

ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

**LEILA OR, THE SIEGE
OF GRANADA, BOOK I**

Эдвард Бульвер-Литтон

Leila or, the Siege of Granada, Book I

«Public Domain»

Бульвер-Литтон Э. Д.

Leila or, the Siege of Granada, Book I / Э. Д. Бульвер-Литтон —
«Public Domain»,

© Бульвер-Литтон Э. Д.
© Public Domain

Содержание

Book I	5
CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	7
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	10

Edward Bulwer Lytton

Leila or, the Siege of Granada, Book I

Book I

CHAPTER I

THE ENCHANTER AND THE WARRIOR

It was the summer of the year 1491, and the armies of Ferdinand and Isabel invested the city of Granada.

The night was not far advanced; and the moon, which broke through the transparent air of Andalusia, shone calmly over the immense and murmuring encampment of the Spanish foe, and touched with a hazy light the snow-capped summits of the Sierra Nevada, contrasting the verdure and luxuriance which no devastation of man could utterly sweep from the beautiful vale below.

In the streets of the Moorish city many a group still lingered. Some, as if unconscious of the beleaguering war without, were listening in quiet indolence to the strings of the Moorish lute, or the lively tale of an Arabian improvisatore; others were conversing with such eager and animated gestures, as no ordinary excitement could wring from the stately calm habitual to every oriental people. But the more public places in which gathered these different groups, only the more impressively heightened the desolate and solemn repose that brooded over the rest of the city.

At this time, a man, with downcast eyes, and arms folded within the sweeping gown which descended to his feet, was seen passing through the streets, alone, and apparently unobservant of all around him. Yet this indifference was by no means shared by the struggling crowds through which, from time to time, he musingly swept.

"God is great!" said one man; "it is the Enchanter Almamen."

"He hath locked up the manhood of Boabdil el Chico with the key of his spells," quoth another, stroking his beard; "I would curse him, if I dared."

"But they say that he hath promised that when man fails, the genii will fight for Granada," observed a third, doubtingly.

"Allah Akbar! what is, is! what shall be, shall be!" said a fourth, with all the solemn sagacity of a prophet. Whatever their feelings, whether of awe or execration, terror or hope, each group gave way as Almamen passed, and hushed the murmurs not intended for his ear. Passing through the Zacatin (the street which traversed the Great Bazaar), the reputed enchanter ascended a narrow and winding street, and arrived at last before the walls that encircled the palace and fortress of the Alhambra.

The sentry at the gate saluted and admitted him in silence; and in a few moments his form was lost in the solitude of groves, amidst which, at frequent openings, the spray of Arabian fountains glittered in the moonlight; while, above, rose the castled heights of the Alhambra; and on the right those Vermilion Towers, whose origin veils itself in the furthest ages of Phoenician enterprise.

Almamen paused, and surveyed the scene. "Was Aden more lovely?" he muttered; "and shall so fair a spot be trodden by the victor Nazerene? What matters? creed chases creed—race, race—until time comes back to its starting-place, and beholds the reign restored to the eldest faith and the eldest tribe. The horn of our strength shall be exalted."

At these thoughts the seer relapsed into silence, and gazed long and intently upon the stars, as, more numerous and brilliant with every step of the advancing night, their rays broke on the playful waters, and tinged with silver the various and breathless foliage. So earnest was his gaze, and so absorbed his thoughts, that he did not perceive the approach of a Moor, whose glittering weapons and snow-white turban, rich with emeralds, cast a gleam through the wood.

The new comer was above the common size of his race, generally small and spare—but without attaining the lofty stature and large proportions of the more redoubted of the warriors of Spain. But in his presence and mien there was something, which, in the haughtiest conclave of Christian chivalry, would have seemed to tower and command. He walked with a step at once light and stately, as if it spurned the earth; and in the carriage of the small erect head and stag-like throat, there was that undefinable and imposing dignity, which accords so well with our conception of a heroic lineage, and a noble though imperious spirit. The stranger approached Almamen, and paused abruptly when within a few steps of the enchanter. He gazed upon him in silence for some moments; and when at length he spoke it was with a cold and sarcastic tone.

"Pretender to the dark secrets," said he, "is it in the stars that thou art reading those destinies of men and nations, which the Prophet wrought by the chieftain's brain and the soldier's arm?"

"Prince," replied Almamen, turning slowly, and recognising the intruder on his meditations, "I was but considering how many revolutions, which have shaken earth to its centre, those orbs have witnessed, unsympathising and unchanged."

"Unsympathising!" repeated the Moor—"yet thou believest in their effect upon the earth?"

"You wrong me," answered Almamen, with a slight smile, "you confound your servant with that vain race, the astrologers."

"I deemed astrology a part of the science of the two angels, Harut and Marut."

[The science of magic. It was taught by the Angels named in the text; for which offence they are still supposed to be confined to the ancient Babel. There they may yet be consulted, though they are rarely seen.—Yallal'odir Yahya. —SALE'S Koran.]

"Possibly; but I know not that science, though I have wandered at midnight by the ancient Babel."

"Fame lies to us, then," answered the Moor, with some surprise.

"Fame never made pretence to truth," said Almamen, calmly, and proceeding on his way. "Allah be with you, prince! I seek the king."

"Stay! I have just quitted his presence, and left him, I trust, with thoughts worthy of the sovereign of Granada, which I would not have disturbed by a stranger, a man whose arms are not spear nor shield."

"Noble Muza," returned Almamen, "fear not that my voice will weaken the inspirations which thine hath breathed into the breast of Boabdil. Alas! if my counsel were heeded, thou wouldst hear the warriors of Granada talk less of Muza, and more of the king. But Fate, or Allah, hath placed upon the throne of a tottering dynasty, one who, though brave, is weak— though, wise, a dreamer; and you suspect the adviser, when you find the influence of nature on the advised. Is this just?"

Muza gazed long and sternly on the face of Almamen; then, putting his hand gently on the enchanter's shoulder, he said—

"Stranger, if thou playest us false, think that this arm hath cloven the casque of many a foe, and will not spare the turban of a traitor!"

"And think thou, proud prince!" returned Almamen, unquailing, "that I answer alone to Allah for my motives, and that against man my deeds I can defend!"

With these words, the enchanter drew his long robe round him, and disappeared amidst the foliage.

CHAPTER II

THE KING WITHIN HIS PALACE

In one of those apartments, the luxury of which is known only to the inhabitants of a genial climate (half chamber and half grotto), reclined a young Moor, in a thoughtful and musing attitude.

The ceiling of cedar-wood, glowing with gold and azure, was supported by slender shafts, of the whitest alabaster, between which were open arcades, light and graceful as the arched vineyards of Italy, and wrought in that delicate filagree-work common to the Arabian architecture: through these arcades was seen at intervals the lapsing fall of waters, lighted by alabaster lamps; and their tinkling music sounded with a fresh and regular murmur upon the ear. The whole of one side of this apartment was open to a broad and extensive balcony, which overhung the banks of the winding and moonlit Darro; and in the clearness of the soft night might be distinctly seen the undulating hills, the woods, and orange- groves, which still form the unrivalled landscapes of Granada.

The pavement was spread with ottomans and couches of the richest azure, prodigally enriched with quaint designs in broideries of gold and silver; and over that on which the Moor reclined, facing the open balcony, were suspended on a pillar the round shield, the light javelin, and the curving cimeter, of Moorish warfare. So studded were these arms with jewels of rare cost, that they might alone have sufficed to indicate the rank of the evident owner, even if his own gorgeous vestments had not betrayed it. An open manuscript, on a silver table, lay unread before the Moor: as, leaning his face upon his hand, he looked with abstracted eyes along the mountain summits dimly distinguished from the cloudless and far horizon.

No one could have gazed without a vague emotion of interest, mixed with melancholy, upon the countenance of the inmate of that luxurious chamber.

Its beauty was singularly stamped with a grave and stately sadness, which was made still more impressive by its air of youth and the unwonted fairness of the complexion: unlike the attributes of the Moorish race, the hair and curling beard were of a deep golden colour; and on the broad forehead and in the large eyes, was that settled and contemplative mildness which rarely softens the swart lineaments of the fiery children of the sun. Such was the personal appearance of Boabdil el Chico, the last of the Moorish dynasty in Spain.

"These scrolls of Arabian learning," said Boabdil to himself, "what do they teach? to despise wealth and power, to hold the heart to be the true empire. This, then, is wisdom. Yet, if I follow these maxims, am I wise? alas! the whole world would call me a driveller and a madman. Thus is it ever; the wisdom of the Intellect fills us with precepts which it is the wisdom of Action to despise. O Holy Prophet! what fools men would be, if their knavery did not eclipse their folly!"

The young king listlessly threw himself back on his cushions as he uttered these words, too philosophical for a king whose crown sate so loosely on his brow.

After a few moments of thought that appeared to dissatisfy and disquiet him, Boabdil again turned impatiently round "My soul wants the bath of music," said he; "these journeys into a pathless realm have wearied it, and the streams of sound supple and relax the travailed pilgrim."

He clapped his hands, and from one of the arcades a boy, hitherto invisible, started into sight; at a slight and scarce perceptible sign from the king the boy again vanished, and in a few moments afterwards, glancing through the fairy pillars, and by the glittering waterfalls, came the small and twinkling feet of the maids of Araby. As, with their transparent tunics and white arms, they gleamed, without an echo, through that cool and voluptuous chamber, they might well have seemed the Peris of the eastern magic, summoned to beguile the sated leisure of a youthful Solomon. With them came a maiden of more exquisite beauty, though smaller stature, than the rest, bearing the light Moorish

lute; and a faint and languid smile broke over the beautiful face of Boabdil, as his eyes rested upon her graceful form and the dark yet glowing lustre of her oriental countenance. She alone approached the king, timidly kissed his hand, and then, joining her comrades, commenced the following song, to the air and very words of which the feet of the dancing-girls kept time, while with the chorus rang the silver bells of the musical instrument which each of the dancers carried.

AMINE'S SONG

I

Softly, oh, softly glide,
Gentle Music, thou silver tide,
Bearing, the lulled air along,
This leaf from the Rose of Song!
To its port in his soul let it float,
The frail, but the fragrant boat,
Bear it, soft Air, along!

II

With the burthen of sound we are laden,
Like the bells on the trees of Aden,¹
When they thrill with a tinkling tone
At the Wind from the Holy Throne,
Hark, as we move around,
We shake off the buds of sound;
Thy presence, Beloved, is Aden.

III

Sweet chime that I hear and wake
I would, for my lov'd one's sake,
That I were a sound like thee,
To the depths of his heart to flee.
If my breath had his senses blest;
If my voice in his heart could rest;
What pleasure to die like thee!

¹ The Mohammedans believe that musical bells hang on the trees of Paradise, and are put in motion by a wind from the throne of God.

The music ceased; the dancers remained motionless in their graceful postures, as if arrested into statues of alabaster; and the young songstress cast herself on a cushion at the feet of the monarch, and looked up fondly, but silently, into his yet melancholy eyes,—when a man, whose entrance had not been noticed, was seen to stand within the chamber.

He was about the middle stature,—lean, muscular, and strongly though sparely built. A plain black robe, something in the fashion of the Armenian gown, hung long and loosely over a tunic of bright scarlet, girdled by a broad belt, from the centre of which was suspended a small golden key, while at the left side appeared the jewelled hilt of a crooked dagger. His features were cast in a larger and grander mould than was common among the Moors of Spain; the forehead was broad, massive, and singularly high, and the dark eyes of unusual size and brilliancy; his beard, short, black, and glossy, curled upward, and concealed all the lower part of the face, save a firm, compressed, and resolute expression in the lips, which were large and full; the nose was high, aquiline, and well-shaped; and the whole character of the head (which was, for symmetry, on too large and gigantic a scale as proportioned to the form) was indicative of extraordinary energy and power. At the first glance, the stranger might have seemed scarce on the borders of middle age; but, on a more careful examination, the deep lines and wrinkles, marked on the forehead and round the eyes, betrayed a more advanced period of life. With arms folded on his breast, he stood by the side of the king, waiting in silence the moment when his presence should be perceived.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.