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LES PERLES DE LA COURONNE (THE PEARLS OF THE CROWN) France 1937 90 mins b/w 16mm

From a Screen Play by: Sacha Guitry. *Directed by:* Mr Guitry and Christian Jaque.
Production: A Serge Sandberg Production. *Music by:* Jean Francaix. *Photography by:*
Jules Kruger. *Sound Recording by:* M. Courmes. *Editing by:* W. Barache, Myriam.

In a letter from Paris, Sacha Guitry explains how he conceived the idea for his film.
"I knew one of the greatest joys of my life the day I learned the origins of the four
pear-shaped pearls which embellish the Royal Crown of England. It seemed to me
that I had discovered a treasure of a story of a thousand and one nights. These
four pearls were originally part of a necklace of seven which Pope Clement VII
gave to Catherine de Medici. She gave them to Mary Stuart, and when the Queen of
Scots died four of the pearls fell into the possession of Queen Elizabeth. Centuries
later Queen Victoria herself fastened them to the Royal Crown.

"By ignoring the other three pearls, destiny permitted me to give free reign to my
imagination. I wanted to make a film that would be comprehensible not only in France
but equally in Italy, England and America. Thus the historical characters - and
there are many - speak their native tongues. I could not see Pope Clement VII or
King Francis I speaking English; nor Henry VIII and Cardinal Wolsey speaking Italian.

"The Pope expresses himself in Italian, the British ruler in English and the French
King in French. But the public will understand what each one says. Each phrase is
short: the gesture and mimicry of the actor plus the dramatic situation, suffice to
explain the words." [There are subtitles as well]

Mr Guitry intended this to be a fun film and there will be more fun if you
can follow the credits as he speaks them aloud. If you can read French or even just
struggle through it, skip the cast list which comes next and go on to the full
recitation as he gave it in French.

Jean Martin)	
Francis I) Sacha Guitry
Barras)	
Napoleon III)	
Francoise Martin)	
Mary Queen of Scots) Jacqueline Delubac
Josephine)	
King Henry VIII)	
An equerry to His Majesty) Lyn Harding
Pope Clement VII Ermete Zabboni
Chamberlain to the Pope Enrico Glori
Catherine de Medici)	
Empress Eugenie in 1914) Marguerite Moreno

Queen Mary Tudor)
 Queen Elizabeth) Yvette Pienne

Spanelli Catalano
 Queen of Abyssinia Arletty
 Cardinal Wolsey Percy Marmont
 Darnley Derrick de Marney
 Anne Boleyn Barbara Shaw
 Madame du Barry Simone Renant
 General Bonaparte Jean Louis Barrault
 Napoleon I Emile Drain
 A Courtesan Cecile Sorel
 A Robber (the thief who stole the pearls) Engleman
 An American Fred Duprez
 Gabrielle D'Estrees Germaine Aussey
 and Jean Coquelin, Gaston Dubose, Pauline Carton, Lillian Granval,
 Laurence Atkins, Damia, Huguette Duflos, James Craven, Renee St. Cyr.

Voix de Sacha Guitry: "La Société Film Sonore Tobis a l'honneur de vous présenter une production Serge Sandberg (Cineas) 'Les Perles de la Couronne'. Un film de Sacha Guitry; musique de Jean Françaix; concert Padeloup, direction Georges Derveaux. Ce film a été porté à l'écran par l'auteur et Christian Jaque. Le texte en langue anglaise a été traduit par Stuart Gilbert; le texte en langue italienne a été traduit par Luigi Chiarelli. Jules Kruger imprima les images; M. Courmes enregistra les sons; Jean Perier fit les décors; G.K. Benka dessina les costumes; Muelle les exécuta et la Maison Granier aussi. Montage: W. Barache et Myriam. Assistants: Marc Frossard, Jean Etivient, Guy Lacourt. Régie générale: F. Caron. Le Film a été enregistré sur Western Electric à Paris, studios cinéma Billancourt." (Directeur de production: Derveaux. Distribution: Filsonore. Sortie: 11 mars 1937. Tournage ext.: Opéra, Hotel des Ventes, Maxim's, paquebot "Normandie"). "Sacha Guitry (le récitant, Jean Martin, François Ier, Barras, Napoleon III) et Raimu (un industriel marseillais) ont l'honneur d'interpréter ce film avec Harding (Henry VIII et l'aide de camp du Roi), avec Cecile Sorel (la Française du Grand Siècle), avec, avec..., avec les artistes dont voici les principaux dans l'ordre de leur apparition sur l'écran: Jacqueline Delubac (Françoise Martin, Marie Stuart, Josephine de Beauharnais), Renée Saint-Cyr (Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne), Enrico Glori (le chambellan du pape), Barbara Shaw (Ann Boleyn), Marguerite Moreno (Catherine de Médicis, l'impératrice Eugénie), Arletty (la reine d'Abyssinie), Dalio (son confident), Claude Dauphin (une Italienne), Robert Seller (un Français), Penzio (le maçon qui chante), Andrew Engleman (le voleur de perles), Miss Yvette Pienne (Elizabeth I, Marie Tudor, La Reine Victoria), Lisette Lanvin (la Reine Victoria jeune), Pierre Juvenet (un vieux lord), Henri Crémieux (Aimé Simon-Girard, Henri IV), Germaine Aussey (Gabrielle d'Estrees), Simone Renant (Madame du Barry), Damia (une femme du peuple), Di Mazzei, Jean Louis Barrault (Bonaparte), Pizani (Talleyrand), Emile Drain (Napoléon), Huguette Duflos (la Reine Hortense), Raymonde Allain (l'Impératrice Eugénie), Mrs Farebrother (une vieille Lady), Rosine Deréan (la jeune fille française de 1637 à 1837 et Catherine d'Aragon), Marie Leconte de la Comédie française (une femme dans la misère), Jean Coquelin (un vieux bourgeois), Gaston Dubose (un Grand Duc), Pauline Carton (la domestique de Françoise Martin), Laurence Atkins (la Duchesse d'Etampes), James Craven (Holbein et Le Titien), Percy Marmont (le cardinal Wolsey), Derrick de Marney (Darnley), Léon Walter (le duc de Montmorency), Jacqueline Pacaud (Jane Seymour), Pierre Magnier, Lillie Granval (un soprano léger), Paulette Elambert (Catherine de Médicis enfant), Jacques Berlioz, Georges Grey, Gildes, Fels, Marfa D'Hervilly, Dinahylyk, Oleo, Clément, Eugène Fougère, Catalano, Lautner. Et maintenant, toutes indications étant données, toutes obligations remplies, justice étant rendue, voici 'Les Perles de la Couronne'. Oyez et voyez l'histoire merveilleuse des sept perles fines, recueillie, composée, écrite et bien souvent imaginée par Sacha Guitry".

Sacha Guitry, son of a famous French actor father, was born in St. Petersburg in 1885. During the greater part of the era of silent films he would have nothing to do with the movies. Instead he concentrated on writing his own plays and appearing in them. So successful was he at this, that he was referred to as being, "France's man of the theatre." However, when sound came to the cinema Sacha Guitry was right into it with a vengeance.

He seems to have had two major effects on the motion picture critics of the time. They either hated him or thought he was great. Otis Ferguson, who reviewed films for The New Republic professed to see nothing in Guitry whatever. Guitry was severely criticised and called "Narcisistic" because he turned his own stage plays into films and made money while doing so. One of his most remarkable films was the famous *Roman D'un Tricheur* (*Romance of a Cheat*). Some angered critic seriously tried to make out that this film was autobiographical. On the other side of the fence the New York Times reviewer in commenting upon *The Pearls Of The Crown* wrote, "Even if we had not suspected it before, we should know it now: M. Guitry is one of his (own) sincerest admirers. What's more, we are another."

It was left for Graham Greene, the eminent novelist, to size up Sacha Guitry accurately. For five years in the 1930s Graham Greene was leading a double life. With one hand he was writing such unforgettable novels as Brighton Rock, The Power And The Glory and A Gun For Sale; with the other he was chronicling week by week, the films that opened in London, for The Spectator and briefly for the distinguished ill-fated magazine Night And Day. He began his review of *Les Perles de la Couronne* by saying, "It is not easy to review M. Guitry's films - so much depends on the effect of M. Guitry's personality." He then went on to catalogue what he didn't like about that personality. However, having done that he got around to giving credit to Guitry for something no one else seemed willing to admit, "Late in life he has taken light-heartedly to the cinema, breaking every rule, using in *Bonne Chance* - the most outrageous wipes successfully. Successfully, there's the rub. There is some jealousy in our distaste. Everything seems to have come to him so easily. He behaves outrageously, accepting none of the dogmas we have chosen as guides through the awful un-Aristotelean waste of this commercial craft. But he is no revolutionary. The rules remain rules for all of us but M. Guitry. The impertinence of it."

At the time of Guitry's death, Charles Ford wrote to Films in Review and came right out with what Graham Greenehad only glimpsed in part. "From 1935 until his death Guitry was active in French cinema as an author, producer and actor. He was discussed, criticised, idolized and detasted. But he made his mark and many of his films were artistic as well as commercial successes. His pictures were of two kinds, filmed plays and cinematic experiments..." Charles Ford went on to state that Guitry was one of the giants of French cinema.

Oscar Burritt

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