies in St. Petersburg ; in another, giving greeting to the Hungarian Romanies who played their wild czardas at the Paris Exposition. Or we can follow his peaceful strolls through the English meadows and lanes near Oatlands Park, or his adventures with his not over-respectable but very attractive friends at the Hampton races. One gypsy episode carries him to Aberistwyth, a second to Brighton, a third to London streets or his London study. Thus he tells the tale, as no one else could, of his life on the road.

In December, 1878, he returned to Philadelphia, where he established himself in large and pleasant rooms in Broad Street, not knowing how long he might stay in America, and unwilling, because of this uncertainty, to settle down in his own house. He lived there, however, for four years and a half, travelling but little save in the summer, when, to escape from the burning brick-oven which Philadelphia becomes at that season, he fled to Rye Beach or to the White Mountains, to Mount Desert or to far Campobello, in New Brunswick, where, in the tents almost hidden by the sweet pine woods, he listened to the Algonkin legends which he published in book form three or four years ago. The house in which he made his home for the time being is a large redbrick mansion on the left side of Broad Street, between Locust and Walnut streets. His apartments were on the ground floor, and the table at which he worked, writing his Indian book or making the designs for the series of art manuals he was then editing, was drawn close to one of the windows looking out upon the street. There, between the hours of nine and one in the morning, he was usually to be found. From the street one could in passing catch a glimpse of the fine strong head which so many artists have cared to draw, and which Le Gros has etched ; of the long

gray beard, and of the brown velveteen coat — not that famous coat to which Mr. Leland bade so tender a farewell in his gypsy book, but another, already endeared to him by many a lively recollection of gypsy camps and country fairs. Here there was little quiet to be had. Broad Street is at all times noisy, and it is moreover the favorite route for all the processions, military or political, by torchlight or by daylight, that ever rejoice the hearts of Philadelphia's children. It is a haunt, too, of pitiless organ-grinders and importunate beggars. Well I remember the wretched woman who set up her stand, and her tuneless organ, but a few steps beyond Mr. Leland's window, grinding away there day after day, indifferent to expostulations and threats, until at last the civil authorities had to be appealed to. For how much unwritten humor, for how many undrawn designs, she is responsible, who can say ? But then, on the other hand, the window had its advantages. Stray gypsies could not pass unseen, and from it friendly tinkers could be easily summoned within. But for this post of observation I doubt if Owen Macdonald, the tinker, would have paid so many visits to Mr. Leland's rooms, and hence if he would have proved so valuable an assistant in the preparation of the dictionary of shelta, or tinker's talk, a Celtic language lately discovered by Mr. Leland. "Pat" (or Owen) was a genuine tinker, and "no tinker was ever yet astonished at anything." He never made remarks about the room into which he was invited, but I often wondered what he thought of it, with its piles of books and drawings and papers, and its walls covered with grotesquely decorated placques and strange musical instruments, from a lute of Mr. Leland's own fashioning to a Chinese mandolin, its mantelshelf and low book-cases crowded with Chinese and Hindu deities, Venetian glass, Etruscan vases, Indian birch-bark boxes, and Philadelphia pottery of striking form and ornament. It had been but an ordinary though large parlor when Mr. Leland first moved into it, but he soon gave it a

character all its own, surrounding himself with a few of his pet household gods, the others with his books being packed away in London and Philadelphia warehouses waiting the day when he will collect them together and set them up in a permanent home.

The reason Mr. Leland remained so long in the Broad Street house was because he was interested in a good work which detained him year after year in Philadelphia. While abroad he had seen and studied many things besides gypsies, and he had come home with new ideas on the subject of education, to which he immediately endeavored to give active expression. His theory was that industrial pursuits could be made a part of every child's education, and that they must be comparatively easy. The necessity of introducing some sort of hand-work into public school education had long been felt by the Philadelphia School Board, and indeed by many others throughout the country. It had been proved that to teach trades was an impossibility. It remained for Mr. Leland to suggest that the principles of industrial or decorative art could be readily learned by even very young children at the same time that they pursued their regular studies. He laid his scheme before the school directors, and they, be it said to their credit, furnished him with ample means for the necessary experiment. This was so successful, that before the end of the first year the number of children sent to him increased from a mere handful to one hundred and fifty. Before he left America there were more than three hundred attending his classes. It is true that Pestalozzi and Froebel had already arrived at the same theory of education. But, as Carl Werner has said, Mr. Leland was the first person in Europe or America who seriously demonstrated and proved it by practical experiment.

These classes were held at the Hollingsworth schoolhouse in Locust Street above Broad, but a few steps from where he lived. It is simply impossible not to say a few words here about it, since Mr. Leland was as much at home in the schoolhouse as in his own rooms. Four afternoons every week were spent there. On Tuesdays and Thursdays he himself gave lessons in design to the school children, going from one to the other with an interest and an attention not common even among professional masters. When, after the rounds were made, there were a few minutes to spare — which did not often happen — he went into the next room, where other children were busy under teachers, working out their own designs in wood or clay or leather. I think in many of the grotesques that were turned out from that modeling table — in the frogs and the serpents and sea-monsters twining about vases, and the lizards serving as handles to jars — Mr. Leland's influence could be easily recognized. On Saturdays he was again there, superintending a smaller class of reposed workers. In England he had found what could really be done by cold hammering brass on wood, and in America he popularized this discovery. When he first began to teach the children, this sort of work being as yet little known, I remember there was one boy, rather more careless but more businesslike than his fellow-hammerers, who during his summer holidays made over two hundred and eighteen dollars by beating out on placque after placque a few designs (one an Arabic inscription), which he had borrowed from Mr. Leland. But after the children's class was enlarged and a class was started at the Ladies' Decorative Art Club established by Mr. Leland, work had to be more careful and original to be profitable. On Mondays the Decorative Art Club engaged Mr. Leland's time, many of its members meeting to learn design in the Hollingsworth school-rooms, which were larger and better lighted than those in their club-house. This club, which in its second

year had no less than two hundred members, also owes its existence entirely to Mr. Leland, who is still its president. When it is remembered that both in the school and in the club he worked from pure motives of interest in his theory and its practical results, and with no other object in view but its ultimate success, the extent of his earnestness and zeal may be measured.

It may be easily understood that this work, together with his literary occupations, left him little time for recreation. But still there were leisure hours ; and in the fresh springtime it was his favorite amusement to wander from the city to the Reservoir, with its pretty adjoining wood beyond Camden, or to certain other well-known, shady, flowery gypseries in West Philadelphia or far-out Broad Street, where he knew a friendly Sarshan ? (" How are you ? ") would be waiting for him. Or else on cold winter days, when sensible Romanies had taken flight to the South or were living in houses, he 'liked nothing better than to stroll through the streets, looking in at shop-windows ; exchanging a few words in their vernacular with the smiling Italians selling chestnuts and fruit at street corners, or stray Slavonian dealers (Slovak or Croat) in mouse and rat-traps, or with other " interesting varieties of vagabonds"; stopping in bric-a-brac shops and meeting their German-Jew owners with a brotherly "Sholem aleichem" and bargaining with unmistakable familiarity with the ways of the trade ; or else, perhaps, ordering tools and materials, buying brass and leather for his classes. Indeed, he was scarcely less constant to Chestnut Street than Walt Whitman or Mr. Boker. But while Walt Whitman in his daily walks seldom went above Tenth Street, Mr. Leland seldom went below it, turning there to go to the Mercantile Library, which he visited quite as often as the Philadelphia Library, of which he has long been a shareholder; while Mr. Boker seemed to belong more

particularly to the neighborhood of Thirteenth or Broad Street, where he was near the Union League and the Philadelphia Club. Almost everybody must have known by sight these three men, all so striking in personal appearance. Mr. Leland rarely went out in the evenings. Then he rested and was happy in his large easy chair, with his cigar and his book. There never was such an insatiable reader, not even excepting Macaulay. It was then, and is still, his invariable custom to begin a book immediately after dinner and finish it before going to bed, never missing a line ; and he reads everything, from old black-letter books to the latest volume of travels or trash, from Gaboriau's most sensational novel to the most abstruse philosophical treatise. His reading is as varied as his knowledge.

I have thus dwelt particularly on his life in Philadelphia, because, during the four and a half years he spent there — a long period for him to give to any one place — he had time to fall into regular habits and to lead what may be called a home life ; and also because his way of living since he has been back in England has changed but slightly. He now has his headquarters at the Langham. He still devotes his mornings to literary work and many of his afternoons to teaching decorative art. He is one of the directors of the Home Arts Society, which but for him would never have been ; Mrs. Jebb, one of its most zealous upholders, having modeled the classes which led to its organization wholly upon his system of instruction, and in cooperation with him. The society has its chief office in the Langham chambers, close to the hotel ; there Mr. Leland teaches and works just as he did in the Hollingsworth school-rooms. Lord Brownlow is the president of this association, Lady Brownlow, his wife, taking an active interest in it ; and Mr. Walter Besant is the treasurer. Mr. Leland is also the father or founder of the famous Rabelais Club, in which the chair was generally taken by the late Lord Houghton. For