

Mansfield Milburg Francisco

# Dumas' Paris



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*Dumas' Paris:*

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## CHAPTER I. A GENERAL INTRODUCTION

There have been many erudite works, in French and other languages, describing the antiquities and historical annals of Paris from the earliest times; and in English the mid-Victorian era turned out – there are no other words for it – innumerable “books of travel” which recounted alleged adventures, strewn here and there with bits of historical lore and anecdotes, none too relevant, and in most cases not of undoubted authenticity.

Of the actual life of the people in the city of light and learning, from the times of Napoleon onward, one has to go to the fountainhead of written records, the acknowledged masterworks in the language of the country itself, the reports and *annuaires* of various *sociétés*, *commissions*, and what not, and collect therefrom such information as he finds may suit his purpose.

In this manner may be built up a fabric which shall be authentic and proper, varied and, most likely, quite different in

its plan, outline, and scope from other works of a similar purport, which may be recalled in connection therewith.

Paris has been rich in topographical historians, and, indeed, in her chroniclers in all departments, and there is no end of relative matter which may be evolved from an intimacy with these sources of supply. In a way, however, this information ought to be supplemented by a personal knowledge on the part of the compiler, which should make localities, distances, and environments – to say nothing of the actual facts and dates of history – appear as something more than a shrine to be worshipped from afar.

Given, then, these ingredients, with a love of the subject, – no less than of the city of its domicile, – it has formed a pleasant itinerary in the experiences of the writer of this book to have followed in the footsteps of Dumas *père*, through the streets that he knew and loved, taking note meanwhile of such contemporary shadows as were thrown across his path, and such events of importance or significance as blended in with the scheme of the literary life of the times in which he lived, none the less than of those of the characters in his books.

Nearly all the great artists have adored Paris – poets, painters, actors, and, above all, novelists.

From which it follows that Paris is the ideal city for the novelist, who, whether he finds his special subjects in her streets or not, must be inspired by this unique fulness and variety of human life. Nearly all the great French novelists have adored

Paris. Dumas loved it; Victor Hugo spent years of his time in riding about her streets on omnibuses; Daudet said splendid things of it, and nearly, if not quite, all the great names of the artistic world of France are indissolubly linked with it.

Paris to-day means not “La Ville,” “La Cité,” or “L’Université,” but the whole triumvirate. Victor Hugo very happily compared the three cities to a little old woman between two handsome, strapping daughters.

It was Beranger who announced his predilection for Paris as a birthplace. Dumas must have felt something of the same emotion, for he early gravitated to the “City of Liberty and Equality,” in which – even before the great Revolution – misfortune was at all times alleviated by sympathy.

From the stones of Paris have been built up many a lordly volume – and many a slight one, for that matter – which might naturally be presumed to have recounted the last word which may justifiably have been said concerning the various aspects of the life and historic events which have encircled around the city since the beginning of the *moyen age*.

This is true or not, according as one embraces a wide or a contracted horizon in one’s view.

For most books there is, or was at the time of their writing, a reason for being, and so with familiar spots, as with well-worn roads, there is always a new panorama projecting itself before one.

The phenomenal, perennial, and still growing interest in the

romances of Dumas the elder is the excuse for the present work, which it is to be hoped is admittedly a good one, however far short of exhaustiveness – a much overworked word, by the way – the volume may fall.

It were not possible to produce a complete or “exhaustive” work on any subject of a historical, topographical or æsthetic nature: so why claim it? The last word has not yet been said on Dumas himself, and surely not on Paris – no more has it on Pompeii, where they are still finding evidences of a long lost civilization as great as any previously unearthed.

It was only yesterday, too (this is written in the month of March, 1904), that a party of frock-coated and silk-hatted benevolent-looking gentlemen were seen issuing from a manhole in the *Université quartier* of Paris. They had been inspecting a newly discovered *thermale établissement* of Roman times, which led off one of the newly opened subterranean arteries which abound beneath Paris.

It is said to be a rival of the Roman bath which is enclosed within the walls of the present Musée Cluny, and perhaps the equal in size and splendour of any similar remains extant.

This, then, suggests that in every land new ground, new view-points, and new conditions of life are making possible a record which, to have its utmost value, should be a progressively chronological one.

And after this manner the present volume has been written. There is a fund of material to draw upon, historic fact, pertinent

and contemporary side-lights, and, above all, the environment which haloed itself around the personality of Dumas, which lies buried in many a *cache* which, if not actually inaccessible, is at least not to be found in the usual books of reference.

Perhaps some day even more will have been collected, and a truly satisfying biographical work compiled. If so, it will be the work of some ardent Frenchman of a generation following that in which Alexandre Dumas lived, and not by one of the contemporaries of even his later years. Albert Vandam, perhaps, might have done it as it should have been done; but he did not do so, and so an intimate personal record has been lost.

Paris has ever been written down in the book of man as the city of light, of gaiety, and of a trembling vivacity which has been in turn profligate, riotous, and finally criminal.

All this is perhaps true enough, but no more in degree than in most capitals which have endured so long, and have risen to such greatness.

With Paris it is quantity, with no sacrifice of quality, that has placed it in so preëminent a position among great cities, and the life of Paris – using the phrase in its most commonly recognized aspect – is accordingly more brilliant or the reverse, as one views it from the *boulevards* or from the *villettes*.

French writers, the novelists in particular, have well known and made use of this; painters and poets, too, have perpetuated it in a manner which has not been applied to any other city in the world.

To realize the conditions of the life of Paris to the full one has to go back to Rousseau – perhaps even farther. His observation that “*Les maisons font la ville, mais le citoyens font la cité,*” was true when written, and it is true to-day, with this modification, that the delimitation of the confines of *la ville* should be extended so far as to include all workaday Paris – the shuffling, bustling world of energy and spirit which has ever insinuated itself into the daily life of the people.

The love and knowledge of Alexandre Dumas *père* for Paris was great, and the accessory and detail of his novels, so far as he drew upon the capital, was more correct and apropos. It was something more than a mere dash of local colour scattered upon the canvas from a haphazard palette. In *minutiæ* it was not drawn as fine as the later Zola was wont to accomplish, but it showed no less detail did one but comprehend its full meaning.

Though born in the provincial town Villers-Cotterets, – seventy-eight kilomètres from Paris on the road to Soissons, – Dumas came early in touch with the metropolis, having in a sort of runaway journey broken loose from his old associations and finally becoming settled in the capital as a clerk in the Bureau d’Orleans, at the immature age of twenty. Thus it was that his impressions and knowledge of Paris were founded upon an experience which was prolonged and intimate, extending, with brief intervals of travel, for over fifty years.

He had journeyed meantime to Switzerland, England, Corsica, Naples, the Rhine, Belgium, – with a brief residence in

Italy in 1840-42, – then visiting Spain, Russia, the Caucasus, and Germany.

This covered a period from 1822, when he first came to Paris, until his death at Puys, near Dieppe, in 1870; nearly a full half-century amid activities in matters literary, artistic, and social, which were scarce equalled in brilliancy elsewhere – before or since.

In spite of his intimate association with the affairs of the capital, – he became, it is recalled, a candidate for the Chamber of Deputies at the time of the Second Republic, – Dumas himself has recorded, in a preface contributed to a “Histoire de l’Eure,” by M. Charpillon (1879), that if he were ever to compile a history of France he should first search for *les pierres angulaires* of his edifice in the provinces.

This bespeaks a catholicity which, perhaps, after all, is, or should be, the birthright of every historical novelist.

He said further, in this really valuable and interesting contribution, which seems to have been entirely overlooked by the bibliographers, that “to write the history of France would take a hundred volumes” – and no doubt he was right, though it has been attempted in less.

And again that “the aggrandizement of Paris has only been accomplished by a weakening process having been undergone by the provinces.” The egg from which Paris grew was deposited in the nest of *la cité*, the same as are the eggs laid *par un cygne*.

He says further that in writing the history of Paris he would

have founded on “Lutetia (or Louchetia) the *Villa de Jules*, and would erect in the Place de Notre Dame a temple or altar to Ceres; at which epoch would have been erected another to Mercury, on the Mount of Ste. Geneviève; to Apollo in the Rue de la Barillerie, where to-day is erected that part of Tuileries built by Louis XIV., and which is called *Le Pavillon de Flore*.

“Then one would naturally follow with *Les Thermes de Julien*, which grew up from the *Villa de Jules*; the reunion under Charlemagne which accomplished the Sorbonne (*Sora bona*), which in turn became the favourite place of residence of Hugues Capet, the stronghold of Philippe-Auguste, the *bibliothèque* of Charles V., the monumental capital of Henri VI. d’Angleterre; and so on through the founding of the first printing establishment in France by Louis XI.; the new school of painting by François I.; of the Académie by Richelieu; ... to the final curtailment of monarchical power with the horrors of the Revolution and the significant events which centred around the Bastille, Versailles, and the Tuileries.”

Leaving the events of the latter years of the eighteenth century, and coming to the day in which Dumas wrote (1867), Paris was truly – and in every sense —

“The capital of France, and its history became not only the history of France but the history of the world... The city will yet become the capital of humanity, and, since Napoleon repudiated his provincial residences and made Paris *sa résidence impériale*, the man of destiny who reigns in Paris in reality reigns throughout

the universe.”

There may be those who will take exception to these brilliant words of Dumas. The Frenchman has always been an ardent and *soi-disant* bundle of enthusiasm, but those who love him must pardon his pride, which is harmless to himself and others alike, and is a far more admirable quality than the indifference and apathy born of other lands.

His closing words are not without a cynical truth, and withal a pride in Paris:

“It is true that if we can say with pride, we Parisians, ‘It was Paris which overthrew the Bastille,’ you of the provinces can say with equal pride, ‘It was we who made the Revolution.’”

As if to ease the hurt, he wrote further these two lines only:

“At this epoch the sister nations should erect a gigantic statue of Peace. This statue will be Paris, and its pedestal will represent *La Province*.”

His wish – it was not prophecy – did not, however, come true, as the world in general and France and poor rent Alsace et Lorraine in particular know to their sorrow; and all through a whim of a self-appointed, though weakling, monarch.

The era of the true peace of the world and the monument to its glory came when the French nation presented to the New World that grand work of Bartholdi, “Liberty Enlightening the World,” which stands in New York harbour, and whose smaller replica now terminates the Allée des Cygnes.

The grasp that Dumas had of the events of romance and

history served his purpose well, and in the life of the fifties in Paris his was a name and personality that was on everybody's lips.

How he found time to live the full life that he did is a marvel; it certainly does not bear out the theory of heredity when one considers the race of his birth and the "dark-skinned" language which was supposedly his heritage.

One edition of his work comprises two hundred and seventy-seven volumes, and within the year a London publisher has announced some sixty volumes "never before translated." Dumas himself has said that he was the author of over seven hundred works.

In point of time his romances go back to the days of the house of Valois and the Anglo-French wars (1328), and to recount their contents is to abstract many splendid chapters from out the pages of French history.

It would seem as though nearly every personage of royalty and celebrity (if these democratic times will allow the yoking together of the two; real genuine *red* republicans would probably link royalty and notoriety) stalked majestically through his pages, and the record runs from the fourteenth nearly to the end of the nineteenth century, with the exception of the reign of Louis XI.

An ardent admirer of Sir Walter Scott has commented upon this lapse as being accounted for by the apparent futility of attempting to improve upon "Quentin Durward." This is interesting, significant, and characteristic, but it is not charitable, generous, or broad-minded.

## CHAPTER II.

# DUMAS' EARLY LIFE IN PARIS

At fifteen (1817), Dumas entered the law-office of one Mennesson at Villers-Cotterets as a *saute-ruisseau* (gutter-snipe), as he himself called it, and from this time on he was forced to forego what had been his passion heretofore: bird-catching, shooting, and all manner of woodcraft.

When still living at Villers-Cotterets Dumas had made acquaintance with the art of the dramatist, so far as it was embodied in the person of Adolphe de Leuven, with whom he collaborated in certain immature melodramas and vaudevilles, which De Leuven himself took to Paris for disposal.

“No doubt managers would welcome them with enthusiasm,” said Dumas, “and likely enough we shall divert a branch of that Pactolus River which is irrigating the domains of M. Scribe” (1822).

Later on in his “Mémoires” he says: “Complete humiliation; we were refused everywhere.”

From Villers-Cotterets the scene of Dumas' labours was transferred to Crépy, three and a half leagues distant, a small town to which he made his way on foot, his belongings in a little bundle “*not more bulky than that of a Savoyard when he leaves his native mountains.*”

In his new duties, still as a lawyer's clerk, Dumas found life very wearisome, and, though the ancient capital of the Valois must have made an impress upon him, – as one learns from the Valois romances, – he pined for the somewhat more free life which he had previously lived; or, taking the bull by the horns, deliberated as to how he might get into the very vortex of things by pushing on to the capital.

As he tritely says, “To arrive it was necessary to make a start,” and the problem was how to arrive in Paris from Crépy in the existing condition of his finances.

By dint of ingenuity and considerable activity Dumas left Crépy in company with a friend on a sort of a runaway holiday, and made his third entrance into Paris.

It would appear that Dumas' culinary and gastronomic capabilities early came into play, as we learn from the “Mémoires” that, when he was not yet out of his teens, and serving in the notary's office at Crépy, he proposed to his colleague that they take this three days' holiday in Paris.

They could muster but thirty-five francs between them, so Dumas proposed that they should shoot game *en route*. Said Dumas, “We can kill, shall I say, one hare, two partridges, and a quail... We reach Dammartin, get the hinder part of our hare roasted and the front part jugged, then we eat and drink.” “And what then?” said his friend. “What then? Bless you, why we pay for our wine, bread, and seasoning with the two partridges, and we tip the waiter with the quail.”

The journey was accomplished in due order, and he and his friend put up at the Hôtel du Vieux-Augustins, reaching there at ten at night.

In the morning he set out to find his collaborateur De Leuven, but the fascination of Paris was such that it nearly made him forswear regard for the flight of time.

He says of the Palais Royale: "I found myself within its courtyard, and stopped before the Theatre Français, and on the bill I saw:

**“Demain, Lundi**

**Sylla**

**Tragédie dans cinq Actes**

**Par M. de Jouy’**

“I solemnly swore that by some means or other ... I would see Sylla, and all the more so because, in large letters, under the above notice, were the words, ‘The character of Sylla will be taken by M. Talma.’”

In his “Mémoires” Dumas states that it was at this time he had the temerity to call on the great Talma. “Talma was short-sighted,” said he, “and was at his toilet; his hair was close cut, and his aspect under these conditions was remarkably un-poetic... Talma was for me a god – a god unknown, it is true, as was Jupiter to Semele.”

And here comes a most delicious bit of Dumas himself, Dumas the egotist:

“Ah, Talma! were you but twenty years younger or I twenty years older! I know the past, you cannot foretell the future... Had you known, Talma, that the hand you had just touched would ultimately write sixty or eighty dramas ... in each of which you would have found the material for a marvellous creation...”

Dumas may be said to have at once entered the world of art and letters in this, his third visit to Paris, which took place so early in life, but in the years so ripe with ambition.

Having seen the great Talma in Sylla, in his dressing-room at the Theatre Français, he met Delavigne, who was then just completing his “Ecole des Viellards,” Lucien Arnault, who had just brought out “Regulus;” Soumet, fresh from the double triumph of “Saul” and “Clymnestre;” here, too, were Lemercier, Delrien, Viennet, and Jouy himself; and he had met at the Café du Roi, Theadlon, Francis, Rochefort, and De Merle; indeed by his friend De Leuven he was introduced to the assemblage there as a “future Corneille,” in spite of the fact that he was but a notary’s clerk.

Leaving what must have been to Dumas *the presence*, he shot a parting remark, “Ah, yes, I shall come to Paris for good, I warrant you that.”

In “The Taking of the Bastille” Dumas traces again, in the characters of Pitou and old Father Billot, much of the route which he himself took on his first visit to Paris. The journey, then, is recounted from first-hand information, and there will be no difficulty on the part of any one in tracing the similarity of the itinerary.

Chapter I., of the work in question, brings us at once on familiar ground, and gives a description of Villers-Cotterets and its inhabitants in a manner which shows Dumas’ hand so unmistakably as to remove any doubts as to the volume of assistance he may have received from others, on this particular book at least.

“On the borders of Picardy and the province of Soissons, and on that part of the national territory which, under the name of the Isle of France, formed a portion of the ancient patrimony of our kings, and in the centre of an immense crescent, formed by a forest of fifty thousand acres, which stretches its horns to the north and south, rises, almost buried amid the shades of a vast park planted by François I. and Henri II., the small city of Villers-Cotterets. This place is celebrated from having given birth to Charles Albert Demoustier, who, at the period when our present history commences, was there writing his Letters to Emilie on Mythology, to the unbounded satisfaction of the pretty

women of those days, who eagerly snatched his publications from each other as soon as printed.

“Let us add, to complete the poetical reputation of this little city, whose detractors, notwithstanding its royal château and its two thousand four hundred inhabitants, obstinately persist in calling it a mere village – let us add, we say, to complete its poetical reputation, that it is situated at two leagues distance from Laferte-Milan, where Racine was born, and eight leagues from Château-Thierry, the birthplace of La Fontaine.

“Let us also state that the mother of the author of ‘Britannicus’ and ‘Athalie’ was from Villers-Cotterets.

“But now we must return to its royal château and its two thousand four hundred inhabitants.

“This royal château, begun by François I., whose salamanders still decorate it, and finished by Henri II., whose cipher it bears entwined with that of Catherine de Medici and encircled by the three crescents of Diana of Poitiers, after having sheltered the loves of the knight king with Madame d’Etampes, and those of Louis Philippe of Orleans with the beautiful Madame de Montesson, had become almost uninhabited since the death of this last prince; his son, Philippe d’Orleans, afterward called Egalité, having made it descend from the rank of a royal residence to that of a mere hunting rendezvous.

“It is well known that the château and forest of Villers-Cotterets formed part of the appanage settled by Louis XIV. on his brother Monsieur, when the second son of Anne of

Austria married the sister of Charles II., the Princess Henrietta of England.

“As to the two thousand four hundred inhabitants of whom we have promised our readers to say a word, they were, as in all localities where two thousand four hundred people are united, a heterogeneous assemblage.

“Firstly: Of the few nobles, who spent their summers in the neighbouring châteaux and their winters in Paris, and who, mimicking the prince, had only a lodging-place in the city.

“Secondly: Of a goodly number of citizens, who could be seen, let the weather be what it might, leaving their houses after dinner, umbrella in hand, to take their daily walk, a walk which was regularly bounded by a deep, invisible ditch which separated the park from the forest, situated about a quarter of a league from the town, and which was called, doubtless on account of the exclamation which the sight of it drew from the asthmatic lungs of the promenaders, satisfied at finding themselves not too much out of breath, the ‘Ha, ha!’

“Thirdly: Of a considerably greater number of artisans who worked the whole of the week and only allowed themselves to take a walk on the Sunday; whereas their fellow townsmen, more favoured by fortune, could enjoy it every day.

“Fourthly and finally: Of some miserable proletarians, for whom the week had not even a Sabbath, and who, after having toiled six days in the pay of the nobles, the citizens, or even of the artisans, wandered on the seventh day through the forest to

gather up dry wood or branches of the lofty trees, torn from them by the storm, that mower of the forest, to whom oak-trees are but ears of wheat, and which it scattered over the humid soil beneath the lofty trees, the magnificent appanage of a prince.

“If Villers-Cotterets (Villerii ad Cotiam Retiæ) had been, unfortunately, a town of sufficient importance in history to induce archæologists to ascertain and follow up its successive changes from a village to a town and from a town to a city – the last, as we have said, being strongly contested, they would certainly have proved this fact, that the village had begun by being a row of houses on either side of the road from Paris to Soissons; then they would have added that its situation on the borders of a beautiful forest having, though by slow degrees, brought to it a great increase of inhabitants, other streets were added to the first, diverging like the rays of a star and leading toward other small villages with which it was important to keep up communication, and converging toward a point which naturally became the centre, that is to say, what in the provinces is called *Le Carrefour*, – and sometimes even the Square, whatever might be its shape, – and around which the handsomest buildings of the village, now become a burgh, were erected, and in the middle of which rises a fountain, now decorated with a quadruple dial; in short, they would have fixed the precise date when, near the modest village church, the first want of a people, arose the first turrets of the vast château, the last caprice of a king; a château which, after having been, as we have already said,

by turns a royal and a princely residence, has in our days become a melancholy and hideous receptacle for mendicants under the direction of the Prefecture of the Seine, and to whom M. Marrast issues his mandates through delegates of whom he has not, nor probably will ever have, either the time or the care to ascertain the names.”

The last sentence seems rather superfluous, – if it was justifiable, – but, after all, no harm probably was done, and Dumas as a rule was never vituperative.

Continuing, these first pages give us an account of the difficulties under which poor Louis Ange Pitou acquired his knowledge of Latin, which is remarkably like the account which Dumas gives in the “Mémoires” of his early acquaintance with the classics.

When Pitou leaves Haramont, his native village, and takes to the road, and visits Billot at “Bruyere aux Loups,” knowing well the road, as he did that to Dampoux, Compiègne, and Vivières, he was but covering ground equally well known to Dumas’ own youth.

Finally, as he is joined by Billot *en route* for Paris, and takes the highroad from Villers-Cotterets, near Gondeville, passing Nanteuil, Dammartin, and Ermenonville, arriving at Paris at La Villette, he follows almost the exact itinerary taken by the venturesome Dumas on his runaway journey from the notary’s office at Crépy-en-Valois.

Crépy-en-Valois was the near neighbour of Villers-Cotterets,

which jealously attempted to rival it, and does even to-day. In “The Taking of the Bastille” Dumas only mentions it in connection with Mother Sabot’s *âne*, “which was shod,” – the only ass which Pitou had ever known which wore shoes, – and performed the duty of carrying the mails between Crépy and Villers-Cotterets.

At Villers-Cotterets one may come into close contact with the château which is referred to in the later pages of the “Vicomte de Bragelonne.” “Situated in the middle of the forest, where we shall lead a most sentimental life, the very same where my grandfather,” said Monseigneur the Prince, “Henri IV. did with ‘La Belle Gabrielle.’”

So far as lion-hunting goes, Dumas himself at an early age appears to have fallen into it. He recalls in “Mes Mémoires” the incident of Napoleon I. passing through Villers-Cotterets just previous to the battle of Waterloo.

“Nearly every one made a rush for the emperor’s carriage,” said he; “naturally I was one of the first... Napoleon’s pale, sickly face seemed a block of ivory... He raised his head and asked, ‘Where are we?’ ‘At Villers-Cotterets, Sire,’ said a voice. ‘Go on.’” Again, a few days later, as we learn from the “Mémoires,” “a horseman coated with mud rushes into the village; orders four horses for a carriage which is to follow, and departs... A dull rumble draws near ... a carriage stops... ‘Is it he – the emperor?’ Yes, it was the emperor, in the same position as I had seen him before, exactly the same, pale, sickly, impassive; only the head

droops rather more... ‘Where are we?’ he asked. ‘At Villers-Cotterets, Sire.’ ‘Go on.’”

That evening Napoleon slept at the Elysée. It was but three months since he had returned from Elba, but in that time he came to an abyss which had engulfed his fortune. That abyss was Waterloo; only saved to the allies – who at four in the afternoon were practically defeated – by the coming up of the Germans at six.

Among the books of reference and contemporary works of a varying nature from which a writer in this generation must build up his facts anew, is found a wide difference in years as to the date of the birth of Dumas *père*.

As might be expected, the weight of favour lies with the French authorities, though by no means do they, even, agree among themselves.

His friends have said that no unbiassed, or even complete biography of the author exists, even in French; and possibly this is so. There is about most of them a certain indefiniteness and what Dumas himself called the “colour of sour grapes.”

The exact date of his birth, however, is unquestionably 1802, if a photographic reproduction of his natal certificate, published in Charles Glinel’s “Alex. Dumas et Son Œuvre,” is what it seems to be.

Dumas’ aristocratic parentage – for such it truly was – has been the occasion of much scoffing and hard words. He pretended not to it himself, but it was founded on family history,

as the records plainly tell, and whether Alexandre, the son of the brave General Dumas, the Marquis de la Pailleterie, was prone to acknowledge it or not does not matter in the least. The “feudal particle” existed plainly in his pedigree, and with no discredit to any concerned.

General Dumas, his wife, and his son are buried in the cemetery of Villers-Cotterets, where the exciting days of the childhood of Dumas, the romancer, were spent, in a plot of ground “conceded in perpetuity to the family.” The plot forms a rectangle six metres by five, surrounded by towering pines.

The three monuments contained therein are of the utmost simplicity, each consisting of an inclined slab of stone.

The inscriptions are as follows:

FAMILLE	ALEXANDRE	DUMAS
Thomas-Alexandre	Marie-Louise-Elizabeth	Alexandre Dumas
Dumas	Labouret	né à Villers-Cotterets
Davy de la Pailleterie	Épouse	le 24 juillet 1802
général de division	du général de division	décédé
né à Jeremie	Dumas Davy	le 5 décembre 1870
Ile et Côte de Saint	de la Pailleterie	à Puy
Dominique	née	transféré
le 25 mars 1762,	à Villers-Cotterets	à
décédé	le 4 juillet 1769	Villers-Cotterets
à Villers-Cotterets	décédée	le
le 27 février 1806	le 1er aout 1838	15 avril 1872

There would seem to be no good reason why a book treating

of Dumas' Paris might not be composed entirely of quotations from Dumas' own works. For a fact, such a work would be no less valuable as a record than were it evolved by any other process. It would indeed be the best record that could possibly be made, for Dumas' topography was generally truthful if not always precise.

There are, however, various contemporary side-lights which are thrown upon any canvas, no matter how small its area, and in this instance they seem to engulf even the personality of Dumas himself, to say nothing of his observations.

Dumas was such a part and parcel of the literary life of the times in which he lived that mention can scarce be made of any contemporary event that has not some bearing on his life or work, or he with it, from the time when he first came to the metropolis (in 1822) at the impressionable age of twenty, until the end.

It will be difficult, even, to condense the relative incidents which entered into his life within the confines of a single volume, to say nothing of a single chapter. The most that can be done is to present an abridgment which shall follow along the lines of some preconceived chronological arrangement. This is best compiled from Dumas' own words, leaving it to the additional references of other chapters to throw a sort of reflected glory from a more distant view-point.

The reputation of Dumas with the merely casual reader rests upon his best-known romances, "Monte Cristo," 1841; "Les Trois Mousquetaires," 1844; "Vingt Ans Après," 1845; "Le Vicomte de Bragelonne," 1847; "La Dame de Monsoreau,"

1847; and his dramas of “Henri III. et Sa Cour,” 1829, “Antony,” 1831, and “Kean,” 1836.

His memoirs, “Mes Mémoires,” are practically closed books to the mass of English readers – the word books is used advisedly, for this remarkable work is composed of twenty stout volumes, and they only cover ten years of the author’s life.

Therein is a mass of fact and fancy which may well be considered as fascinating as are the “romances” themselves, and, though autobiographic, one gets a far more satisfying judgment of the man than from the various warped and distorted accounts which have since been published, either in French or English.

Beginning with “Memories of My Childhood” (1802-06), Dumas launches into a few lines anent his first visit to Paris, in company with his father, though the auspicious – perhaps significant – event took place at a very tender age. It seems remarkable that he should have recalled it at all, but he was a remarkable man, and it seems not possible to ignore his words.

“We set out for Paris, ah, that journey! I recollect it perfectly... It was August or September, 1805. We got down in the Rue Thiroux at the house of one Dollé... I had been embraced by one of the most noble ladies who ever lived, Madame la Marquise de Montesson, widow of Louis-Philippe d’Orleans... The next day, putting Brune’s sword between my legs and Murat’s hat upon my head, I galloped around the table; when my father said, ‘*Never forget this, my boy.*’... My father consulted Corvisart, and attempted to see the emperor, but

Napoleon, the quondam general, had now become the emperor, and he refused to see my father... To where did we return? I believe Villers-Cotterets.”

Again on the 26th of March, 1813, Dumas entered Paris in company with his mother, now widowed. He says of this visit:

“I was delighted at the prospect of this my second visit... I have but one recollection, full of light and poetry, when, with a flourish of trumpets, a waving of banners, and shouts of ‘Long live the King of Rome,’ was lifted up above the heads of fifty thousand of the National Guard the rosy face and the fair, curly head of a child of three years – the infant son of the great Napoleon... Behind him was his mother, – that woman so fatal to France, as have been all the daughters of the Cæsars, Anne of Austria, Marie Antoinette, and Marie Louise, – an indistinct, insipid face... The next day we started home again.”

Through the influence of General Foy, an old friend of his father’s, Dumas succeeded in obtaining employment in the Orleans Bureau at the Palais Royal.

His occupation there appears not to have been unduly arduous. The offices were in the right-hand corner of the second courtyard of the Palais Royal. He remained here in this bureau for a matter of five years, and, as he said, “loved the hour when he came to the office,” because his immediate superior, Lassagne, – a contributor to the *Drapeau Blanc*, – was the friend and intimate of Désaugiers, Théaulon, Armand Gouffé, Brozier, Rougemont, and all the vaudevillists of the time.

Dumas' meeting with the Duc d'Orleans – afterward Louis-Philippe – is described in his own words thus: “In two words I was introduced. ‘My lord, this is M. Dumas, whom I mentioned to you, General Foy’s protégé.’ ‘You are the son of a brave man,’ said the duc, ‘whom Bonaparte, it seems, left to die of starvation.’ . . . The duc gave Oudard a nod, which I took to mean, ‘He will do, he’s by no means bad for a provincial.’” And so it was that Dumas came immediately under the eye of the duc, engaged as he was at that time on some special clerical work in connection with the duc’s provincial estates.

The affability of Dumas, so far as he himself was concerned, was a foregone conclusion. In the great world in which he moved he knew all sorts and conditions of men. He had his enemies, it is true, and many of them, but he himself was the enemy of no man. To English-speaking folk he was exceedingly agreeable, because, – quoting his own words, – said he, “It was a part of the debt which I owed to Shakespeare and Scott.” Something of the egoist here, no doubt, but gracefully done nevertheless.

With his temperament it was perhaps but natural that Dumas should have become a romancer. This was of itself, maybe, a foreordained sequence of events, but no man thinks to-day that, leaving contributory conditions, events, and opportunities out of the question, he shapes his own fate; there are accumulated heritages of even distant ages to contend with. In Dumas’ case there was his heritage of race and colour, refined, perhaps, by a long drawn out process, but, as he himself tells in “Mes

Mémoires,” his mother’s fear was that her child would be born black, and he *was*, or, at least, purple, as he himself afterward put it.

## CHAPTER III.

# DUMAS' LITERARY CAREER

Just how far Dumas' literary ability was an inheritance, or growth of his early environment, will ever be an open question. It is a manifest fact that he had breathed something of the spirit of romance before he came to Paris.

Although it was not acknowledged until 1856, "The Wolf-Leader" was a development of a legend told to him in his childhood. Recalling then the incident of his boyhood days, and calling into recognition his gift of improvisation, he wove a tale which reflected not a little of the open-air life of the great forest of Villers-Cotterets, near the place of his birth.

Here, then, though it was fifty years after his birth, and thirty after he had thrust himself on the great world of Paris, the scenes of his childhood were reproduced in a wonderfully romantic and weird tale – which, to the best of the writer's belief, has not yet appeared in English.

To some extent it is possible that there is not a little of autobiography therein, not so much, perhaps, as Dickens put into "David Copperfield," but the suggestion is thrown out for what it may be worth.

It is, furthermore, possible that the historic associations of the town of Villers-Cotterets – which was but a little village set in

the midst of the surrounding forest – may have been the prime cause which influenced and inspired the mind of Dumas toward the romance of history.

In point of chronology, among the earliest of the romances were those that dealt with the fortunes of the house of Valois (fourteenth century), and here, in the little forest town of Villers-Cotterets, was the magnificent manor-house which belonged to the Ducs de Valois; so it may be presumed that the sentiment of early associations had somewhat to do with these literary efforts.

All his life Dumas devotedly admired the sentiment and fancies which foregathered in this forest, whose very trees and stones he knew so well. From his “Mémoires” we learn of his indignation at the destruction of its trees and much of its natural beauty. He says:

“This park, planted by François I., was cut down by Louis-Philippe. Trees, under whose shade once reclined François I. and Madame d’Etampes, Henri II. and Diane de Poitiers, Henri IV. and Gabrielle d’Estrées – you would have believed that a Bourbon would have respected you. But over and above your inestimable value of poetry and memories, you had, unhappily, a material value. You beautiful beeches with your polished silvery cases! you beautiful oaks with your sombre wrinkled bark! – you were worth a hundred thousand crowns. The King of France, who, with his six millions of private revenue, was too poor to keep you – the King of France sold you. For my part, had you been my sole possession, I would have preserved you; for, poet as I am, one

thing that I would set before all the gold of the earth: the murmur of the wind in your leaves; the shadow that you made to flicker beneath my feet; the visions, the phantoms, which, at eventide, betwixt the day and night, in the doubtful hour of twilight, would glide between your age-long trunks as glide the shadows of the ancient Abencerrages amid the thousand columns of Cordova's royal mosque."

What wonder, with these lines before one, that the impressionable Dumas was so taken with the romance of life and so impracticable in other ways.

From the fact that no thorough biography of Dumas exists, it will be difficult to trace the fluctuations of his literary career with preciseness. It is not possible even with the twenty closely packed volumes of the "Mémoires" – themselves incomplete – before one. All that a biographer can get from this treasure-house are facts, – rather radiantly coloured in some respects, but facts nevertheless, – which are put together in a not very coherent or compact form.

They do, to be sure, recount many of the incidents and circumstances attendant upon the writing and publication of many of his works, and because of this they immediately become the best of all sources of supply. It is to be regretted that these "Mémoires" have not been translated, though it is doubtful if any publisher of English works could get his money back from the transaction.

Other clues as to his emotions, and with no uncertain

references to incidents of Dumas' literary career, are found in "Mes Bêtes," "Ange Pitou," the "Causeries," and the "Travels." These comprise many volumes not yet translated.

Dumas was readily enough received into the folds of the great. Indeed, as we know, he made his *entrée* under more than ordinary, if not exceptional, circumstances, and his connection with the great names of literature and statecraft extended from Hugo to Garibaldi.

As for his own predilections in literature, Dumas' own voice is practically silent, though we know that he was a romanticist pure and simple, and drew no inspiration or encouragement from Voltairian sentiments. If not essentially religious, he at least believed in its principles, though, as a warm admirer has said, "He had no liking for the celibate and bookish life of the churchman."

Dumas does not enter deeply into the subject of ecclesiasticism in France. His most elaborate references are to the Abbey of Ste. Genevieve – since disappeared in favour of the hideous pagan Panthéon – and its relics and associations, in "La Dame de Monsoreau." Other of the romances from time to time deal with the subject of religion more or less, as was bound to be, considering the times of which he wrote, of Mazarin, Richelieu, De Rohan, and many other churchmen.

Throughout the thirties Dumas was mostly occupied with his plays, the predominant, if not the most sonorous note, being sounded by "Antony."

As a novelist his star shone brightest in the decade following, commencing with “Monte Cristo,” in 1841, and continuing through “Le Vicomte de Bragelonne” and “La Dame de Monsoreau,” in 1847.

During these strenuous years Dumas produced the flower of his romantic garland – omitting, of course, certain trivial and perhaps unworthy trifles, among which are usually considered, rightly enough, “Le Capitaine Paul” (Paul Jones) and “Jeanne d’Arc.” At this period, however, he produced the charming and exotic “Black Tulip,” which has since come to be a reality. The best of all, though, are admittedly the Mousquetaire cycle, the volumes dealing with the fortunes of the Valois line, and, again, “Monte Cristo.”

By 1830, Dumas, eager, as it were, to experience something of the valiant boisterous spirit of the characters of his romances, had thrown himself heartily into an alliance with the opponents of Louis-Philippe. Orleanist successes, however, left him to fall back upon his pen.

In 1844, having finished “Monte Cristo,” he followed it by “Les Trois Mousquetaires,” and before the end of the same year had put out forty volumes, by what means, those who will read the scurrilous “Fabrique des Romans” – and properly discount it – may learn.

The publication of “Monte Cristo” and “Les Trois Mousquetaires” as newspaper *feuilletons*, in 1844-45, met with amazing success, and were, indeed, written from day to day, to

keep pace with the demands of the press.

Here is, perhaps, an opportune moment to digress into the ethics of the profession of the “literary ghost,” and but for the fact that the subject has been pretty well thrashed out before, – not only with respect to Dumas, but to others as well, – it might justifiably be included here at some length, but shall not be, however.

The busy years from 1840-50 could indeed be “explained” – if one were sure of his facts; but beyond the circumstances, frequently availed of, it is admitted, of Dumas having made use of secretarial assistance in the productions which were ultimately to be fathered by himself, there is little but jealous and spiteful hearsay to lead one to suppose that he made any secret of the fact that he had some very considerable assistance in the production of the seven hundred volumes which, at a late period in his life, he claimed to have produced.

The “*Maquet affaire*,” of course, proclaims the whilom Augustus Mackeat as a *collaborateur*; still the ingenuity of Dumas shines forth through the warp and woof in an unmistakable manner, and he who would know more of the pros and cons is referred to the “*Maison Dumas et Cie.*”

Maquet was manifestly what we have come to know as a “hack,” though the species is not so very new – nor so very rare. The great libraries are full of them the whole world over, and very useful, though irresponsible and ungrateful persons, many of them have proved to be. Maquet, at any rate, served some sort

of a useful purpose, and he certainly was a confidant of the great romancer during these very years, but that his was the mind and hand that evolved or worked out the general plan and detail of the romances is well-nigh impossible to believe, when one has digested both sides of the question.

An English critic of no inconsiderable knowledge has thrown in his lot recently with the claims of Maquet, and given the sole and entire production of “Les Trois Mousquetaires,” “Monte Cristo,” “La Dame de Monsoreau,” and many other of Dumas’ works of this period, to him, placing him, indeed, with Shakespeare, whose plays certain gullible persons believe to have been written by Bacon. The flaw in the theory is apparent when one realizes that the said Maquet was no myth – he was, in fact, a very real person, and a literary personage of a certain ability. It is strange, then, that if he were the producer of, say “Les Trois Mousquetaires,” which was issued ostensibly as the work of Dumas, that he wrote nothing under his own name that was at all comparable therewith; and stranger still, that he was able to repeat this alleged success with “Monte Cristo,” or the rest of the Mousquetaire series, and yet not be able to do the same sort of a feat when playing the game by himself. One instance would not prove this contention, but several are likely to not only give it additional strength, but to practically demonstrate the correct conclusion.

The ethics of plagiarism are still greater and more involved than those which make justification for the employment of one

who makes a profession of *library research*, but it is too involved and too vast to enter into here, with respect to accusations of its nature which were also made against Dumas.

As that new star which has so recently risen out of the East – Mr. Kipling – has said, “They took things where they found them.” This is perhaps truthful with regard to most literary folk, who are continually seeking a new line of thought. Scott did it, rather generously one might think; even Stevenson admitted that he was greatly indebted to Washington Irving and Poe for certain of the details of “Treasure Island” – though there is absolutely no question but that it was a sort of unconscious absorption, to put it rather unscientifically. The scientist himself calls it the workings of the subconscious self.

As before said, the Maquet *affaire* was a most complicated one, and it shall have no lengthy consideration here. Suffice to say that, when a case was made by Maquet in court, in 1856-58, Maquet lost. “It is not justice that has won,” said Maquet, “but Dumas.”

Edmond About has said that Maquet lived to speak kindly of Dumas, “as did his legion of other *collaborateurs*; and the proudest of them congratulate themselves on having been trained in so good a school.” This being so, it is hard to see anything very outrageous or preposterous in the procedure.

Blaze de Bury has described Dumas’ method thus:

“The plot was worked over by Dumas and his colleague, when it was finally drafted by the other and afterward *rewritten* by

Dumas.”

M. About, too, corroborates Blaze de Bury’s statement, so it thus appears legitimately explained. Dumas at least supplied the ideas and the *esprit*.

In Dumas’ later years there is perhaps more justification for the thought that as his indolence increased – though he was never actually inert, at least not until sickness drew him down – the authorship of the novels became more complex. Blaze de Bury put them down to the “Dumas-Legion,” and perhaps with some truth. They certainly have not the vim and fire and temperament of individuality of those put forth from 1840 to 1850.

Dumas wrote fire and impetuosity into the veins of his heroes, perhaps some of his very own vivacious spirit. It has been said that his moral code was that of the camp or the theatre; but that is an ambiguity, and it were better not dissected.

Certainly he was no prude or Puritan, not more so, at any rate, than were Burns, Byron, or Poe, but the virtues of courage, devotion, faithfulness, loyalty, and friendship were his, to a degree hardly excelled by any of whom the written record of *cameraderie* exists.

Dumas has been jibed and jeered at by the supercilious critics ever since his first successes appeared, but it has not leavened his reputation as the first romancer of his time one single jot; and within the past few years we have had a revival of the character of true romance – perhaps the first *true* revival since Dumas’ time – in M. Rostand’s “Cyrano de Bergerac.”

We have had, too, the works of Zola, who, indomitable, industrious, and sincere as he undoubtedly was, will have been long forgotten when the masterpieces of Dumas are being read and reread. The Mousquetaire cycle, the Valois romances, and “Monte Cristo” stand out by themselves above all others of his works, and have had the approbation of such discerning fellow craftsmen as George Sand, Thackeray, and Stevenson, all of whom may be presumed to have judged from entirely different points of view. Thackeray, indeed, plainly indicated his greatest admiration for “La Tulipe Noire,” a work which in point of time came somewhat later. At this time Dumas had built his own Chalet de Monte Cristo near St. Germain, a sort of a Gallic rival to Abbotsford. It, and the “Théâtre Historique,” founded by Dumas, came to their disastrous end in the years immediately following upon the Revolution of 1848, when Dumas fled to Brussels and began his “Mémoires.” He also founded a newspaper called *Le Mousquetaire*, which failed, else he might have retrenched and satisfied his creditors – at least in part.

He travelled in Russia, and upon his return wrote of his journey to the Caspian. In 1860 he obtained an archæological berth in Italy, and edited a Garibaldian newspaper.

By 1864, the “Director of Excavations at Naples,” which was Dumas’ official title, fell out with the new government which had come in, and he left his partisan journal and the lava-beds of Pompeii for Paris and the literary arena again; but the virile

power of his early years was gone, and Dumas never again wielded the same pen which had limned the features of Athos, Porthos, Aramis, and D'Artagnan.

In 1844 Dumas participated in a sort of personally-conducted Bonapartist tour to the Mediterranean, in company with the son of Jerome Napoleon. On this journey Dumas first saw the island of Monte Cristo and the Château d'If, which lived so fervently in his memory that he decided that their personality should be incorporated in the famous tale which was already formulating itself in his brain.

Again, this time in company with the Duc de Montpensier, he journeyed to the Mediterranean, "did" Spain, and crossed over to Algiers. When he returned he brought back the celebrated vulture, "Jugurtha," whose fame was afterward perpetuated in "Mes Bêtes."

That there was a deal of reality in the characterization and the locale of Dumas' romances will not be denied by any who have acquaintance therewith. Dumas unquestionably took his material where he found it, and his wonderfully retentive memory, his vast capacity for work, and his wide experience and extensive acquaintance provided him material that many another would have lacked.

M. de Chaffault tells of his having accompanied Dumas by road from Sens to Joigny, Dumas being about to appeal to the republican constituency of that place for their support of him as a candidate for the parliamentary elections.

“In a short time we were on the road,” said the narrator, “and the first stage of three hours seemed to me only as many minutes. Whenever we passed a country-seat, out came a lot of anecdotes and legends connected with its owners, interlarded with quaint fancies and epigrams.”

Aside from the descriptions of the country around about Crépy, Compiègne, and Villers-Cotterets which he wove into the Valois tales, “The Taking of the Bastille,” and “The Wolf-Leader,” there is a strong note of personality in “Georges;” some have called it autobiography.

The tale opens in the far-distant Isle of France, called since the English occupation Mauritius, and in the narrative of the half-caste Georges Munier are supposed to be reflected many of the personal incidents of the life of the author.

This story may or may not be a mere repetition of certain of the incidents of the struggle of the mulatto against the barrier of the white aristocracy, and may have been an echo in Dumas’ own life. It is repeated it may have been this, or it may have been much more. Certain it is, there is an underlying motive which could only have been realized to the full extent expressed therein by one who knew and felt the pangs of the encounter with a world which only could come to one of genius who was by reason of race or creed outclassed by his contemporaries; and therein is given the most vivid expression of the rise of one who had everything against him at the start.

This was not wholly true of Dumas himself, to be sure, as he

was endowed with certain influential friends. Still it was mainly through his own efforts that he was able to prevail upon the old associates and friends of the dashing General Dumas, his father, to give him his first lift along the rough and stony literary pathway.

In this book there is a curious interweaving of the life and colour which may have had not a little to do with the actual life which obtained with respect to his ancestors, and as such, and the various descriptions of negro and Creole life, the story becomes at once a document of prime interest and importance.

Since Dumas himself has explained and justified the circumstance out of which grew the conception of the D'Artagnan romances, it is perhaps advisable that some account should be given of the original D'Artagnan.

Primarily, the interest in Dumas' romance of "Les Trois Mousquetaires" is as great, if not greater, with respect to the characters as it is with the scenes in which they lived and acted their strenuous parts. In addition, there is the profound satisfaction of knowing that the rollicking and gallant swashbuckler has come down to us from the pages of real life, as Dumas himself recounts in the preface to the Colman Lévy edition of the book. The statement of Dumas is explicit enough; there is no mistaking his words which open the preface:

**“Dans laquelle**

**Il est établi que, malgré leurs noms en *os* et en *is*,**

**Les héros de l’histoire**

**Que nous allons avoir l’honneur  
de raconter à nos lecteurs**

**N’ont rien de mythologique.”**

The contemporary facts which connect the real Comte d’Artagnan with romances are as follows:

Charles de Batz de Castlemore, Comte d’Artagnan, received his title from the little village of Artagnan, near the Gascon town of Orthez in the present department of the Hautes-Pyrénées. He was born in 1623. Dumas, with an author’s license, made his chief figure a dozen years older, for the real D’Artagnan was but five years old at the time of the siege of La Rochelle of

which Dumas makes mention. On the whole, the romance is near enough to reality to form an ample endorsement of the author's verity.

The real D'Artagnan made his way to Paris, as did he of the romance. Here he met his fellow Béarnais, one M. de Treville, captain of the king's musketeers, and the illustrious individuals, *Armand de Sillegue d'Athos*, a Béarnais nobleman who died in 1645, and whose direct descendant, Colonel de Sillegue, commanded, according to the French army lists of a recent date, a regiment of French cavalry; *Henry d'Aramitz*, lay abbé of Oloron; and *Jean de Portu*, all of them probably neighbours in D'Artagnan's old home.

D'Artagnan could not then have been at the siege of La Rochelle, but from the "Mémoires de M. d'Artagnan," of which Dumas writes in his preface, we learn of his feats at arms at Arras, Valenciennes, Douai, and Lille, all places where once and again Dumas placed the action of the novels.

The real D'Artagnan died, sword in hand, "in the imminent deadly breach" at Maestricht, in 1673. He served, too, under Prince Rupert in the Civil War, and frequently visited England, where he had an *affaire* with a certain Milady, which is again reminiscent of the pages of Dumas.

This D'Artagnan in the flesh married Charlotte Anne de Chanlecy, and the last of his direct descendants died in Paris in the latter years of the eighteenth century, but collateral branches of the family appear still to exist in Gascony, and there was a

certain Baron de Batz, a Béarnais, who made a daring attempt to save Marie Antoinette in 1793.

The inception of the whole work in Dumas' mind, as he says, came to him while he was making research in the "Bibliothèque Royale" for his history of Louis XIV.

Thus from these beginnings grew up that series of romances which gave undying fame to Alexandre Dumas, and to the world of readers a series of characters and scenes associated with the mediæval history of France, which, before or since, have not been equalled.

Alexandre Dumas has been described as something of the soldier, the cook, and the traveller, more of the journalist, diplomatist, and poet, and, more than all else, the dramatist, romancer, and *raconteur*. He himself has said that he was a "veritable Wandering Jew of literature."

His versatility in no way comprised his abilities, and, while conceit and egoism played a not unimportant share in his make-up, his affability – when he so chose – caused him to be ranked highly in the estimation of his equals and contemporaries. By the cur-dogs, which always snap at the heels of a more splendid animal, he was not ranked so high.

Certain of these were for ever twitting him publicly of his creed, race, and foibles. It is recorded by Theodore de Bauville, in his "Odes," that one Jacquot hailed Dumas in the open street with a ribald jeer, when, calmly turning to his detractor, Dumas said, simply: "Hast thou dined to-day, Jacquot?" Then it was

that this said Jacquot published the slanderous brochure, "*La Maison Dumas et Cie*," which has gone down as something considerable of a sensation in the annals of literary history; so much so, indeed, that most writers who have had occasion to refer to Dumas' literary career have apparently half-believed its accusations, which, truth to tell, may have had some bearing on "things as they were," had they but been put forward as a bit of temperate criticism rather than as a sweeping condemnation.

To give the reader an idea of the Dumas of 1840, one can scarcely do better than present his portrait as sketched by De Villemessant, the founder and brilliant editor of the *Figaro*, when Dumas was at the height of his glory, and a grasp of his hand was better than a touch of genius to those receiving it:

"At no time and among no people had it till then been granted to a writer to achieve fame in every direction; in serious drama and in comedy, and novels of adventure and of domestic interest, in humourous stories and in pathetic tales, Alexandre Dumas had been alike successful. The frequenters of the Théâtre Français owed him evenings of delight, but so did the general public as well. Dumas alone had had the power to touch, interest, or amuse, not only Paris or France, but the whole world. If all other novelists had been swallowed up in an earthquake, this one would have been able to supply the leading libraries of Europe. If all other dramatists had died, Alexandre Dumas could have occupied every stage; his magic name on a playbill or affixed to a newspaper *feuilleton* ensured the sale of that issue or a

full house at the theatre. He was king of the stage, prince of *feuilletonists*, the literary man *par excellence*, in that Paris then so full of intellect. When he opened his lips the most eloquent held their breath to listen; when he entered a room the wit of man, the beauty of woman, the pride of life, grew dim in the radiance of his glory; he reigned over Paris in right of his sovereign intellect, the only monarch who for an entire century had understood how to draw to himself the adoration of all classes of society, from the Faubourg St. Germain to the Batignolles.

“Just as he united in himself capabilities of many kinds, so he displayed in his person the perfection of many races. From the negro he had derived the frizzled hair and those thick lips on which Europe had laid a delicate smile of ever-varying meaning; from the southern races he derived his vivacity of gesture and speech, from the northern his solid frame and broad shoulders and a figure which, while it showed no lack of French elegance, was powerful enough to have made green with envy the gentlemen of the Russian Life-Guards.”

Dumas' energy and output were tremendous, as all know. It is recorded that on one occasion, – in the later years of his life, when, as was but natural, he had tired somewhat, – after a day at *la chasse*, he withdrew to a cottage near by to rest until the others should rejoin him, after having finished their sport. This they did within a reasonably short time, – whether one hour or two is not stated with definiteness, – when they found him sitting before the fire “twirling his thumbs.” On being interrogated, he

replied that he had not been sitting there long; *in fact, he had just written the first act of a new play.*

The French journal, *La Revue*, tells the following incident, which sounds new. Some years before his death, Dumas had written a somewhat quaint letter to Napoleon III., apropos of a play which had been condemned by the French censor. In this epistle he commenced:

“Sire: – In 1830, and, indeed, even to-day, there are three men at the head of French literature. These three men are Victor Hugo, Lamartine, and myself. Although I am the least of the three, the five continents have made me the most popular, probably because the one was a thinker, the other a dreamer, while I am merely a writer of commonplace tales.”

This letter goes on to plead the cause of his play, and from this circumstance the censorship was afterward removed.

A story is told of an incident which occurred at a rehearsal of “*Les Trois Mousquetaires*” at the “*Ambigu*.” This story is strangely reminiscent of another incident which happened at a rehearsal of Halévy’s “*Guido et Gênevra*,” but it is still worth recounting here, if only to emphasize the indomitable energy and perspicacity of Dumas.

It appears that a *pompier*— that gaudy, glistening fireman who is always present at functions of all sorts on the continent of Europe – who was watching the rehearsal, was observed by Dumas to suddenly leave his point of vantage and retire. Dumas followed him and inquired his reason for withdrawing.

“What made you go away?” Dumas asked of him. “Because that last act did not interest me so much as the others,” was the answer. Whereupon Dumas sent for the prompt-book and threw that portion relating to that particular tableau into the fire, and forthwith set about to rewrite it on the spot. “It does not amuse the *pompier*,” said Dumas, “but I know what it wants.” An hour and a half later, at the finish of the rehearsal, the actors were given their new words for the seventh tableau.

In spite of the varied success with which his plays met, Dumas was, we may say, first of all a dramatist, if construction of plot and the moving about of dashing and splendid figures counts for anything; and it most assuredly does.

This very same qualification is what makes the romances so vivid and thrilling; and they do not falter either in accessory or fact.

The cloaks of his swashbuckling heroes are always the correct shade of scarlet; their rapiers, their swords, or their pistols are always rightly tuned, and their entrances and their exits correctly and most appropriately timed.

When his characters represent the poverty of a tatterdemalion, they do it with a sincerity that is inimitable, and the lusty throatings of a D’Artagnan are never a hollow mockery of something they are not.

Dumas drew his characters of the stage and his personages of the romances with the brilliance and assurance of a Velasquez, rather than with the finesse of a Praxiteles, and for that reason

they live and introduce themselves as cosmopolitans, and are to be appreciated only as one studies or acquires something of the spirit from which they have been evolved.

Of Dumas' own uproarious good nature many have written. Albert Vandam tells of a certain occasion when he went to call upon the novelist at St. Germain, – and he reckoned Dumas the most lovable and genial among all of his host of acquaintances in the great world of Paris, – that he overheard, as he was entering the study, “a loud burst of laughter.” “I had sooner wait until monsieur's visitors are gone,” said he. “Monsieur has no visitors,” said the servant. “Monsieur often laughs like that at his work.”

Dumas as a man of affairs or as a politician was not the success that he was in the world of letters. His activities were great, and his enthusiasm for any turn of affairs with which he allied himself remarkable; but, whether he was *en voyage* on a whilom political mission, at work as “Director of Excavations” at Pompeii, or founding or conducting a new journal or a new playhouse, his talents were manifestly at a discount. In other words, he was singularly unfit for public life; he was not an organizer, nor had he executive ability, though he had not a little of the skill of prophecy and foresight as to many turns of fortune's wheel with respect to world power and the comity of nations.

Commenting upon the political state of Europe, he said: “Geographically, Prussia has the form of a serpent, and, like it, she appears to be asleep, in order to gain strength to swallow everything around her.” All of his prophecy was not fulfilled,

to be sure, but a huge slice was fed into her maw from out of the body of France, and, looking at things at a time fifty years ahead of that of which Dumas wrote, – that is, before the Franco-Prussian War, – it would seem as though the serpent’s appetite was still unsatisfied.

In 1847, when Dumas took upon himself to wish for a seat in the government, he besought the support of the constituency of the borough in which he had lived – St. Germain. But St. Germain denied it him – “on moral grounds.” In the following year, when Louis-Philippe had abdicated, he made the attempt once again.

The republican constituency of Joigny challenged him with respect to his title of Marquis de la Pailleterie, and his having been a secretary in the Orleans Bureau. The following is his reply – verbatim – as publicly delivered at a meeting of electors, and is given here as illustrating well the earnestness and devotion to a code which many Puritan and prudish moralists have themselves often ignored:

“I was formerly called the Marquis de la Pailleterie, no doubt. It was my father’s name, and one of which I was very proud, being then unable to claim a glorious one of my own make. But at present, when I am somebody, I call myself Alexandre Dumas, and nothing more; and every one knows me, yourselves among the rest – you, you absolute nobodies, who have come here merely to boast, to-morrow, after having given me insult to-night, that you have known the great Dumas. If such were

your avowed ambition, you could have satisfied it without having failed in the common courtesies of gentlemen. There is no doubt, either, about my having been a secretary to the Duc d'Orleans, and that I have received many favours from his family. If you are ignorant of the meaning of the phrase, 'The memories of the heart,' allow me, at least, to proclaim loudly that I am not, and that I entertain toward this family of royal blood all the devotion of an honourable man."

That Dumas was ever accused of making use of the work of others, of borrowing ideas wherever he found them, and, indeed, of plagiarism itself, – which is the worst of all, – has been mentioned before, and the argument for or against is not intended to be continued here.

Dumas himself has said much upon the subject in defence of his position, and the contemporary scribblers of the time have likewise had their say – and it was not brief; but of all that has been written and said, the following is pertinent and deliciously naïve, and, coming from Dumas himself, has value:

"One morning I had only just opened my eyes when my servant entered my bedroom and brought me a letter upon which was written the word *urgent*. He drew back the curtains; the weather – doubtless by some mistake – was fine, and the brilliant sunshine entered the room like a conqueror. I rubbed my eyes and looked at the letter to see who had sent it, astonished at the same time that there should be only one. The handwriting was quite unknown to me. Having turned it over and over for a minute

or two, trying to guess whose the writing was, I opened it and this is what I found:

“Sir: – I have read your “Three Musketeers,” being well to do, and having plenty of spare time on my hands – ’

“(‘Lucky fellow!’ said I; and I continued reading.)

“I admit that I found it fairly amusing; but, having plenty of time before me, I was curious enough to wish to know if you really did find them in the “Memoirs of M. de La Fère.” As I was living in Carcassonne, I wrote to one of my friends in Paris to go to the Bibliothèque Royale, and ask for these memoirs, and to write and let me know if you had really and truly borrowed your facts from them. My friend, whom I can trust, replied that you had copied them word for word, and that it is what you authors always do. So I give you fair notice, sir, that I have told people all about it at Carcassonne, and, if it occurs again, we shall cease subscribing to the *Siècle*.

“*Yours sincerely,*

“–.’

“I rang the bell.

“‘If any more letters come for me to-day,’ said I to the servant, ‘you will keep them back, and only give them to me sometime when I seem a bit too happy.’

“‘Manuscripts as well, sir?’

“‘Why do you ask that question?’

“‘Because some one has brought one this very moment.’

“‘Good! that is the last straw! Put it somewhere where it won’t

be lost, but don't tell me where.'

"He put it on the mantelpiece, which proved that my servant was decidedly a man of intelligence.

"It was half-past ten; I went to the window. As I have said, it was a beautiful day. It appeared as if the sun had won a permanent victory over the clouds. The passers-by all looked happy, or, at least, contented.

"Like everybody else, I experienced a desire to take the air elsewhere than at my window, so I dressed, and went out.

"As chance would have it – for when I go out for a walk I don't care whether it is in one street or another – as chance would have it, I say, I passed the Bibliothèque Royale.

"I went in, and, as usual, found Pâris, who came up to me with a charming smile.

"'Give me,' said I, 'the "Memoirs of La Fère."' "

"He looked at me for a moment as if he thought I was crazy; then, with the utmost gravity, he said, 'You know very well they don't exist, because you said yourself they did!'

"His speech, though brief, was decidedly pithy.

"By way of thanks I made Pâris a gift of the autograph I had received from Carcassonne.

"When he had finished reading it, he said, 'If it is any consolation to you to know it, you are not the first who has come to ask for the "Memoirs of La Fère"; I have already seen at least thirty people who came solely for that purpose, and no doubt they hate you for sending them on a fool's errand.'

“As I was in search of material for a novel, and as there are people who declare novels are to be found ready-made, I asked for the catalogue.

“Of course, I did not discover anything.”

Every one knows of Dumas' great fame as a gastronome and epicure; some recall, also, that he himself was a *cuisinier* of no mean abilities. How far his capacities went in this direction, and how wide was his knowledge of the subject, can only be gleaned by a careful reading of his great “Dictionnaire de Cuisine.” Still further into the subject he may be supposed to have gone from the fact that he also published an inquiry, or an open letter, addressed to the *gourmands* of all countries, on the subject of mustard.

It is an interesting subject, to be sure, but a trifling one for one of the world's greatest writers to spend his time upon; say you, dear reader? Well! perhaps! But it is a most fascinating contribution to the literature of epicurism, and quite worth looking up and into. The history of the subtle spice is traced down through Biblical and Roman times to our own day, chronologically, etymologically, botanically, and practically. It will be, and doubtless has been, useful to other compilers of essays on good cheer.

Whatever may be the subtle abilities which make the true romancer, or rather those which make his romances things of life and blood, they were possessed by Alexandre Dumas.

Perhaps it is the more easy to construct a romantic play than it is to erect, from matter-of-fact components, a really engrossing

romantic novel. Dumas' abilities seem to fit in with both varieties alike, and if he did build to order, the result was in most cases no less successful than if evolved laboriously.

It is a curious fact that many serial contributions – if we are to believe the literary gossip of the time – are only produced as the printer is waiting for copy. The formula is manifestly not a good one upon which to build, but it has been done, and successfully, by more writers than one, and with scarce a gap unbridged.

Dickens did it, – if it is allowable to mention him here, – and Dumas himself did it, – many times, – and with a wonderful and, one may say, inspired facility, but then his facility, none the less than his vitality, made possible much that was not granted to the laborious Zola.

Dumas was untiring to the very last. His was a case of being literally worked out – not worked to death, which is quite a different thing.

It has been said by Dumas  *fils*  that in the latter years of the elder's life he would sit for length upon length of time, pen in hand, and not a word would flow therefrom, ere the ink had dried.

An interesting article on Dumas' last days appeared in *La Revue* in 1903. It dealt with the sadness and disappointments of Dumas' later days, in spite of which the impression conveyed of the great novelist's personality is very vivid, and he emerges from it much as his books would lead one to expect – a hearty, vigorous creature, surcharged with vitality, with desire to live and let live, a man possessed of almost equally prominent faults and virtues,

and generous to a fault.

Money he had never been able to keep. He had said himself, at a time when he was earning a fortune, "I can keep everything but money. Money unfortunately always slips through my fingers." The close of his life was a horrible struggle to make ends meet. When matters came to a crisis Dumas would pawn some of the valuable *objets d'art* he had collected in the opulent past, or ask his son for assistance. But, though the sum asked was always given, there were probably few things which the old man would not have preferred to this appeal to the younger author.

As he grew old, Dumas *père* became almost timid in his attitude toward the son, whose disapproval had frequently found expression in advice and warning. But Dumas could not settle down, and he could not become careful. Neither of these things was in his nature, and there was consequently always some little undercurrent of friction between them. To the end of his days his money was anybody's who liked to come and ask for it, and nothing but the final clouding of his intellectual capacity could reduce his optimism. Then, it is true, he fell into a state of sustained depression. The idea that his reputation would not last haunted him.

In 1870, when Dumas was already very ill, his son, anxious that he should not be in Paris during its investment by the Germans, took him to a house he had at Puys, near Dieppe. Here the great man rapidly sank, and, except at meal-times, passed his time in a state of heavy sleep, until a sudden attack of apoplexy

finally seized him. He never rallied after it, and died upon the day the Prussian soldiers took possession of Dieppe.

Many stories are rife of Dumas the prodigal. Some doubtless are true, many are not. Those which he fathers himself, we might well accept as being true. Surely he himself should know.

The following incident which happened in the last days of his life certainly has the ring of truth about it.

When in his last illness he left Paris for his son's country house near Dieppe, he had but twenty francs, the total fortune of the man who had earned millions.

On arriving at Puys, Dumas placed the coin on his bedroom chimneypiece, and there it remained all through his illness.

One day he was seated in his chair near the window, chatting with his son, when his eye fell on the gold piece.

A recollection of the past crossed his mind.

"Fifty years ago, when I went to Paris," he said, "I had a louis. Why have people accused me of prodigality? I have always kept that louis. See – there it is."

And he showed his son the coin, smiling feebly as he did so.

## CHAPTER IV.

# DUMAS' CONTEMPORARIES

Among those of the world's great names in literature contemporary with Dumas, but who knew Paris ere he first descended upon it to try his fortune in its arena of letters, were Lamartine, who already, in 1820, had charmed his public with his "Meditations;" Hugo, who could claim but twenty years himself, but who had already sung his "Odes et Ballades," and Chateaubriand.

Soulié and De Vigny won their fame with poems and plays in the early twenties, De Musset and Chénier followed before a decade had passed, and Gautier was still serving his apprenticeship.

It was the proud Goethe who said of these young men of the twenties, "They all come from Chateaubriand." Béranger, too, "the little man," even though he was drawing on toward the prime of life, was also singing melodiously: it was his *chansons*, it is said, that upset the Bourbon throne and made way for the "citizen-king." Nodier, of fanciful and fantastic rhyme, was already at work, and Mérimée had not yet taken up the administrative duties of overseeing the preserving process which at his instigation was, at the hands of a paternal government, being applied to the historical architectural

monuments throughout France; a glory which it is to be feared has never been wholly granted to Mérimée, as was his due.

Guizot, the *bête noire* of the later Louis-Philippe, was actively writing from 1825 to 1830, and his antagonist, Thiers, was at the same period producing what Carlyle called the “voluminous and untrustworthy labours of a brisk little man in his way;” which recalls to mind the fact that Carlylean rant – like most of his prose – is a well-nigh insufferable thing.

At this time Mignet, the historian, was hard at work, and St. Beuve had just deserted *materia medica* for literature. Michelet’s juvenile histories were a production of the time, while poor, unhonoured, and then unsung, Balzac was grinding out his pittance – in after years to grow into a monumental literary legacy – in a garret.

Eugène Sue had not yet taken to literary pathways, and was scouring the seas as a naval surgeon.

The drama was prolific in names which we have since known as masters, Scribe, Halévy, and others.

George Sand, too, was just beginning that grand literary life which opened with “Indiana” in 1832, and lasted until 1876. She, like so many of the great, whose name and fame, like Dumas’ own, has been perpetuated by a monument in stone, the statue which was unveiled in the little town of her birth on the Indre, La Châtre, in 1903.

Like Dumas, too, hers was a cyclopean industry, and so it followed that in the present twentieth century (in the year

1904), another and a more glorious memorial to France's greatest woman writer was unveiled in the Garden of the Luxembourg.

Among the women famous in the *monde* of Paris at the time of Dumas' arrival were Mesdames Desbordes-Valmore, Amable Tastu, and Delphine Gay.

"For more than half a century this brilliant group of men and women sustained the world of ideas and poetry," said Dumas, in his "Mémoires," "and I, too," he continued, "have reached the same plane ... unaided by intrigue or coterie, and using none other than my own work as the stepping-stone in my pathway."

Dumas cannot be said to have been niggardly with his praise of the work of others. He said of a sonnet of Arnault's – "La Feuille" – that it was a masterpiece which an André Chénier, a Lamartine, or a Hugo might have envied, and that for himself, not knowing what his "literary brothers" might have done, he would have given for it "any one of his dramas."

It was into the office of Arnault, who was chief of a department in the Université, that Béranger took up his labours as a copying-clerk, – as did Dumas in later years, – and it was while here that Béranger produced his first ballad, the "Roi d'Yvetot."

In 1851 Millet was at his height, if one considers what he had already achieved by his "great agrarian poems," as they have been called. Gautier called them "Georgics in paint," and such they undoubtedly were. Millet would hardly be called a Parisian; he was not of the life of the city, but rather of that of the

countryside, by his having settled down at Barbizon in 1849, and practically never left it except to go to Paris on business.

His life has been referred to as one of “sublime monotony,” but it was hardly that. It was a life devoted to the telling of a splendid story, that of the land as contrasted with that of the paved city streets.

Corot was a real Parisian, and it was only in his early life in the provinces that he felt the bitterness of life and longed for the flagstones of the quais, for the Tuileries, the Seine, and his beloved Rue de Bac, where he was born on 10th Thermidor, Year IV. (July 28, 1796). Corot early took to painting the scenes of the metropolis, as we learn from his biography, notably at the point along the river bank where the London steamer moors to-day. But these have disappeared; few or none of his juvenile efforts have come down to us.

Corot returned to Paris, after many years spent in Rome, during the reign of Louis-Philippe, when affairs were beginning to stir themselves in literature and art. In 1839 his “Site d’Italie” and a “Soir” were shown at the annual Salon, – though, of course, he had already been an exhibitor there, – and inspired a sonnet of Théophile Gautier, which concludes:

“Corot, ton nom modest, écrit dans un coin noir.”

Corot’s pictures *were* unfortunately hung in the darkest corners – for fifteen years. As he himself has said, it was as if

he were in the catacombs. In 1855 Corot figured as one of the thirty-four judges appointed by Napoleon III. to make the awards for paintings exhibited in the world's first Universal Exhibition. It is not remarked that Corot had any acquaintance or friendships with Dumas or with Victor Hugo, of whom he remarked, "This Victor Hugo seems to be pretty famous in literature." He knew little of his contemporaries, and the hurly-burly knew less of him. He was devoted, however, to the genius of his superiors – as he doubtless thought them. Of Delacroix he said one day, "He is an eagle, and I am only a lark singing little songs in gray clouds."

A literary event of prime importance during the latter years of Dumas' life in Paris, when his own purse was growing thin, was the publication of the "Histoire de Jules César," written by Napoleon III.

Nobody ever seems to have taken the second emperor seriously in any of his finer expressions of sentiment, and, as may be supposed, the publication of this immortal literary effort was the occasion of much sarcasm, banter, violent philippic, and sardonic criticism.

Possibly the world was not waiting for this work, but royalty, no less than other great men, have their hobbies and their fads; Nero fiddled, and the first Napoleon read novels and threw them forthwith out of the carriage window, so it was quite permissible that Napoleon III. should have perpetuated this life history of an emperor whom he may justly and truly have admired – perhaps envied, in a sort of impossible way.

Already Louis Napoleon's collection of writings was rather voluminous, so this came as no great surprise, and his literary reputation was really greater than that which had come to him since fate made him the master of one of the foremost nations of Europe.

From his critics we learn that "he lacked the grace of a popular author; that he was quite incapable of interesting the reader by a charm of manner; and that his *style* was meagre, harsh, and grating, but epigrammatic." No Frenchman could possibly be otherwise.

Dumas relates, again, the story of Sir Walter Scott's visit to Paris, seeking documents which should bear upon the reign of Napoleon. Dining with friends one evening, he was invited the next day to dine with Barras. But Scott shook his head. "I cannot dine with that man," he replied. "I shall write evil of him, and people in Scotland would say that I have flung the dishes from his own table at his head."

It is not recorded that Dumas' knowledge of swordsmanship was based on practical experience, but certainly no more scientific sword-play of *passe* and *touche* has been put into words than that wonderful attack and counter-attack in the opening pages of "Les Trois Mousquetaires."

Of the *duel d'honneur* there is less to be said, though Dumas more than once sought to reconcile estranged and impetuous spirits who would have run each other through, either by leaden bullet or the sword. A notable instance of this was in the

memorable *affaire* between Louis Blanc of *L'Homme-Libre* and Dujarrier-Beauvallon of *La Presse*. The latter told Dumas that he had no alternative but to fight, though he went like a lamb to the slaughter, and had no knowledge of the *code* nor any skill with weapons.

Dumas *père* was implored by the younger Dumas – both of whom took Dujarrier's interests much to heart – to go and see Grisier and claim his intervention. "I cannot do it," said the elder; "the first and foremost thing to do is to safeguard his reputation, which is the more precious because it is his first duel." The Grisier referred to was the great master of fence of the time who was immortalized by Dumas in his "Maître d'Armes."

Dumas himself is acknowledged, however, on one occasion, at least, to have acted as second – co-jointly with General Fleury – in an *affaire* which, happily, never came off.

It was this Blanc-Dujarrier duel which brought into further prominent notice that most remarkable and quasi-wonderful woman, Lola Montez; that daughter of a Spaniard and a Creole, a native of Limerick, pupil of a boarding-school at Bath, and one-time resident of Seville; to which may be added, on the account of Lord Malmesbury, "The woman who in Munich set fire to the magazine of revolution which was ready to burst forth all over Europe."

She herself said that she had also lived in Calcutta as the wife of an officer in the employ of the East India Company; had at one time been reduced to singing in the streets at Brussels; had

danced at the Italian Opera in London, – “not much, but as well as half the ugly wooden women who were there,” – and had failed as a dancer in Warsaw.

“This illiterate schemer,” says Vandam, “who probably knew nothing of geography or history, had pretty well the Almanach de Gotha by heart.” “Why did I not come earlier to Paris?” she once said. “What was the good? There was a king there bourgeois to his finger-nails, tight-fisted besides, and notoriously the most moral and the best father in all the world.”

This woman, it seems, was a beneficiary in the testament of Dujarrier, who died as a result of his duel, to the extent of eighteen shares in the Théâtre du Palais Royal, and in the trial which followed at Rouen, at which were present all shades and degrees of literary and professional people, Dumas, Gustave Flaubert, and others, she insisted upon appearing as a witness, for no reason whatever, apparently, than that of further notoriety. “Six months from this time,” as one learns from Vandam, “her name was almost forgotten by all of us except Alexandre Dumas, who once and again alluded to her.” “Though far from superstitious, Dumas, who had been as much smitten with her as most of her admirers, avowed that he was glad that she had disappeared. ‘She has the evil eye,’ said he, ‘and is sure to bring bad luck to any one who closely links his destiny with hers.’”

There is no question but that Dumas was right, for she afterward – to mention but two instances of her remarkably active career – brought disaster “most unkind” upon Louis I.

of Bavaria; committed bigamy with an English officer who was drowned at Lisbon; and, whether in the guise of lovers or husbands, all, truly, who became connected with her met with almost immediate disaster.

The mere mention of Lola Montez brings to mind another woman of the same category, though different in character, Alphonsine Plessis, more popularly known as La Dame aux Camélias. She died in 1847, and her name was not Marie or Marguérite Duplessis, but as above written.

Dumas *fils* in his play did not idealize Alphonsine Plessis' character; indeed, Dumas *père* said that he did not even enlarge or exaggerate any incident – all of which was common property in the *demi-monde*– “save that he ascribed her death to any cause but the right one.” “I know he made use of it,” said the father, “but he showed the malady aggravated by Duval's desertion.”

We learn that the elder Dumas “wept like a baby” over the reading of his son's play. But his tears did not drown his critical faculty. “At the beginning of the third act,” said Dumas *père*, “I was wondering how Alexandre would get his Marguérite back to town, ... but the way Alexandre got out of the difficulty proves that he is my son, every inch of him, and at the very outset of his career he is a better dramatist than I am ever likely to be.”

“Alphonsine Plessis was decidedly a real personage, but not an ordinary one in her walk of life,” said Doctor Véron. “A woman of her refinement might not have been impossible in a former day, because the grisette – and subsequently the *femme*

*entretenu*— was not then even surmised. She interests me much; she is the best dressed woman in Paris, she neither conceals nor hides her vices, and she does not continually hint about money; in short, she is wonderful.”

“*La Dame aux Camélias*” appeared within eighteen months of the actual death of the heroine, and went into every one’s hands, interest being whetted meanwhile by the recent event, and yet more by much gossip – scandal if you will – which universally appeared in the Paris press. Her pedigree was evolved and diagnosed by Count G. de Contades in a French bibliographical journal, *Le Livre*, which showed that she was descended from a “*guénuchetonne*” (slattern) of Longé, in the canton of Brionze, near Alençon; a predilection which the elder Dumas himself had previously put forth when he stated that, “I am certain that one might find taint either on the father’s side, or on the mother’s, probably on the former’s, but more probably still on both.”

The following eulogy, extracted from a letter written to Dumas *fils* by Victor Hugo upon the occasion of the inhumation of the ashes of Alexandre Dumas at Villers-Cotterets, whither they were removed from Puits, shows plainly the esteem in which his literary abilities were held by the more sober-minded of his compeers:

“Mon cher Confrère: – I learn from the papers of the funeral of Alexandre Dumas at Villers-Cotterets... It is with regret that I am unable to attend... But I am with you in my heart... What I would say, let me write... No popularity of

the past century has equalled that of Alexandre Dumas. His successes were more than successes: they were triumphs... The name of Alexandre Dumas is more than 'Français, il est Européen;' and it is more than European, it is universal. His theatre has been given publicity in all lands, and his romances have been translated into all tongues. Alexandre Dumas was one of those men we can call the sowers of civilization... Alexandre Dumas is seducing, fascinating, interesting, amusing, and informing... All the emotions, the most pathetic, all the irony, all the comedy, all the analysis of romance, and all the intuition of history are found in the supreme works constructed by this great and vigorous architect.

"... His spirit was capable of all the miracles he performed; this he bequeathed and this survives... Your renown but continues his glory.

"... Your father and I were young together... He was a grand and good friend... I had not seen him since 1857... As I entered Paris Alexandre Dumas was leaving. I did not have even a parting shake of the hand.

"The visit which he made me in my exile I will some day return to his tomb.

*"Cher confrère, fils de mon ami, je vous embrasse.*

*"Victor Hugo."*

Of Dumas, Charles Reade said: "He has never been properly appreciated; he is the prince of dramatists, the king of romancists, and the emperor of good fellows."

Dumas *fils* he thought a "vinegar-blooded iconoclast –

shrewd, clever, audacious, introspective, and mathematically logical.”

The Cimetière du Père La Chaise has a contemporary interest with the names of many who were contemporaries of Dumas in the life and letters of his day.

Of course, sentimental interest first attaches itself to the Gothic canopy – built from the fragments of the convent of Paraclet – which enshrines the remains of Abelard and Heloïse (1142-64), and this perhaps is as it should be, but for those who are conversant with the life of Paris of Dumas’ day, this most “famous resting-place” has far more interest because of its shelter given to so many of Dumas’ contemporaries and friends.

Scribe, who was buried here 1861; Michelet, d. 1874; Delphine Cambacérès, 1867; Lachambeaudie, 1872; Soulie, 1847; Balzac, 1850; Ch. Nodier, 1844; C. Delavigne, 1843; Delacroix, the painter, 1865; Talma, the tragedian, 1826; Boieldieu, the composer, 1834; Chopin, 1849; Herold, 1833; General Foy, 1825; David d’Angers, 1856; Hugo, 1828 (the father of Victor Hugo); David, the painter, 1825; Alfred de Musset, 1857; Rossini, 1868.

# CHAPTER V.

## THE PARIS OF DUMAS

Dumas' real descent upon the Paris of letters and art was in 1823, when he had given up his situation in the notary's office at Crépy, and after the eventful holiday journey of a few weeks before. His own account of this, his fourth entrance into the city, states that he was "landed from the coach at five A. M. in the Rue Bouloi, No. 9. It was Sunday morning, and Bourbon Paris was very gloomy on a Sunday."

Within a short time of his arrival the young romancer was making calls, of a nature which he hoped would provide him some sort of employment until he should make his way in letters, upon many bearers of famous Bourbon names who lived in the Faubourgs St. Germain and St. Honoré – all friends and compatriots of his father.

He had brought with him letters formerly written to his father, and hoped to use them as a means of introduction. He approached Marshal Jourdain, General Sebastiani, the Duc de Bellune, and others, but it was not until he presented himself to General Foy, at 64 Rue du Mont Blanc, – the deputy for his department, – that anything to his benefit resulted.

Finally, through the kindly aid of General Foy, Dumas – son of a republican general though he was – found himself seated

upon a clerk's stool, quill in hand, writing out dictation at the secretary's bureau of the Duc d'Orleans.

"I then set about to look for lodgings," said Dumas, "and, after going up and down many staircases, I came to a halt in a little room on a fourth story, which belonged to that immense pile known as the 'Pâté des Italiens.' The room looked out on the courtyard, and I was to have it for one hundred and twenty francs per annum."

From that time on Dumas may be said to have known Paris intimately – its life, its letters, its hotels and restaurants, its theatres, its salons, and its boulevards.

So well did he know it that he became a part and parcel of it.

His literary affairs and relations are dealt with elsewhere, but the various aspects of the social and economic life of Paris at the time Dumas knew its very pulse-beats must be gleaned from various contemporary sources.

The real Paris which Dumas knew – the Paris of the Second Empire – exists no more. The order of things changeth in all but the conduct of the stars, and Paris, more than any other centre of activity, scintillates and fluctuates like the changings of the money-markets.

The life that Dumas lived, so far as it has no bearing on his literary labours or the evolving of his characters, is quite another affair from that of his yearly round of work.

He knew intimately all the gay world of Paris, and fresh echoes of the part he played therein are being continually presented to

us.

He knew, also, quite as intimately, certain political and social movements which took place around about him, in which he himself had no part.

It was in the fifties of the nineteenth century that Paris first became what one might call a coherent mass. This was before the days of the application of the adjective “Greater” to the areas of municipalities. Since then we have had, of course, a “Greater Paris” as we have a “Greater London” and a “Greater New York,” but at the commencement of the Second Empire (1852) there sprang into being, – “jumped at one’s eyes,” as the French say, – when viewed from the heights of the towers of Notre Dame, an immense panorama, which showed the results of a prodigious development, radiating far into the distance, from the common centre of the *Ile de la Cité* and the still more ancient *Lutèce*.

Up to the construction of the present fortifications, – under Louis-Philippe, – Paris had been surrounded, at its outer confines, by a simple *octroi* barrier of about twenty-five kilometres in circumference, and pierced by fifty-four entrances. Since 1860 this wall has been raised and the limits of what might be called Paris proper have been extended up to the fortified lines.

This fortification wall was thirty-four kilometres in length; was strengthened by ninety-four bastions, and surrounded and supported by thirteen detached forts. Sixty-five openings gave access to the inner city, by which the roadways, waterways,

and railways entered. These were further distinguished by classification as follows: *portes*— of which there were fifty; *poternes*— of which there were five; and *passages*— of which there were ten. Nine railways entered the city, and the “*Ceinture*” or girdle railway, which was to bind the various *gares*, was already conceived.

At this time, too, the Quais received marked attention and development; trees were planted along the streets which bordered upon them, and a vast system of sewerage was planned which became – and endures until to-day – one of the sights of Paris, for those who take pleasure in such unsavoury amusements.

Lighting by gas was greatly improved, and street-lamps were largely multiplied, with the result that Paris became known for the first time as “*La Ville Lumière*.”

A score or more of villages, or *bourgs*, before 1860, were between the limits of these two barriers, but were at that time united by the *loi d’annexion*, and so “Greater Paris” came into being.

The principle *bourgs* which lost their identity, which, at the same time is, in a way, yet preserved, were Auteuil, Passy, les Ternes, Batignolles, Montmartre, la Chapelle, la Villette, Belleville, Ménilmontant, Charenton, and Bercy; and thus the population of Paris grew, as in the twinkling of an eye, from twelve hundred thousand to sixteen hundred thousand; and its superficial area from thirty-four hundred *hectares* to more than eight thousand – a *hectare* being about the equivalent of two and

a half acres.

During the period of the "Restoration," which extended from the end of the reign of the great Napoleon to the coming of Louis-Philippe (1814-30), Paris may be said to have been in, or at least was at the beginning of, its golden age of prosperity.

In a way the era was somewhat inglorious, but in spite of liberal and commonplace opinion, there was made an earnest effort to again secure the pride of place for French letters and arts; and it was then that the romantic school, with Dumas at its very head, attained its first importance.

It was not, however, until Louis-Philippe came into power that civic improvements made any notable progress, though the Pont des Invalides had been built, and gas-lamps, omnibuses, and sidewalks, had been introduced just previously.

Under Louis-Philippe were completed the Église de la Madeleine and the Arc de Triomphe d'Etoile. The Obelisk, – a gift from Mohammed Ali, Viceroy of Egypt, to Louis-Philippe, – the Colonne de Juillet, and the Ponts Louis-Philippe and du Carrousel were built, as well as the modern fortifications of Paris, with their detached forts of Mont Valerien, Ivry, Charenton, Nogent, etc.

There existed also the encircling boulevards just within the fortifications, and yet another parallel series on the north, beginning at the Madeleine and extending to the Colonne de Juillet.

It was not, however, until the Second Republic and the

Second Empire of Napoleon III. that a hitherto unparalleled transformation was undertaken, and there sprung into existence still more broad boulevards and spacious squares, and many palatial civic and private establishments, the Bourse, the New Opera, and several theatres, the Ceinture Railway, and the Bois de Boulogne and the Bois de Vincennes.

By this time Dumas' activities were so great, or at least the product thereof was so great, that even his intimate knowledge of French life of a more heroic day could not furnish him all the material which he desired.

It was then that he produced those essentially modern stories of life in Paris of that day, which, slight though they are as compared with the longer romances, are best represented by the "Corsican Brothers," "Captain Pamphile," and "Gabriel Lambert."

Among the buildings at this time pulled down, on the Place du Carrousel, preparatory to the termination of the Louvre, was the Hôtel Longueville, the residence of the beautiful duchess of that name, celebrated for her support of the Fronde and her gallantries, as much as for her beauty. Dumas would have revelled in the following incident as the basis of a tale. In the arched roof of one of the cellars of the duchess' hôtel two skeletons of a very large size and in a perfect state of preservation were discovered, which have since been the object of many discussions on the part of the antiquarians, but *adhuc sub judice lis est*. Another discovery was made close by the skeletons, which

is more interesting from a literary point of view; namely, that of a box, in carved steel, embellished with gilded brass knobs, and containing several papers. Among them was an amatory epistle in verse, from the Prince de Marsillac to the fair duchess. The other papers were letters relating to the state of affairs at that time; some from the hand of the celebrated Turenne, with memorandums, and of the Prince de Conti, “of great value to autograph collectors,” said the newspaper accounts of the time, but assuredly of still more value to historians, or even novelists.

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