

A knight in full plate armor stands in a misty forest. The knight is wearing a helmet with a visor, a red surcoat with gold scrollwork, and a breastplate with intricate designs. He holds a sword in his right hand and a large, dark shield in his left. The background is a dense forest of tall, thin trees under a grey, overcast sky.

**ALEXANDRE DUMAS**

**THE QUEEN'S  
NECKLACE**

# *The Queen's Necklace*

Pages de titre

PROLOGUE.—THE PREDICTIONS.

CHAPTER I.

CHAPTER II.

CHAPTER III.

CHAPTER IV.

CHAPTER V.

CHAPTER VI.

CHAPTER VII.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHAPTER IX.

CHAPTER X.

CHAPTER XI.

CHAPTER XII.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHAPTER XV.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHAPTER XVII.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHAPTER XIX.

CHAPTER XX.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHAPTER XXII.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CHAPTER XXIV.

[CHAPTER XXV.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXVI.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXVII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXVIII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXIX.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXX.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXXI.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXXII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXXIII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXXIV.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXXV.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXXVI.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXXVII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXXVIII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXXIX.](#)  
[CHAPTER XL.](#)  
[CHAPTER XLI.](#)  
[CHAPTER XLII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XLIII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XLIV.](#)  
[CHAPTER XLV.](#)  
[CHAPTER XLVI.](#)  
[CHAPTER XLVII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XLVIII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XLIX.](#)  
[CHAPTER L.](#)  
[CHAPTER LI.](#)  
[CHAPTER LII.](#)  
[CHAPTER LIII.](#)  
[CHAPTER LIV.](#)  
[CHAPTER LV.](#)  
[CHAPTER LVI.](#)

[CHAPTER LVII.](#)  
[CHAPTER LVIII.](#)  
[CHAPTER LIX.](#)  
[CHAPTER LX.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXI.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXII.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXIII.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXIV.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXV.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXVI.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXVII.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXVIII.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXIX.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXX.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXXI.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXXII.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXXIII.\[B\]](#)  
[CHAPTER LXXIV.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXXV.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXXVI.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXXVII.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXXVIII.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXXIX.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXXX.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXXXI.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXXXII.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXXXIII.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXXXIV.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXXXV.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXXXVI.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXXXVII.](#)  
[CHAPTER LXXXVIII.](#)

CHAPTER LXXXIX.

CHAPTER XC.

CHAPTER XCI.

CHAPTER XCII.

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*The Queen's Necklace*

*Alexandre Dumas*

## *PROLOGUE.—THE PREDICTIONS.*

### *AN OLD NOBLEMAN AND AN OLD MAÎTRE-D'HÔTEL.*

It was the beginning of April, 1784, between twelve and one o'clock. Our old acquaintance, the Marshal de Richelieu, having with his own hands colored his eyebrows with a perfumed dye, pushed away the mirror which was held to him by his valet, the successor of his faithful Raffè and shaking his head in the manner peculiar to himself, "Ah!" said he, "now I look myself;" and rising from his seat with juvenile vivacity, he commenced shaking off the powder which had fallen from his wig over his blue velvet coat, then, after taking a turn or two up and down his room, called for his maître-d'hôtel.

In five minutes this personage made his appearance, elaborately dressed.

The marshal turned towards him, and with a gravity befitting the occasion, said, "Sir, I suppose you have prepared me a good dinner?"

*“Certainly, your grace.”*

*“You have the list of my guests?”*

“I remember them perfectly, your grace; I have prepared a dinner for nine.”

“There are two sorts of dinners, sir,” said the marshal.

*“True, your grace, but——”*

The marshal interrupted him with a slightly impatient movement, although still dignified.

“Do you know, sir, that whenever I have heard the word ‘but,’ and I have heard it many times in the course of eighty-eight years, it has been each time, I am sorry to say, the harbinger of some folly.”

*“Your grace——”*

*“In the first place, at what time do we dine?”*



“Your grace, the citizens dine at two, the bar at three, the nobility at four  
——”

*“And I, sir?”*

*“Your grace will dine to-day at five.”*

*“Oh, at five!”*

*“Yes, your grace, like the king——”*

*“And why like the king?”*

“Because, on the list of your guests, is the name of a king.”

“Not so, sir, you mistake; all my guests to-day are simply noblemen.”

“Your grace is surely jesting; the Count Haga,<sup>[A]</sup> who is among the guests  
——”

*“Well, sir!”*

*“The Count Haga is a king.”*

*“I know no king so called.”*

“Your grace must pardon me then,” said the maître-d’hôtel, bowing, “but, I believed, supposed——”

“Your business, sir, is neither to believe nor suppose; your business is to read, without comment, the orders I give you. When I wish a thing to be known, I tell it; when I do not tell it, I wish it unknown.”

The maître-d’hôtel bowed again, more respectfully, perhaps, than he would have done to a reigning monarch.

“Therefore, sir,” continued the old marshal, “you will, as I have none but noblemen to dinner, let us dine at my usual hour, four o’clock.”

At this order, the countenance of the maître-d’hôtel became clouded as if he had heard his sentence of death; he grew deadly pale; then, recovering himself, with the courage of despair he said, “In any event, your grace cannot dine before five o’clock.”

*“Why so, sir?” cried the marshal.*

*“Because it is utterly impossible.”*

“Sir,” said the marshal, with a haughty air, “it is now, I believe, twenty years since you entered my service?”

*“Twenty-one years, a month, and two weeks.”*

“Well, sir, to these twenty-one years, a month, and two weeks, you will not add a day, nor an hour. You understand me, sir,” he continued, biting his thin lips and depressing his eyebrows; “this evening you seek a new master. I do not choose that the word impossible shall be pronounced in my house; I am too old now to begin to learn its meaning.”

*The maître-d’hôtel bowed a third time.*

“This evening,” said he, “I shall have taken leave of your grace, but, at least, up to the last moment, my duty shall have been performed as it should be;” and he made two steps towards the door.

“What do you call as it should be?” cried the marshal. “Learn, sir, that to do it as it suits me is to do it as it should be. Now, I wish to dine at four, and it does not suit me, when I wish to dine at four, to be obliged to wait till five.”

“Your grace,” replied the maître-d’hôtel, gravely, “I have served as butler to his highness the Prince de Soubise, and as steward to his eminence the Cardinal de Rohan. With the first, his majesty, the late King of France,

dined once a year; with the second, the Emperor of Austria dined once a month. I know, therefore, how a sovereign should be treated. When he visited the Prince de Soubise, Louis XV. called himself in vain the Baron de Gonesse; at the house of M. de Rohan, the Emperor Joseph was announced as the Count de Packenstein; but he was none the less emperor. To-day, your grace also receives a guest, who vainly calls himself Count Haga—Count Haga is still King of Sweden. I shall leave your service this evening, but Count Haga will have been treated like a king.”

“But that,” said the marshal, “is the very thing that I am tiring myself to death in forbidding; Count Haga wishes to preserve his incognito as strictly as possible. Well do I see through your absurd vanity; it is not the crown that you honor, but yourself that you wish to glorify; I repeat again, that I do not wish it imagined that I have a king here.”

“What, then, does your grace take me for? It is not that I wish it known that there is a king here.”

“Then in heaven’s name do not be obstinate, but let us have dinner at four.”

“But at four o’clock, your grace, what I am expecting will not have arrived.”

*“What are you expecting? a fish, like M. Vatel?”*

*“Does your grace wish that I should tell you?”*

*“On my faith, I am curious.”*

*“Then, your grace, I wait for a bottle of wine.”*

“A bottle of wine! Explain yourself, sir, the thing begins to interest me.”

“Listen then, your grace; his majesty the King of Sweden—I beg pardon, the Count Haga I should have said—drinks nothing but tokay.”

“Well, am I so poor as to have no tokay in my cellar? If so, I must dismiss my butler.”

“Not so, your grace; on the contrary, you have about sixty bottles.”

“Well, do you think Count Haga will drink sixty bottles with his dinner?”

“No, your grace; but when Count Haga first visited France, when he was only prince royal, he dined with the late king, who had received twelve bottles of tokay from the Emperor of Austria. You are aware that the tokay of the finest vintages is reserved exclusively for the cellar of the emperor, and that kings themselves can only drink it when he pleases to send it to them.”

*“I know it.”*

“Then, your grace, of these twelve bottles of which the prince royal drank, only two remain. One is in the cellar of his majesty Louis XVI.—”

*“And the other?”*

“Ah, your grace!” said the maître-d’hôtel, with a triumphant smile, for he felt that, after the long battle he had been fighting, the moment of victory was at hand, “the other one was stolen.”

*“By whom, then?”*

“By one of my friends, the late king’s butler, who was under great obligations to me.”

*“Oh! and so he gave it to you.”*

“Certainly, your grace,” said the maître-d’hôtel with pride.

*“And what did you do with it?”*

*“I placed it carefully in my master’s cellar.”*

“Your master! And who was your master at that time?”

*“His eminence the Cardinal de Rohan.”*

*“Ah, mon Dieu! at Strasbourg?”*

*“At Saverne.”*

“And you have sent to seek this bottle for me!” cried the old marshal.

“For you, your grace,” replied the maître-d’hôtel, in a tone which plainly said, “ungrateful as you are.”

The Duke de Richelieu seized the hand of the old servant and cried, “I beg pardon; you are the king of maîtres d’hôtel.”

“And you would have dismissed me,” he replied, with an indescribable shrug of his shoulders.

“Oh, I will pay you one hundred pistoles for this bottle of wine.”

“And the expenses of its coming here will be another hundred; but you will grant that it is worth it.”

“I will grant anything you please, and, to begin, from to-day I double your salary.”

“I seek no reward, your grace; I have but done my duty.”

*“And when will your courier arrive?”*

“Your grace may judge if I have lost time: on what day did I have my orders for the dinner?”

*“Why, three days ago, I believe.”*

“It takes a courier, at his utmost speed, twenty-four hours to go, and the same to return.”

“There still remain twenty-four hours,” said the marshal; “how have they been employed?”

“Alas, your grace, they were lost. The idea only came to me the day after I received the list of your guests. Now calculate the time necessary for the negotiation, and you will perceive that in asking you to wait till five I am only doing what I am absolutely obliged to do.”

*“The bottle is not yet arrived, then?”*

*“No, your grace.”*

“Ah, sir, if your colleague at Saverne be as devoted to the Prince de Rohan as you are to me, and should refuse the bottle, as you would do in his place \_\_\_\_\_”



*“I? your grace——”*

“Yes; you would not, I suppose, have given away such a bottle, had it belonged to me?”

“I beg your pardon, humbly, your grace; but had a friend, having a king to provide for, asked me for your best bottle of wine, he should have had it immediately.”

*“Oh!” said the marshal, with a grimace.*

“It is only by helping others that we can expect help in our own need, your grace.”

“Well, then, I suppose we may calculate that it will be given, but there is still another risk—if the bottle should be broken?”

“Oh! your grace, who would break a bottle of wine of that value?”

“Well, I trust not; what time, then, do you expect your courier?”

*“At four o’clock precisely.”*

*“Then why not dine at four?” replied the marshal.*

“Your grace, the wine must rest for an hour; and had it not been for an invention of my own, it would have required three days to recover itself.”

*Beaten at all points, the marshal gave way.*

“Besides,” continued the old servant, “be sure, your grace, that your guests will not arrive before half-past four.”

*“And why not?”*

“Consider, your grace: to begin with M. de Launay; he comes from the Bastile, and with the ice at present covering the streets of Paris——”

“No; but he will leave after the prisoners’ dinner, at twelve o’clock.”

“Pardon me, your grace, but the dinner hour at the Bastile has been changed since your grace was there; it is now one.”

*“Sir, you are learned on all points; pray go on.”*

“Madame Dubarry comes from the Luciennes, one continued descent, and in this frost.”

“That would not prevent her being punctual, since she is no longer a duke’s favorite; she plays the queen only among barons; but let me tell you, sir,

that I desire to have dinner early on account of M. de la Pérouse, who sets off to-night, and would not wish to be late.”

“But, your grace, M. de la Pérouse is with the king, discussing geography and cosmography; he will not get away too early.”

*“It is possible.”*

“It is certain, your grace, and it will be the same with M. de Favras, who is with the Count de Provence, talking, no doubt, of the new play by the Canon de Beaumarchais.”

*“You mean the ‘Marriage of Figaro’?”*

*“Yes, your grace.”*

*“Why, you are quite literary also, it seems.”*

*“In my leisure moments I read, your grace.”*

“We have, however, M. de Condorcet, who, being a geometrician, should at least be punctual.”

“Yes; but he will be deep in some calculation, from which, when he rouses himself, it will probably be at least half an hour too late. As for the Count Cagliostro, as he is a stranger, and not well acquainted with the customs of Versailles, he will, in all probability, make us wait for him.”

“Well,” said the marshal, “you have disposed of all my guests, except M. de Taverney, in a manner worthy of Homer, or of my poor Raffè.”

The maître-d’hôtel bowed. “I have not,” said he, “named M. de Taverney, because, being an old friend, he will probably be punctual.”

*“Good; and where do we dine?”*

*“In the great dining-room, your grace.”*

*“But we shall freeze there.”*

“It has been warmed for three days, your grace; and I believe you will find it perfectly comfortable.”

“Very well; but there is a clock striking! Why, it is half-past four!” cried the marshal.

“Yes, your grace; and there is the courier entering the courtyard with my bottle of tokay.”

“May I continue for another twenty years to be served in this manner!” said the marshal, turning again to his looking-glass, while the maître-d’hôtel ran down-stairs.

“Twenty years!” said a laughing voice, interrupting the marshal in his survey of himself; “twenty years, my dear duke! I wish them you; but then I shall be sixty—I shall be very old.”

“You, countess!” cried the marshal, “you are my first arrival, and, mon Dieu! you look as young and charming as ever.”

*“Duke, I am frozen.”*

*“Come into the boudoir, then.”*

*“Oh! tête-à-tête, marshal?”*

*“Not so,” replied a somewhat broken voice.*

“Ah! Taverney!” said the marshal; and then whispering to the countess, “Plague take him for disturbing us!”

Madame Dubarry laughed, and they all entered the adjoining room.

[A] The name of Count Haga was well known as one assumed by the King of Sweden when traveling in France.

## II.—*M. DE LA PEROUSE.*

At the same moment, the noise of carriages in the street warned the marshal that his guests were arriving; and soon after, thanks to the punctuality of his maître-d'hôtel, nine persons were seated round the oval table in the dining-room. Nine lackeys, silent as shadows, quick without bustle, and attentive without importunity, glided over the carpet, and passed among the guests, without ever touching their chairs, which were surrounded with furs, which were wrapped round the legs of the sitters. These furs, with the heat from the stoves, and the odors from the wine and the dinner, diffused a degree of comfort, which manifested itself in the gaiety of the guests, who had just finished their soup.

No sound was heard from without, and none within, save that made by the guests themselves; for the plates were changed, and the dishes moved round, with the most perfect quiet. Nor from the maître d'hôtel could a whisper be heard; he seemed to give his orders with his eyes.

The guests, therefore, began to feel as though they were alone. It seemed to them that servants so silent must also be deaf.

M. de Richelieu was the first who broke the silence, by saying to the guest on his right hand, "But, count, you drink nothing."

This was addressed to a man about thirty-eight years of age, short, fair-haired, and with high shoulders; his eye a clear blue, now bright, but oftener with a pensive expression, and with nobility stamped unmistakably on his open and manly forehead.

*“I only drink water, marshal,” he replied.*

“Excepting with Louis XV.,” returned the marshal; “I had the honor of dining at his table with you, and you deigned that day to drink wine.”

“Ah! you recall a pleasing remembrance, marshal; that was in 1771. It was tokay, from the imperial cellar.”

“It was like that with which my maître-d’hôtel will now have the honor to fill your glass,” replied Richelieu, bowing.

Count Haga raised his glass, and looked through it. The wine sparkled in the light like liquid rubies. “It is true,” said he; “marshal, I thank you.”

These words were uttered in a manner so noble, that the guests, as if by a common impulse, rose, and cried,—

*“Long live the king!”*

“Yes,” said Count Haga, “long live his majesty the King of France. What say you, M. de la Pérouse?”

“My lord,” replied the captain, with that tone, at once flattering and respectful, common to those accustomed to address crowned heads, “I have just left the king, and his majesty has shown me so much kindness, that no one will more willingly cry ‘Long live the king’ than I. Only, as in another hour I must leave you to join the two ships which his majesty has put at my disposal, once out of this house, I shall take the liberty of saying, ‘Long life to another king, whom I should be proud to serve, had I not already so good a master.’”

“This health that you propose,” said Madame Dubarry, who sat on the marshal’s left hand, “we are all ready to drink, but the oldest of us should take the lead.”

“Is it you, that that concerns, or me, Taverney?” said the marshal, laughing.

“I do not believe,” said another on the opposite side, “that M. de Richelieu is the senior of our party.”

*“Then it is you, Taverney,” said the duke.*

“No, I am eight years younger than you! I was born in 1704,” returned he.

“How rude,” said the marshal, “to expose my eighty-eight years.”

“Impossible, duke! that you are eighty-eight,” said M. de Condorcet.

“It is, however, but too true; it is a calculation easy to make, and therefore unworthy of an algebraist like you, marquis. I am of the last century—the great century, as we call it. My date is 1696.”



*“Impossible!” cried De Launay.*

“Oh, if your father were here, he would not say impossible, he, who, when governor of the Bastille, had me for a lodger in 1714.”

“The senior in age, here, however,” said M. de Favras, “is the wine Count Haga is now drinking.”

“You are right, M. de Favras; this wine is a hundred and twenty years old; to the wine, then, belongs the honor——”

“One moment, gentlemen,” said Cagliostro, raising his eyes, beaming with intelligence and vivacity; “I claim the precedence.”

“You claim precedence over the tokay!” exclaimed all the guests in chorus.

“Assuredly,” returned Cagliostro, calmly; “since it was I who bottled it.”

*“You?”*

“Yes, I; on the day of the victory won by Montecucully over the Turks in 1664.”

A burst of laughter followed these words, which Cagliostro had pronounced with perfect gravity.

“By this calculation, you would be something like one hundred and thirty years old,” said Madame Dubarry; “for you must have been at least ten years old when you bottled the wine.”

“I was more than ten when I performed that operation, madame, as on the following day I had the honor of being deputed by his majesty the Emperor of Austria to congratulate Montecucully, who by the victory of St. Gothard had avenged the day at Especk, in Sclavonia, in which the infidels treated the imperialists so roughly, who were my friends and companions in arms in 1536.”

“Oh,” said Count Haga, as coldly as Cagliostro himself, “you must have been at least ten years old, when you were at that memorable battle.”

*“A terrible defeat, count,” returned Cagliostro.*

“Less terrible than Cressy, however,” said Condorcet, smiling.

“True, sir, for at the battle of Cressy, it was not only an army, but all France, that was beaten; but then this defeat was scarcely a fair victory to the English; for King Edward had cannon, a circumstance of which Philip de Valois was ignorant, or rather, which he would not believe, although I warned him that I had with my own eyes seen four pieces of artillery which Edward had bought from the Venetians.”

“Ah,” said Madame Dubarry; “you knew Philip de Valois?”

“Madame, I had the honor to be one of the five lords who escorted him off the field of battle; I came to France with the poor old King of Bohemia, who was blind, and who threw away his life when he heard that the battle was lost.”

“Ah, sir,” said M. de la Pérouse, “how much I regret, that instead of the battle of Cressy, it was not that of Actium at which you assisted.”

*“Why so, sir?”*

“Oh, because you might have given me some nautical details, which, in spite of Plutarch’s fine narration, have ever been obscure to me.”

“Which, sir? I should be happy to be of service to you.”

*“Oh, you were there, then, also?”*

“No, sir; I was then in Egypt. I had been employed by Queen Cleopatra to restore the library at Alexandria—an office for which I was better qualified than any one else, from having personally known the best authors of antiquity.”

“And you have seen Queen Cleopatra?” said Madame Dubarry.

*“As I now see you, madame.”*

*“Was she as pretty as they say?”*

“Madame, you know beauty is only comparative; a charming queen in Egypt, in Paris she would only have been a pretty grisette.”

*“Say no harm of grisettes, count.”*

*“God forbid!”*

*“Then Cleopatra was——”*

“Little, slender, lively, and intelligent; with large almond-shaped eyes, a Grecian nose, teeth like pearls, and a hand like your own, countess—a fit hand to hold a scepter. See, here is a diamond which she gave me, and which she had had from her brother Ptolemy; she wore it on her thumb.”

*“On her thumb?” cried Madame Dubarry.*

“Yes; it was an Egyptian fashion; and I, you see, can hardly put it on my little finger;” and taking off the ring, he handed it to Madame Dubarry.

It was a magnificent diamond, of such fine water, and so beautifully cut, as to be worth thirty thousand or forty thousand francs.

The diamond was passed round the table, and returned to Cagliostro, who, putting it quietly on his finger again, said, “Ah, I see well you are all incredulous; this fatal incredulity I have had to contend against all my life. Philip de Valois would not listen to me, when I told him to leave open a retreat to Edward; Cleopatra would not believe me when I warned her that Antony would be beaten: the Trojans would not credit me, when I said to

them, with reference to the wooden horse, ‘Cassandra is inspired; listen to Cassandra.’”

“Oh! it is charming,” said Madame Dubarry, shaking with laughter; “I have never met a man at once so serious and so diverting.”

“I assure you,” replied Cagliostro, “that Jonathan was much more so. He was really a charming companion; until he was killed by Saul, he nearly drove me crazy with laughing.”

“Do you know,” said the Duke de Richelieu, “if you go on in this way you will drive poor Taverney crazy; he is so afraid of death, that he is staring at you with all his eyes, hoping you to be an immortal.”

“Immortal I cannot say, but one thing I can affirm——”

“What?” cried Taverney, who was the most eager listener.

“That I have seen all the people and events of which I have been speaking to you.”

*“You have known Montecucully?”*

“As well as I know you, M. de Favras; and, indeed, much better, for this is but the second or third time I have had the honor of seeing you, while I lived nearly a year under the same tent with him of whom you speak.”

*“You knew Philip de Valois?”*

“As I have already had the honor of telling you, M. de Condorcet; but when he returned to Paris, I left France and returned to Bohemia.”

*“And Cleopatra.”*

“Yes, countess; Cleopatra, I can tell you, had eyes as black as yours, and shoulders almost as beautiful.”

*“But what do you know of my shoulders?”*

“They are like what Cassandra’s once were; and there is still a further resemblance,—she had like you, or rather, you have like her, a little black spot on your left side, just above the sixth rib.”

*“Oh, count, now you really are a sorcerer.”*

“No, no,” cried the marshal, laughing; “it was I who told him.”

*“And pray how do you know?”*

The marshal bit his lips, and replied, “Oh, it is a family secret.”