



ARADIA

Gospel of the Witches

Charles Godfrey Leland

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August 15, 1824 – March 20, 1903

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Post Scriptum

PREFACE

If the reader has ever met with the works of the learned folk-lorist G. Pitré, or the articles contributed by “Lady Vere De Vere” to the *Italian Rivista*, or that of J. H. Andrews to *Folk-Lore*,¹ he will be aware that there are in Italy great numbers of *strege*, fortune-tellers or witches, who divine by cards, perform strange ceremonies in which spirits are supposed to be invoked, make and sell amulets, and in fact, comport themselves generally as their reputed kind are wont to do, be they Black Voodoos in America or sorceresses anywhere.

But the Italian *strega* or sorceress is in certain respects a different character from these. In most cases she comes of a family in which her calling or art has been practised for many generations. I have no doubt that there are in stances in which the ancestry remounts to mediæval, Roman, or it may be Etruscan times. The result has naturally been the accumulation in such families of much tradition. But in Northern Italy, as its literature indicates, though there has been some slight gathering of fairy tales and popular superstitions by scholars, there has never existed the least interest as regarded the strange lore of the witches,

¹ March, 1897: “Neapolitan Witchcraft.”

nor any suspicion that it embraced an incredible quantity of old Roman minor myths and legends, such as Ovid has recorded, but of which much escaped him and all other Latin writers. ²

This ignorance was greatly aided by the wizards themselves, in making a profound secret of all their traditions, urged thereto by fear of the priests. In fact, the latter all unconsciously actually contributed immensely to the preservation of such lore, since the charm of the forbidden is very great, and witchcraft, like the truffle, grows best and has its raciest flavour when most deeply hidden. However this may be, both priest and wizard are vanishing now with incredible rapidity - it has even struck a French writer that a Franciscan in a railway carriage is a strange anomaly - and a few more years of newspapers and bicycles (Heaven knows what it will be when flying-machines appear!) will probably cause an evanishment of all.

However, they die slowly, and even yet there are old people in the Romagna of the North who know the Etruscan names of the Twelve Gods, and invocations to Bacchus, Jupiter, and Venus, Mercury, and the Lares or ancestral spirits, and in the cities are women who prepare strange amulets, over which they mutter spells, all known in the old Roman time, and who can astonish

2 Thus we may imagine what the case would have been as regards German fairy-tales if nothing bad survived to a future day except the collections of Grimm and Musæus. The world would fall into the belief that these constituted all the works of the kind which had ever existed, when, in fact they form only a small part of the whole. And folklore was unknown to classic authors: there is really no evidence in any ancient Latin writer that he gathered traditions and the like among the vulgar, as men collect at present. They all made books entirely out of books-there being still "a few left of the same sort" of literati.

even the learned by their legends of Latin gods, mingled with lore which may be found in Cato or Theocritus.

With one of these I became intimately acquainted in 1886, and have ever since employed her specially to collect among her sisters of the hidden spell in many places all the traditions of the olden time known to them. It is true that I have drawn from other sources, but this woman by long practice has perfectly learned what few understand, or just what I want, and how to extract it from those of her kind.

Among other strange relics, she succeeded, after many years, in obtaining the following “Gospel,” which I have in her handwriting. A full account of its nature with many details will be found in an Appendix. I do not know definitely whether my informant derived a part of these traditions from *written* sources or oral narration, but believe it was chiefly the latter. However, there are a few wizards who copy or preserve documents relative to their art. I have not seen my collector since the “Gospel” was sent to me. I hope at some future time to be better informed.

For brief explanation I may say that witchcraft is known to its votaries as *la vecchia religione*, or the old religion, of which Diana is the Goddess, her daughter Aradia (or Herodias) the female Messiah, and that this little work sets forth how the latter was born, came down to earth, established witches and witchcraft, and then returned to heaven. With it are given the ceremonies and invocations or incantations to be addressed to Diana and Aradia, the exorcism of Cain, and the spells of the holy-stone, rue, and

Goddess of Witchcraft

Where Leland's *Etruscan Magic and Occult Remedies* deals with the entire pantheon of old Italian gods and nature spirits, worshiped by the streghe, *Aradia* is focused on Diana or Tana, her daughter Aradia and Lucifer. Aradia, the queen of the Italian witches, or streghe is as Leland concludes: *'evidently enough Herodias, who was regarded in the beginning as associated with Diana as chief of the witches. This was not, as I opine, derived from the Herodias of the New Testament, but from an earlier replica of Lilith, bearing the same name.'*

This wonderful book describes the creation according to Italian witch-lore. We also read about the witch-meeting or sabbath (treguenda) and it contains many original magical recipes, like spells for love and good fortune. Diana is further connected to the Moon and the fairy world.

VAMzzz Publishing revised this book with a Post Scriptum, containing biographical info on Charles Godfrey Leland, his witch-informant Maddalena and historical proof the witch-tradition is indeed linked to 2000 years of Diana worship.

