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LEILA

OR,

THE SIEGE OF GRANADA

BY

EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

Book III.

CHAPTER I.

ISABEL AND THE JEWISH MAIDEN.

While this scene took place before the tribunal of Torquemada, Leila had been summoned from the indulgence of fears, which her gentle nature and her luxurious nurturing had ill-fitted her to contend against, to the presence of the queen. That gifted and high-spirited princess, whose virtues were her

own, whose faults were of her age, was not, it is true, without the superstition and something of the intolerant spirit of her royal spouse: but, even where her faith assented to persecution, her heart ever inclined to mercy; and it was her voice alone that ever counteracted the fiery zeal of Torquemada, and mitigated the sufferings of the unhappy ones who fell under the suspicion of heresy. She had, happily, too, within her a strong sense of justice, as well as the sentiment of compassion; and often, when she could not save the accused, she prevented the consequences of his imputed crime falling upon the innocent members of his house or tribe.

In the interval between his conversation with Ferdinand and the examination of Almamen, the Dominican had sought the queen; and had placed before her, in glowing colours, not only the treason of Almamen, but the consequences of the impious passion her son had conceived for Leila. In that day, any connection between a Christian knight and a Jewess was deemed a sin, scarce expiable; and Isabel conceived all that horror of her son's offence which was natural in a pious mother and a haughty queen. But, despite all the arguments of the friar, she could not be prevailed upon to render up Leila to the tribunal of the Inquisition; and that dread court, but newly established, did not dare, without her consent, to seize upon one under the immediate protection of the queen.

"Fear not, father," said Isabel, with quiet firmness, "I will take upon myself to examine the maiden; and, at least, I will see her removed from all chance of tempting or being tempted by this graceless boy. But she was placed under the charge of the king and myself as a hostage and a trust; we accepted the charge, and our royal honor is pledged to the safety of the maiden. Heaven forbid that I should deny the existence of sorcery, assured as we are of its emanation from the Evil One; but I fear, in this fancy of Juan's, that the maiden is more sinned against than sinning: and yet my son is, doubtless, not aware of the unhappy faith of the Jewess; the knowledge of which alone will suffice to cure him of his error. You shake your head, father; but, I repeat, I will act in this affair so as to merit the confidence I demand. Go, good Tomas. We have not reigned so long without belief in our power to control and deal with a simple maiden."

The queen extended her hand to the monk, with a smile so sweet in its dignity, that it softened even that rugged heart; and, with a reluctant sigh, and a murmured prayer that her counsels might be guided for the best, Torquemada left the royal presence.

"The poor child!" thought Isabel, "those tender limbs, and that fragile form, are ill fitted for yon monk's stern tutelage. She seems gentle: and her face has in it all the yielding softness of our sex; doubtless by mild means, she may be persuaded to abjure her wretched creed; and the shade of some holy convent may hide her alike from the licentious gaze of my son and the iron zeal of the Inquisitor. I will see her."

When Leila entered the queen's pavilion, Isabel, who was alone, marked her trembling step with a compassionate eye; and, as Leila, in obedience to the queen's request, threw up her veil, the paleness of her cheek and the traces of recent tears appealed to Isabel's heart with more success than had attended all the pious invectives of Torquemada.

"Maiden," said Isabel, encouragingly, "I fear thou hast been strangely harassed by the thoughtless caprice of the young prince. Think of it no more. But, if thou art what I have ventured to believe, and to assert thee to be, cheerfully subscribe to the means I will suggest for preventing the continuance of addresses which cannot but injure thy fair name."

"Ah, madam!" said Leila, as she fell on one knee beside the queen, "most joyfully, most gratefully, will I accept any asylum which proffers solitude and peace."

"The asylum to which I would fain lead thy steps," answered Isabel, gently, "is indeed one whose solitude is holy—whose peace is that of heaven. But of this hereafter. Thou wilt not hesitate, then, to quit the camp, unknown to the prince, and ere he can again seek thee?"

"Hesitate, madam? Ah rather, how shall I express my thanks?"

"I did not read that face misjudgingly," thought the queen, as she resumed. "Be it so; we will not lose another night. Withdraw yonder, through the inner tent; the litter shall be straight prepared for thee; and ere midnight thou shalt sleep in safety under the roof of one of the bravest knights and noblest ladies that our realm can boast. Thou shalt bear with thee a letter that shall commend thee specially to the care of thy hostess—thou wilt find her of a kindly and fostering nature. And, oh, maiden!" added the queen, with benevolent warmth, "steel not thy heart against her—listen with ductile senses to her gentle ministry; and may God and His Son prosper that pious lady's counsel, so that it may win a new straying to the Immortal Fold!"

Leila listened and wondered, but made no answer; until, as she gained the entrance to the interior

division of the tent, she stopped abruptly, and said, "Pardon me, gracious queen, but dare I ask thee one question?—it is not of myself."

"Speak, and fear not."

"My father—hath aught been heard of him? He promised, that ere the fifth day were past, he would once more see his child; and, alas! that date is past, and I am still alone in the dwelling of the stranger."

"Unhappy child!" muttered Isabel to herself; "thou knowest not his treason nor his fate—yet why shouldst thou? Ignorant of what would render thee blest hereafter, continue ignorant of what would afflict thee here. Be cheered, maiden," answered the queen, aloud. "No doubt, there are reasons sufficient to forbid your meeting. But thou shalt not lack friends in the dwelling-house of the stranger."

"Ah, noble queen, pardon me, and one word more! There hath been with me, more than once, a stern old man, whose voice freezes the blood within my veins; he questions me of my father, and in the tone of a foe who would entrap from the child something to the peril of the sire. That man—thou knowest him, gracious queen—he cannot have the power to harm my father?"

"Peace, maiden! the man thou speakest of is the priest of God, and the innocent have nothing to dread from his reverend zeal. For thyself, I say again, be cheered; in the home to which I consign thee thou wilt see him no more. Take comfort, poor child—weep not: all have their cares; our duty is to bear in this life, reserving hope only for the next."

The queen, destined herself to those domestic afflictions which pomp cannot soothe, nor power allay, spoke with a prophetic sadness which yet more touched a heart that her kindness of look and tone had already softened; and, in the impulse of a nature never tutored in the rigid ceremonials of that stately court, Leila suddenly came forward, and falling on one knee, seized the hand of her protectress, and kissed it warmly through her tears.

"Are you, too, unhappy?" she said. "I will pray for you to *my* God!"

The queen, surprised and moved at an action which, had witnesses been present, would only perhaps (for such is human nature) have offended her Castilian prejudices, left her hand in Leila's grateful clasp; and laying the other upon the parted and luxuriant ringlets of the kneeling maiden, said, gently,—"And thy prayers shall avail thee and me when thy God and mine are the same. Bless thee, maiden! I am a mother; thou art motherless—bless thee!"

CHAPTER II.

THE TEMPTATION OF THE JEWESS,—IN WHICH THE HISTORY PASSES FROM THE OUTWARD TO THE INTERNAL.

It was about the very hour, almost the very moment, in which Almamen effected his mysterious escape from the tent of the Inquisition, that the train accompanying the litter which bore Leila, and which was composed of some chosen soldiers of Isabel's own body-guard, after traversing the camp, winding along that part of the mountainous defile which was in the possession of the Spaniards, and ascending a high and steep acclivity, halted before the gates of a strongly fortified castle renowned in the chronicles of that memorable war. The hoarse challenge of the sentry, the grating of jealous bars, the clanks of hoofs upon the rough pavement of the courts, and the streaming glare of torches—falling upon stern and bearded visages, and imparting a ruddier glow to the moonlit buttresses and battlements of the fortress—aroused Leila from a kind of torpor rather than sleep, in which the fatigue and excitement of the day had steeped her senses. An old seneschal conducted her, through vast and gloomy halls (how unlike the brilliant chambers and fantastic arcades of her Moorish home) to a huge Gothic apartment, hung with the arras of Flemish looms. In a few moments, maidens, hastily aroused from slumber, grouped around her with a respect which would certainly not have been accorded had her birth and creed been known. They gazed with surprise at her extraordinary beauty and foreign garb, and evidently considered the new guest a welcome addition to the scanty society of the castle. Under any other circumstances, the strangeness of all she saw, and the frowning gloom of the chamber to which she was consigned, would have damped the spirits of one whose destiny had so suddenly passed from the deepest quiet into the sternest excitement. But any change was a relief to the roar of the camp, the addresses of the prince, and the ominous voice and countenance of Torquemada; and Leila looked around her, with the feeling that the queen's promise was fulfilled, and that she was

already amidst the blessings of shelter and repose. It was long, however, before sleep revisited her eyelids, and when she woke the noonday sun streamed broadly through the lattice. By the bedside sat a matron advanced in years, but of a mild and prepossessing countenance, which only borrowed a yet more attractive charm from an expression of placid and habitual melancholy. She was robed in black; but the rich pearls that were interwoven in the sleeves and stomacher, the jewelled cross that was appended from a chain of massive gold, and, still more, a certain air of dignity and command,—bespoke, even to the inexperienced eye of Leila, the evidence of superior station.

"Thou hast slept late, daughter," said the lady, with a benevolent smile; "may thy slumbers have refreshed thee! Accept my regrets that I knew not till this morning of thine arrival, or I should have been the first to welcome the charge of my royal mistress."

There was in the look, much more than in the words of the Donna Inez de Quexada, a soothing and tender interest that was as balm to the heart of Leila; in truth, she had been made the guest of, perhaps, the only lady in Spain, of pure and Christian blood, who did not despise or execrate the name of Leila's tribe. Donna Inez had herself contracted to a Jew a debt of gratitude which she had sought to return to the whole race. Many years before the time in which our tale is cast, her husband and herself had been sojourning at Naples, then closely connected with the politics of Spain, upon an important state mission. They had then an only son, a youth of a wild and desultory character, whom the spirit of adventure allured to the East. In one of those sultry lands the young Quexada was saved from the hands of robbers by the caravanserai of a wealthy traveller. With this stranger he contracted that intimacy which wandering and romantic men often conceive for each other, without any other sympathy than that of the same pursuits. Subsequently, he discovered that his companion was of the Jewish faith; and, with the usual prejudice of his birth and time, recoiled from the friendship he had solicited, and shrank from the sense of the obligation he had incurred he—quitted his companion. Wearied, at length, with travel, he was journeying homeward, when he was seized with a sudden and virulent fever, mistaken for plague: all fled from the contagion of the supposed pestilence—he was left to die. One man discovered his condition—watched, tended, and, skilled in the deeper secrets of the healing art, restored him to life and health: it was the same Jew who had preserved him from the robbers. At this second and more inestimable obligation the prejudices of the Spaniard vanished: he formed a deep and grateful attachment for his preserver; they lived together for some time, and the Israelite finally accompanied the young Quexada to Naples. Inez retained a lively sense of the service rendered to her only son, and the impression had been increased not only by the appearance of the Israelite, which, dignified and stately, bore no likeness to the cringing servility of his brethren, but also by the singular beauty and gentle deportment of his then newly-wed bride, whom he had wooed and won in that holy land, sacred equally to the faith of Christian and of Jew. The young Quexada did not long survive his return: his constitution was broken by long travel, and the debility that followed his fierce disease. On his deathbed he had besought the mother whom he left childless, and whose Catholic prejudices were less stubborn than those of his sire, never to forget the services a Jew had conferred upon him; to make the sole recompense in her power—the sole recompense the Jew himself had demanded—and to lose no occasion to soothe or mitigate the miseries to which the bigotry of the time often exposed the oppressed race of his deliverer. Donna Inez had faithfully kept the promise she gave to the last scion of her house; and, through the power and reputation of her husband and her own connections, and still more through an early friendship with the queen, she had, on her return to Spain, been enabled to ward off many a persecution, and many a charge on false pretences, to which the wealth of some son of Israel made the cause, while his faith made the pretext. Yet, with all the natural feelings of a rigid Catholic, she had earnestly sought to render the favor she had thus obtained amongst the Jews minister to her pious zeal for their more than temporal welfare. She had endeavored, by gentle means, to make the conversions which force was impotent to effect; and, in some instances, her success had been signal. The good senora had thus obtained high renown for sanctity; and Isabel thought rightly that she could not select a protectress for Leila who would more kindly shelter her youth, or more strenuously labor for her salvation. It was, indeed, a dangerous situation for the adherence of the maiden to that faith which it had cost her fiery father so many sacrifices to preserve and to advance.

It was by little and little that Donna Inez sought rather to undermine than to storm the mental fortress she hoped to man with spiritual allies; and, in her frequent conversation with Leila, she was at once perplexed and astonished by the simple and sublime nature of the belief upon which she waged war. For whether it was that, in his desire to preserve Leila as much as possible from contact even with Jews themselves, whose general character (vitiating by the oppression which engendered meanness, and the extortion which fostered avarice) Almamen regarded with lofty though concealed repugnance; or whether it was, that his philosophy did not interpret the Jewish formula of belief in the same spirit as the herd,—the religion inculcated in the breast of Leila was different from that which Inez had ever before encountered amongst her proselytes. It was less mundane and material—a kind of passionate rather than metaphysical theism, which invested the great ONE, indeed, with many human sympathies

and attributes, but still left Him the August and awful God of the Genesis, the Father of a Universe though the individual Protector of a fallen sect. Her attention had been less directed to whatever appears, to a superficial gaze, stern and inexorable in the character of the Hebrew God, and which the religion of Christ so beautifully softened and so majestically refined, than to those passages in which His love watched over a chosen people, and His forbearance bore with their transgressions. Her reason had been worked upon to its belief by that mysterious and solemn agency, by which—when the whole world beside was bowed to the worship of innumerable deities, and the adoration of graven images,—in a small and secluded portion of earth, amongst a people far less civilised and philosophical than many by which they were surrounded, had been alone preserved a pure and sublime theism, disdaining a likeness in the things of heaven or earth. Leila knew little of the more narrow and exclusive tenets of her brethren; a Jewess in name, she was rather a deist in belief; a deist of such a creed as Athenian schools might have taught to the imaginative pupils of Plato, save only that too dark a shadow had been cast over the hopes of another world. Without the absolute denial of the Sadducee, Almamen had, probably, much of the quiet scepticism which belonged to many sects of the early Jews, and which still clings round the wisdom of the wisest who reject the doctrine of Revelation; and while he had not sought to eradicate from the breast of his daughter any of the vague desire which points to a Hereafter, he had never, at least, directed her thoughts or aspirations to that solemn future. Nor in the sacred book which was given to her survey, and which so rigidly upheld the unity of the Supreme Power, was there that positive and unequivocal assurance of life beyond "the grave where all things are forgotten," that might supply the deficiencies of her mortal instructor. Perhaps, sharing those notions of the different value of the sexes, prevalent, from the remotest period, in his beloved and ancestral East, Almamen might have hopes for himself which did not extend to his child. And thus she grew up, with all the beautiful faculties of the soul cherished and unfolded, without thought, without more than dim and shadowy conjectures, of the Eternal Bourne to which the sorrowing pilgrim of the earth is bound. It was on this point that the quick eye of Donna Inez discovered her faith was vulnerable: who would not, if belief were voluntary, believe in the world to come? Leila's curiosity and interest were aroused: she willingly listened to her new guide—she willingly inclined to conclusions pressed upon her, not with menace, but persuasion. Free from the stubborn associations, the sectarian prejudices, and unversed in the peculiar traditions and accounts of the learned of her race, she found nothing to shock her in the volume which seemed but a continuation of the elder writings of her faith. The sufferings of the Messiah, His sublime purity, His meek forgiveness, spoke to her woman's heart; His doctrines elevated, while they charmed, her reason: and in the Heaven that a Divine hand opened to all,—the humble as the proud, the oppressed as the oppressor, to the woman as to the lords of the earth,—she found a haven for all the doubts she had known, and for the despair which of late had darkened the face of earth. Her home lost, the deep and beautiful love of her youth blighted,—that was a creed almost irresistible which told her that grief was but for a day, that happiness was eternal. Far, too, from revolting such of the Hebrew pride of association as she had formed, the birth of the Messiah in the land of the Israelites seemed to consummate their peculiar triumph as the Elected of Jehovah. And while she mourned for the Jews who persecuted the Saviour, she gloried in those whose belief had carried the name and worship of the descendants of David over the furthest regions of the world. Often she perplexed and startled the worthy Inez by exclaiming, "This, your belief, is the same as mine, adding only the assurance of immortal life—Christianity is but the Revelation of Judaism."

The wise and gentle instrument of Leila's conversion did not, however, give vent to those more Catholic sentiments which might have scared away the wings of the descending dove. She forbore too vehemently to point out the distinctions of the several creeds, and rather suffered them to melt insensibly one into the other: Leila was a Christian, while she still believed herself a Jewess. But in the fond and lovely weakness of mortal emotions, there was one bitter thought that often and often came to mar the peace that otherwise would have settled on her soul. That father, the sole softener of whose stern heart and mysterious fates she was, with what pangs would he receive the news of her conversion! And Muza, that bright and hero-vision of her youth—was she not setting the last seal of separation upon all hope of union with the idol of the Moors? But, alas! was she not already separated from him, and had not their faiths been from the first at variance? From these thoughts she started with sighs and tears; and before her stood the crucifix already admitted into her chamber, and—not, perhaps, too wisely—banished so rigidly from the oratories of the Huguenot. For the representation of that Divine resignation, that mortal agony, that miraculous sacrifice, what eloquence it hath for our sorrows! what preaching hath the symbol to the vanities of our wishes, to the yearnings of our discontent!

By degrees, as her new faith grew confirmed, Leila now inclined herself earnestly to those pictures of the sanctity and calm of the conventual life which Inez delighted to draw. In the reaction of her thoughts, and her despondency of all worldly happiness, there seemed, to the young maiden, an inexpressible charm in a solitude which was to release her for ever from human love, and render her entirely up to sacred visions and imperishable hopes. And with this selfish, there mingled a generous and sublime sentiment. The prayers of a convert might be heard in favour of those yet benighted: and

the awful curse upon her outcast race be lightened by the orisons of one humble heart. In all ages, in all creeds, a strange and mystic impression has existed of the efficacy of self-sacrifice in working the redemption even of a whole people: this belief, so strong in the old orient and classic religions, was yet more confirmed by Christianity—a creed founded upon the grandest of historic sacrifices; and the lofty doctrine of which, rightly understood, perpetuates in the heart of every believer the duty of self-immolation, as well as faith in the power of prayer, no matter how great the object, how mean the supplicator. On these thoughts Leila meditated, till thoughts acquired the intensity of passions, and the conversion of the Jewess was completed.

CHAPTER III.

THE HOUR AND THE MAN

It was on the third morning after the King of Granada, reconciled to his people, had reviewed his gallant army in the Vivarrambla; and Boabdil, surrounded by his chiefs and nobles, was planning a deliberate and decisive battle, by assault on the Christian camp,—when a scout suddenly arrived, breathless, at the gates of the palace, to communicate the unlooked-for and welcome intelligence that Ferdinand had in the night broken up his camp, and marched across the mountains towards Cordova. In fact, the outbreak of formidable conspiracies had suddenly rendered the appearance of Ferdinand necessary elsewhere; and, his intrigues with Almamen frustrated, he despaired of a very speedy conquest of the city. The Spanish king resolved, therefore, after completing the devastation of the Vega, to defer the formal and prolonged siege, which could alone place Granada within his power, until his attention was no longer distracted to other foes, and until, it must be added, he had replenished an exhausted treasury. He had formed, with Torquemada, a vast and wide scheme of persecution, not only against Jews, but against Christians whose fathers had been of that race, and who were suspected of relapsing into Judaical practices. The two schemers of this grand design were actuated by different motives; the one wished to exterminate the crime, the other to sell forgiveness for it. And Torquemada connived at the griping avarice of the king, because it served to give to himself, and to the infant Inquisition, a power and authority which the Dominican foresaw would be soon greater even than those of royalty itself, and which, he imagined, by scourging earth, would redound to the interests of Heaven.

The strange disappearance of Almamen, which was distorted and exaggerated, by the credulity of the Spaniards, into an event of the most terrific character, served to complete the chain of evidence against the wealthy Jews, and Jew-descended Spaniards, of Andalusia; and while, in imagination, the king already clutched the gold of their redemption here, the Dominican kindled the flame that was to light them to punishment hereafter.

Boabdil and his chiefs received the intelligence of the Spanish retreat with a doubt which soon yielded to the most triumphant delight. Boabdil at once resumed all the energy for which, though but by fits and starts, his earlier youth had been remarkable.

"Alla Achbar! God is great!" cried he; "we will not remain here till it suit the foe to confine the eagle again to his eyrie. They have left us—we will burst on them. Summon our alfaquis, we will proclaim a holy war! The sovereign of the last possessions of the Moors is in the field. Not a town that contains a Moslem but shall receive our summons, and we will gather round our standard all the children of our faith!"

"May the king live for ever!" cried the council, with one voice.

"Lose not a moment," resumed Boabdil—"on to the Vivarrambla, marshal the troops—Muza heads the cavalry; myself our foot. Ere the sun's shadow reach yonder forest, our army shall be on its march."

The warriors, hastily and in joy, left the palace; and when he was alone, Boabdil again relapsed into his wonted irresolution. After striding to and fro for some minutes in anxious thought, he abruptly quitted the hall of council, and passed in to the more private chambers of the palace, till he came to a door strongly guarded by plates of iron. It yielded easily, however, to a small key which he carried in his girdle; and Boabdil stood in a small circular room, apparently without other door or outlet; but, after looking cautiously round, the king touched a secret spring in the wall, which, giving way, discovered a niche, in which stood a small lamp, burning with the purest naphtha, and a scroll of yellow parchment covered with strange letters and hieroglyphics. He thrust the scroll in his bosom, took the lamp in his hand, and pressing another spring within the niche, the wall receded, and showed a narrow

and winding staircase. The king reclosed the entrance, and descended: the stairs led, at last, into clamp and rough passages; and the murmur of waters, that reached his ear through the thick walls, indicated the subterranean nature of the soil through which they were hewn. The lamp burned clear and steady through the darkness of the place; and Boabdil proceeded with such impatient rapidity, that the distance (in reality, considerable) which he traversed, before he arrived at his destined bourne, was quickly measured. He came at last into a wide cavern, guarded by doors concealed and secret as those which had screened the entrance from the upper air. He was in one of the many vaults which made the mighty cemetery of the monarchs of Granada; and before him stood the robed and crowned skeleton, and before him glowed the magic dial-plate of which he had spoken in his interview with Muza.

"Oh, dread and awful image!" cried the king, throwing himself on his knees before the skeleton,—"shadow of what was once a king, wise in council, and terrible in war, if in those hollow bones yet lurks the impalpable and unseen spirit, hear thy repentant son. Forgive, while it is yet time, the rebellion of his fiery youth, and suffer thy daring soul to animate the doubt and weakness of his own. I go forth to battle, waiting not the signal thou didst ordain. Let not the penance for a rashness, to which fate urges me on, attach to my country, but to me. And if I perish in the field, may my evil destinies be buried with me, and a worthier monarch redeem my errors and preserve Granada!"

As the king raised his looks, the unrelaxed grin of the grim dead, made yet more hideous by the mockery of the diadem and the royal robe, froze back to ice the passion and sorrow at his heart. He shuddered, and rose with a deep sigh; when, as his eyes mechanically followed the lifted arm of the skeleton, he beheld, with mingled delight and awe, the hitherto motionless finger of the dial-plate pass slowly on, and rest at the word so long and so impatiently desired. "ARM!" cried the king; "do I read aright?—are my prayers heard?" A low and deep sound, like that of subterranean thunder, boomed through the chamber; and in the same instant the wall opened, and the king beheld the long-expected figure of Almamen, the magician. But no longer was that stately form clad in the loose and peaceful garb of the Eastern santon. Complete armour cased his broad chest and sinewy limbs; his head alone was bare, and his prominent and impressive features were lighted, not with mystical enthusiasm, but with warlike energy. In his right hand, he carried a drawn sword—his left supported the staff of a snow-white and dazzling banner.

So sudden was the apparition, and so excited the mind of the king, that the sight of a supernatural being could scarcely have impressed him with more amaze and awe.

"King of Granada," said Almamen, "the hour hath come at last; go forth and conquer! With the Christian monarch, there is no hope of peace or compact. At thy request I sought him, but my spells alone preserved the life of thy herald. Rejoice! for thine evil destinies have rolled away from thy spirit, like a cloud from the glory of the sun. The genii of the East have woven this banner from the rays of benignant stars. It shall beam before thee in the front of battle—it shall rise over the rivers of Christian blood. As the moon sways the bosom of the tides, it shall sway and direct the surges and the course of war!"

"Man of mystery! thou hast given me a new life."

"And, fighting by thy side," resumed Almamen, "I will assist to carve out for thee, from the ruins of Arragon and Castile, the grandeur of a new throne. Arm, monarch of Granada!—arm! I hear the neigh of thy charger, in the midst of the mailed thousands! Arm!"

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