

**THE QUEEN'S NECKLACE,  
OR, ROYALTY'S DANGERS  
AND DEFENDERS: A  
HISTORICAL ROMANCE**

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The queen's necklace, or, Royalty's dangers and defenders: a historical romance by Alex. Dumas

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**ALEX. DUMAS**

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Queen's Necklace and Taking of the Bastile Series.

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# THE QUEEN'S NECKLACE ;

OR,

ROYALTY'S DANGERS AND DEFENDERS.

A HISTORICAL ROMANCE.

BY ALEX. DUMAS.

Author of "Balsamo the Magician," "Monte Cristo," "Chicot the Jester," "The Three Musketeers," etc.

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# THE QUEEN'S NECKLACE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### AN AGED NOBLEMAN AND AN OLD STEWARD.

ABOUT a quarter past three p. m., early in April, 1784, the old Marshal Duke of Richelieu, after having perturbed himself with his own hand, pushed back the looking-glass in his valet's grasp, and shaking his head, with his own emphatic air, said :

"I am looking fine now."

He got up from his armchair, flipping off his sky blue velvet coat; the white powder drifted from his wig, with juvenile briskness.

After strutting up and down the dressing-room two or three times, cracking his ankles and jerking out his hamstrings, he called : "My steward !"

In five minutes the steward came, in full dress.

"I suppose you are going to give me a good dinner," he said with the gravity comporting with the occasion ; "you had the list of guests, eh ?"

"I have them by heart : nine in number——"

"Right ; to begin with, at what hour do we dine ?"

"My lord, the citizens dine at two, the legal gentlemen at three, nobility at four, and to-day your grace will dine at five, like royalty."

"Why like royalty, prithee ?"

"Because there is a king on the list your grace honored me with."

"Not a bit of it ; you are making a blunder. My guests are noblemen, only."

"My lord is having a jest with his humble servant, for the Count of Haga, one of the names, is a monarch."

"I do not know any king bearing that title."

"Excuse me, my lord, but I thought——"

He bowed.

"It is not your place to think and suppose. Your duty is to read the list of guests and add no commentary to the order. When I wish a thing known, I say it. When not, I want it ignored."

The steward bowed as though to a king, perhaps more respectfully.

"Hence, we dine as usual at four," went on the nobleman.

The steward's brow was clouded as if he heard his death-sentence. He turned pale as he bent under the blow; but recovering, he cried with desperate courage:

"Happen what may, your grace will not dine till five, as it is materially impossible before."

"Steward," said the old marshal, shaking his still lively and youthful head with haughtiness, "I believe you have been twenty years in my household?"

"Twenty-one, my lord; with a month and a half to boot."

"You shall not add a day, nay, not an hour to them. Hearken," continued the old peer, pinching his thin lips and frowning his dyed eyebrows, "you must seek another master this evening. I do not like the word 'impossible' to be spoken in my house. Not at my age am I going to learn it. I have no time to lose."

The major-domo bowed for the third time.

"I take leave of your grace this evening," he said, "but up to the latest hour I must fulfil my duty becomingly."

He bowed himself backwards two paces to the doorway.

"What do you mean by becomingly, sirrah?" exclaimed the lord. "Learn that matters must be carried out as befits me, here. Now, four o'clock is my dinner hour, and it is not becoming for you to dine me at five."

"My lord duke and marshal," returned the steward duly, "I have been butler to Prince Soubise and steward to Cardinal Prince Rohan. The late King Louis XV. dined once a year with the former; the Emperor of Austria dines once a



month with the other noble. Hence I know how to treat sovereigns, my lord. At Soubise House it was no use the King coming as Baron Gouesse, he was always the monarch; at Lord Rohan's, the Emperor Joseph was vainly styled Count Pakenstein, for he was still the Kaiser. This day your grace receives a guest uselessly dubbed Count Haga—he is no less the King of Sweden. When I go away this evening from this house it will be one where the Count of Haga was treated like a king."

"Just what I forbid, you obstinate fellow! Count Haga desires the most strict and opaque incognito. Zounds! I well know the foolish vanity of you Knights of the Napkin. It is not the Crown you honor, but you glorify yourselves with our crowns of coin."

"I cannot suppose that your grace seriously speaks to me of money," returned the steward tartly.

"Why, no, sir, who the deuce speaks to you about money?" said the nobleman, almost humiliated. "Do not shift the subject, if you please, and let me repeat that I do not want any more talk of kings coming."

"Why, my lord marshal, what do you take me for? do you think I should go ahead blindly? there will not be mention of the king."

"Then you will not be stubborn and I shall dine at four?"

"Nay, my lord, for what I am waiting for will not be here by four."

"What are you to wait for? fish, like that which failed to come to the chief cook Vatel and so he stabbed himself for fear his reputation for punctuality would be spoiled?"

"Vatel? pooh!"

"Shocked by the comparison, eh?"

"No, but because of a swordthrust he should be handed down to posterity."

"Ha! think you he won his glory too cheaply?"

"No, my lord; but how many others suffer in the profession like him and have to pocket pains and humiliations a hundred times worse than swordthrusts although they are not immortalized."

"To be immortalized do you not know you must belong to the French Academy or be dead?"

"If that is the case, my lord, better live and do one's duty I shall not die, and my service will be done as faithfully as Vatel's, had his master, Prince Conde, had the patience to wait half-an-hour."

"So you promise wonders; that is cunning of you."

"Not a wonder, my lord."

"What, then, I am inquisitive?"

"Forsooth, your grace, I am waiting for a bottle of wine."

"A bottle of wine? I am getting interested."

"The point is that his Majesty of Sweden—beg pardon, Count Haga, I hear, drinks nothing but Tokay wine."

"Hang it all, am I so cleaned out that I have no Tokay in the cellars? in that case, I must dismiss my butler."

"No, your grace has something like sixty bottles."

"Bless me, you do not think Count Haga will crack sixty one bottles at a sitting, do you?"

"Patience, my lord; when Count Haga first came into France, he was only Prince Royal; he dined with the last King, who had received a dozen Tokay from the Emperor of Austria. Your grace knows that Imperial Tokay is reserved for the Kaiser's cellar and that sovereigns themselves could not drink it unless the Emperor of Austria liked to send them some. Of the dozen bottles of which the Crown Prince tasted and considered admirable, only two bottles are left at present. One is in the royal cellar. And the other, my lord," concluded the steward triumphantly, with a smile, "it is stolen."

He felt that the moment of victory was come after the long debate he had sustained.

"Who stole it?"

"A friend of mine, the late King's butler, who was under obligations to me."

"Oh! so that he gave it to you?"

"Certainly he did," replied the old steward proudly.

"What did you do with it?"

"I placed it in my master's bins, most carefully."

"Your master? who was he at that period?"

"Prince Louis of Rohan."

"The Cardinal Bishop of Strasburg?"

"His residence is at Saverne."

"And you have sent that fir for that bottle for me?" ejaculated the old marshal.

"For my ungrateful lord," replied the chief domestic in a tone equivalent to calling him ungrateful.

The Duke of Richelieu took the old servant's hand, saying: "I ask you pardon, king of all the stewards!"

"But you drove me out of your house?" returned the other, shrugging his shoulders.

"I will pay a hundred pistoles for that bottle."

"And a hundred, traveling expenses, making two hundred: but your grace will allow that it is dirt cheap."

"I will allow anything; I will begin by allowing your allowance to be double what it was."

"Nay, my lord, you need not do that: I am only doing my duty."

"When does the messenger arrive who costs a hundred pistoles?"

"Your grace shall decide if I have wasted time. Three days ago the dinner was commanded. It takes a fast rider to get there in twenty-four hours and back in the same."

"That leaves you four-and-twenty hours: oh, prince of stewards, what have you done with them?"

"I lost them, alas, my lord! The idea did not strike me until the day after I got your list of dinners. Calculate the time the errand will take and your grace will see that I have begged only the requisite time in asking the hour to be five."

"What, is not the bottle in hand?"

"No, my lord."

"Good heavens! what if your brother steward at Saverne should be as devoted to the Prince of Rohan as you are to me, and refuse to deliver the wine, as you would refuse it?"

"I, my lord?"

"Yes, I do not suppose that you would let anybody have such a bottle, were it in my cellar?"

"Most humbly I crave your grace's pardon, but if one of the fraternity having a king to dine were to ask your finest wine, I should give it over instantly."