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# **Lilith The Legend of the First Woman**

Ada Langworthy Collier

## Imprint

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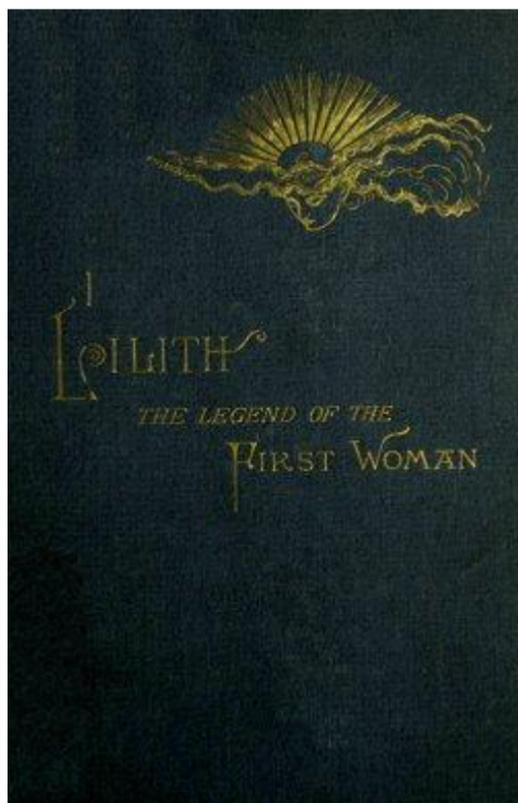
Author: Ada Langworthy Collier  
Cover design: toepferschumann, Berlin (Germany)

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg (Germany)  
ISBN: 978-3-8491-8622-7

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## [5] PREFACE.

That Eve was Adam's second wife was a common Rabbinic speculation. Certain commentators on Genesis adopted this view, to account for the double account of the creation of woman, in the sacred text, first in Genesis i. 27, and second in Genesis xi. 18. And they say that Adam's first wife was named Lilith, but she was expelled from Eden, and after her expulsion Eve was created. Abraham Ecchelensis gives the following account of Lilith and her doings: "There are some who do not regard spectres as simple devils, but suppose them to be of a mixed nature—part demoniacal, part human, and to have had their origin from Lilith, Adam's first wife, by Eblis, prince of the devils. This fable has been transmitted to the Arabs, from Jewish sources, by some converts of Mohamet from Cabbalism and Rabbinism, who have transferred all the Jewish fooleries to the Arabs. They gave to Adam a wife formed of clay, along with Adam, and called her Lilith, resting on the Scripture: 'Male and female created He them.'" — *Legends of the Patriarchs and Prophets.* — Baring Gould.

Lilith or Lilis.—In the popular belief of the Hebrews, a female spectre in the shape of a finely dressed woman, who lies in wait for, and kills children. The old Rabbins turned Lilith into a wife of Adam, on whom he begat demons and who still has power to lie with men and kill children who are not protected by amulets with which the Jews of a yet later period supply themselves as a protection against her. Burton in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* tells us: "The Talmudists say that Adam had a wife called Lilis, before he married Eve, and of her he begat nothing but devils." A commentator on Skinner, quoted in the *Encyclopædia Metropolitana*, says that the English word *Lullaby* is derived from Lilla, abi (begone, Lilith)! In the demonology of the Middle Ages, Lilis was a famous witch, and is introduced as such in the Walpurgis night scene in Goethe's "Faust." — *Webster's Dictionary.*

Our word *Lullaby* is derived from two Arabic words which mean "Beware of Lilith!" — *Anon.*

Lilith, the supposed wife of Adam, after she married Eblis, is said to have ruled over the city of Damascus.—*Legends of the Patriarchs and Prophets*.—*Baring Gould*.

From these few and meagre details of a fabled existence, which are all that the author has been able to collect from any source whatever, has sprung the following poem. The poet feels quite justified in dissenting from the statements made in the preceding extracts, and has not drawn Lilith as [6] there represented—the blood-thirsty sovereign who ruled Damascus, the betrayer of men, the murderer of children. The Lilith of the poem is transferred to the more beautiful shadow-world. To that country which is the abode of poets themselves. And about her is wrapt the humanizing element still, and everywhere embodied in the sweetest word the human tongue can utter—*lullaby*. Some critics declare that true literary art inculcates a lofty lesson—has a high moral purpose. If poets and their work must fall under this rigorous rule, then alas “Lilith” will knock at the door of public opinion with a trembling hand indeed. If the poem have either moral aim or lesson of any kind (which observe, gentle critic, it is by no means asserted that it has), it is simply to show that the strongest intellectual powers contain no elements adverse to the highest and purest exercise of the affectional nature. That, in its true condition, the noblest, the most cultured intellect, and the loveliest, sublimest moral and emotional qualities, together weave the web that clothes the world’s great soul with imperishable beauty. The possessor of highest intellectual capacity will be also capable of highest developments in the latter qualities. The woman of true intellect is the woman of truest affection. For the rest let Lilith speak, whose life dropped unrecorded from the earliest world. It is the poet’s hope that the chords of the mother-heart universal will respond to the song of the childless one. That in the survival of that one word *lullaby*, may be revived the pathetic figure of one whose home, whose hope, whose Eden passed to another. Whose name living in the terrors of superstitious peoples, now lingers in Earth’s sweetest utterance. That Pagan Lilith, re-baptized in the pure waters of maternal love, shall breathe to heathen and Christian motherhood alike, that most sacred love of Earth still throbbing through its tender lullaby.

A. L. C.

## [7] TO VALERIA.

Broideries and ancient stuffs that some queen  
Wore; nor gems that warriors' hilts encrusted;  
Nor fresh from heroes' brows the laurels green;  
Nor bright sheaves by bards of eld entrusted  
To earth's great granaries—I bring not these.  
Only thin, scattered blades from harvests gleaned  
Erewhile I plucked, may happen thee to please.  
So poor indeed, those others had demeaned  
Themselves to cull; or from their strong, firm hands  
Down dropped about their feet with careless laugh,  
Too broken for home gathering, these strands,  
Or else more useless than the idle chaff.  
But I have garnered them. Yet, lest they seem  
Unworthy, and so shame Love's offering,  
Amid the loose-bound sheaf stray flowers gleam.  
And fairer seeming make the gift I bring,  
Lilies blood-red, that lit the waving field,  
And now are knotted through the golden grain.  
Thou wilt not scorn the tribute I now yield,  
Nor even deem the foolish flowers vain.  
[8] So take it, and if still too slight, too small  
It seem, think 'tis a bloom that grew anear,  
In other Springtime, the old garden wall.  
(That pale blue flower you will remember, dear.  
The heedless world, unseeing, passed it by,  
And left it to the bee and you.) Then say,  
"Because the hands that tended it are nigh  
No more, and little feet are gone away  
That round it trampled down the beaded grass,  
Sweeter to me it is than musky spray  
Of Southland; and dearer than days that pass  
In other summer-tides." This simple song  
Read so, dear heart; Nay, rather white-souled one,  
Think 'tis an olden echo, wandered long  
From a low bed where 'neath the westering sun  
You sang. And if your lone heart ever said

"Lo, she is gone, and cannot more be mine,"  
Say now, "She is not changed — she is not wed, —  
She never left her cradle bed. Still shine  
The pillows with the print of her wee head."  
So, mother-heart, this song, where through still rings  
The strain you sang above my baby bed,  
I bring. An idle gift mayhap, that clings  
About old days forgotten long, and dead.  
This loitering tale, Valeria, take.  
Perchance 'tis sad, and hath not any mirth,  
Yet love thou it, for the weak singer's sake,  
And hold it dear, though yet is little worth,  
[9] This tale of Elder-world: of earth's first prime,  
Of years that in their grave so long have lain,  
To-day's dull ear, through poets' tuneful rhyme  
No echo hears, nor mocking friar's strain.

*July 17, 1884.*

## LILITH.



## BOOK I.

Pure as an angel's dream shone Paradise.  
Blue mountains hemmed it round; and airy sighs  
Of rippling waters haunted it. Dim glades,  
And wayward paths o'erflecked with shimmering shades,  
And tangled dells, and wilding pleasancess,  
Hung moist with odors strange from scented trees.  
Sweet sounds o'erbrimmed the place; and rare perfumes,  
Faint as far sunshine, fell 'mong verdant glooms.  
In that fair land, all hues, all leafage green  
Wrapt flawless days in endless summer-sheen.  
Bright eyes, the violet waking, lifted up  
Where bent the lily her deep, fragrant cup;  
And folded buds, 'gainst many a leafy spray –  
The wild-woods' voiceless nuns – knelt down to pray.  
There roses, deep in greenest mosses swathed,  
Kept happy tryst with tropic blooms, sun-bathed.  
No sounds of sadness surged through listening trees:  
[14] The waters babbled low; the errant bees  
Made answer, murmurous; nor paled the hue  
The jonquils wore; nor chill the wild breath grew  
Of daisies clustered white in dewy croft;  
Nor fell the tasseled plumes as satin soft  
Upon the broad-leaved corn. Sweet all the day  
O'erflowed with music every woodland way;  
And sweet the jargonings of nested bird,  
When light the listless wind the forest stirred.  
Straight as the shaft that 'gainst the morning sun  
The slender palm uprears, the Fairest one –  
The first of womankind – sweet Lilith – stood,  
A gracious shape that glorified the wood.  
About her rounded shoulders warm and bare,  
Like netted sunshine fell her lustrous hair;  
The rosy flush of young pomegranate bells  
Dawned on her cheeks; and blue as in lone dells  
Sleep the Forget-me-nots, her eyes. With bent  
Brows, sullen-creased, swart Adam gazed intent

Upon a leopard, crouched low in its place  
 Beneath his feet. Not once in Lilith's face  
 He looked, nor sought her wistful, downcast eyes  
 With shifting shadows dusk, and strange surprise.  
 "O, Love," she said, "no more let us contend!  
 So sweet is life, anger, methinks, should end.  
 In this, our garden bright, why dost thou claim  
 Ever the highest place, the noblest name?  
 Freely to both our Lord gave self-same sway  
 [15] O'er living things. Love, thou art gone astray!  
 Twin-born, of equal stature, kindred soul  
 Are we; like dowed with strength. Yon stars that roll  
 Their course above, down-looking on my face,  
 See yours as fair; in neither aught that's base.  
 Thy wife, not handmaid I, yet thou dost say,  
 'I first in Eden rule.' Thou, then, hast sway.  
 Must I, my Adam, mutely follow thee?  
 Run at thy bidding, crouch beside thy knee?  
 Lift up (when thou dost bid me) timid eyes?  
 Not so will Lilith dwell in Paradise."  
 "Mine own," Adam made answer soft, "'twere best  
 Thou didst forget such ills in noontide rest.  
 Content I wake, the keeper of the place.  
 Of equal stature? Yea! Of self-same grace?  
 Nay, Love; recall those lately vanished eves,  
 When we together plucked the plantain leaves;  
 Yon leopard lowly stretched at my command  
 Its lazy length beneath my soothing hand.  
 At thee she snarled, disdainful half, to sheathe  
 'Neath thy soft pleading eyes her milk-white teeth.  
 Oft, Love, in other times, in sheltered nook,  
 We scattered pearly millet by the brook.  
 Lo thine lay barren in the sand. Quick mine  
 Upspringing sifts o'er pale blooms odors fine:  
 Hateful thy chidings grow; each breeze doth bring  
 [16] Ever thy plaints – thy fretful murmuring.  
 These many days I weary of thy sighs;  
 Know, Lilith, I alone rule Paradise."  
 Thereat he rose, and quick at every stride

The fawning leopard gambolled at his side.  
 So fell the first dark shadow of Earth's strife.  
 With coming evil all the winds were rife.  
 Lone lay the land with sense of dull loss paled.  
 The days grew sick at heart; the sunshine failed;  
 And falling waters breathed in silvery moan  
 A hidden ail to starlit dells alone —  
 As sometimes you have seen, 'neath household eaves,  
 'Mong scents of Springtime, in the budded leaves,  
 The swallows circling blithe, with slant brown wing,  
 Home-flying fleet, with tender chattering,  
 And all the place o'errun with nested love —  
 So have you come, when leaves hung crisp above  
 The silent door. Yet not again, I ween,  
 Those shining wings, cleaving the air, have seen  
 Nor heard the gladsome swallows twittering there —  
 Only the empty nests, low-hung and bare,  
 Spake of the scattered brood. — So lonely were  
 To Lilith grown her once loved haunts. Nor fair  
 The starlit nights, slow-dropping fragrant dew,  
 Nor the dim groves when dawn came shifting through.  
 Far 'mong the hills the wood-doves' moan she heard,  
 [17] Or in some nearer copse, a startled bird;  
 Or the white moonshine 'mong green boughs o'erhead  
 Wrought her full heart to tears. "Sweet peace," she said,  
 "Alas — lies slain!"  
 With musing worn, she brake  
 At last her silence, and to Adam spake:  
 "Beyond these walls I know not what may be —  
 Islands low-fringed, or bare; or tranquil sea,  
 Spaces unpeopled, wastes of burning sands,  
 Green-wooded belts, enclasping summer lands,  
 Or realms of dusky pines, or wolds of snow,  
 Or jagged ice-peaks wrapt in purple glow,  
 Or shadowy oceans lapped in fadeless sheen —  
 Yet there were Paradise, were Lilith queen.  
 To dally with my lord I was not meant;  
 To soothe his idle whims, above him bent,  
 Warm in my milk-white arms, lull his repose,

Nor deep in subtle kisses drown his woes.  
 Wherefore, since here no more dwells love, I fly  
 To seek my home in other lands. For why  
 Should Lilith wait since Adam's empty state  
 More dear he holds than Lilith desolate?"

But answer soft made Adam at the word,  
 For faint his dying love, yet coldly stirred  
 Its ashen cerements: "Nay, love, our home  
 Within these garden walls lies safe. Wouldst roam  
 [18] Without? Sweet peace, by loss, wilt thou restore  
 One little loss, or miss it evermore?"

"In goodly Eden, Adam, safely bide,  
 But I, for peace, nor love, nor life," she cried,  
 "Submit to thee. Unto our Lord I own  
 Allegiance true; my homage his alone.  
 Oft have I watched the mists athwart yon peaks,  
 Pursuing oft past coves and winding creeks,  
 Have thought to touch their shining veil outspread,  
 In happy days ere Love, alas, was dead;  
 So now, farewell! Ere the new day shall break  
 Adown their gleaming track, my way I take."  
 She turned; but ere the gate that looked without  
 She reached, one fleeting moment paused in doubt  
 Upon a river's brink. In one swift glance  
 All coming time she saw. A weird romance  
 Wherein she traced great peoples yet unborn,  
 New springing cycles, strange lands cleft with tarn  
 Or pleasant vale, and green plains stretching far,  
 And quiet bays, and many a shingly bar,  
 And troubled seas, with bitter perils past,  
 And elfin shapes that jeering flitted fast  
 With scornful faces, leering lips that smiled,  
 Or bursts of laughter through that vision wild.  
 Uncertain, then, she stood, half loth to turn.  
 "Against yon deepening sky, how dimly burn  
 The stars, new-lit. Dear home, thou art so fair!"  
 She fondly sighed.

[19] Then sudden she was 'ware  
 The angel near her paused, whose watchful care

Guards Eden's peaceful bounds. Serene, his air  
 So tender-sweet, so pure the gentle face,  
 She scarce dared look upon its subtle grace.  
 Sad were his eyes; his words, rebuking, fell  
 Soft as the moonshine clear, in sleeping dell.  
 "My sister, go not hence, lest these gates bar  
 Lilith forever out. From peace afar,  
 Anger and pride shall lead through distant ways  
 Thy feet reluctant, in the evil days.  
 All is decreed. At yonder southern gate  
 Behold! waits even now my princely mate.  
 Thou can'st not tell which hath in our far land  
 The highest place. Nay; nor, indeed, whose hand  
 Hath grasped the noblest fame; nor yet divine  
 Whose brows enwound with honor, brightest shine.  
 In pleasant labor lurks no thought of pain;  
 The greatest loss oft brings the noblest gain;  
 The heart's warm pulse feels not one throb of strife,  
 And Love is holiest crown of human life.  
 Ere thou didst sleep, beyond the rim of night  
 I heard a voice that sang. The carol light,  
 Scarce earth-born seemed. So sweet the matchless strain,  
 Its cadence weird, lowly to breathe again,  
 Wrapt echo, listening, half forgot; and o'er  
 [20] And o'er, as joyous birds unprisoned soar,  
 The free notes rose. And in the silence wide,  
 Across the seas, across the night, I cried:  
 O sinless soul, whose clear voice blithely rings  
 'Gainst the blue verge of stars! 'Tis Lilith sings  
 The happy song of love. O Love! the tint  
 Of light divine thou wearest. Thou hast no hint  
 Of storm or turmoil, or of Sin's rough ways,  
 Whose feet to heaven climb, through darkest maze.  
 Ah, Lilith, sure the love that basely weighs,  
 That stoops to count its gifts, and hoarding, says,  
 'Such and so many, these indeed are mine;  
 I hold my treasure dear, nor covet thine;'

This is not love; 'tis Thrift in borrowed dress,  
 Deceiving thee. Love giveth free largess

With open hand, clean as the whitest day;  
 Yea, that it gave, forgetteth it straightway.  
 Beyond these walls dwells bliss that lives not here?  
 When thou hast bartered peace, outshining clear  
 And storm-tossed wide, art wildly driven hence,  
 The outer world gives thee no recompense.  
 Each shining sphere that trembles in blue space  
 Hath orbit true – its own familiar place.  
 Nor doth the planet pale that gems the night  
 Reel wanton down, the smallest star to smite.  
 No twining vine, tendrill, or springing shoot  
 Ere taught thee so; for bud and leaf and root  
 Doth its best self lift upward into light,  
 [21] Yet climbing still, scorns not the sacred right  
 That shrines its fellow.  
 “So pattering rains  
 The dark roots drink – and healthful juice slow drains  
 Deep ‘neath the mould; and with their secret toil  
 Bear stainless, leaf and flow’r above the soil.  
 Noblest the soul that self hath most forgot;  
 Strongest the self which hath most humbly wrought;  
 Purest the soul that in full light serene,  
 Unquestioning, enwrapt, God’s field doth glean.  
 I have seen worlds far hence; thy tender feet  
 Bleeding, will tread their stony ways. And sweet  
 Is love. And wedded love, grown cold and rude,  
 More bitter-seeming makes dull solitude.  
 Security is sweet; and light and warm  
 The young heart beats, close shut from every harm.”  
 “Yet,” Lilith answered slow, “in that still night  
 Ere He, the garden’s Lord, passed from our sight,  
 Hast thou forgot his words? ‘Lo this fair spot  
 Made for your pleasance; see ye mar it not,  
 Oh, twin-born pair! So richly dight with grace  
 Of soul and stature; unto whom the place  
 I give. Together rule. Bear equal sway  
 O’er all that live herein.’ Hath Lilith sought  
 A solitary reign? Hath she in aught  
 Offended? Nay; ‘tis Adam who doth break

The compact. Therefore, unhindered let me take  
My way far hence. I shall not vex his soul  
[22] With fretful plaints, where unknown stars shall roll,  
Far, far away," she sighed.  
"Yet ere these bounds  
Thy feet pass, linger. Lilith, list glad sounds  
That greet thine ear. Slow cycles will pass on  
And in the time-to-be-bright years, grow wan;  
Old planets fade, new stars shall dimly burn,  
But not to Eden's peace shalt thou return.  
Oft from thy yearning heart glad hope shall fail.  
Thy fruit of life lift bloom all sere and pale.  
Certain, small comfort bides, when joy is gone,  
In Great or Less. Grim Sorrow waits to lead thee on.  
Sorrow! Thou hast not seen her pallid face.  
In thy most troubled dream she had no place" —  
"Nay, I depart," she said, with lips grown chill.  
"Fearless and free, exiled, but princess still."  
"I may not hinder thee," the Angel sighed;  
"No soul unwilling here may ever bide."  
Slow swung the verdant gates neath saddest eyes.  
*Lilith forever lost fair Paradise.*

