

morbid character being so accentuated there were some who doubted of her reason. Those who saw her intimately bore witness to the fact that on a majority of subjects she reasoned with an entire lucidity of intelligence, but the unshakable faith she had in her mission of bringing light to others caused her to pay no heed whatsoever to any advice; she pledged her faith to her own erroneous judgment, and thus became the prey of those impostors who spy upon souls walled within solitude and obscurity.

What force it was which gave her such a hold upon her husband has never been explained. Did he really love her? Was it simply his feebleness will bowing before the will of the Empress? Did she hold him through the mystical side of his nature? No one has ever known. One thing, however, is certain; her influence was dominant in act, and instead of diminishing with use, it became stronger and deadlier, until the unfortunate monarch, who was by instinct and personality attracted toward the light, fell into darkness so black that he was never again able to escape toward the light.

Poor distraught soul, she did not suspect that she had discovered the darkness; such is the secret tragedy of hearts which no longer have faith in mankind or in life, and who know not how to love. She knew not how to love; therein lay, in my opinion, the cause of her defeat.

And that defeat was destined to bring in its train the downfall of her husband, whom, nevertheless, she expected to save, the death of the son whom she adored, and the crumbling of the vast Empire which she desired to hold intact for that son, and which she hoped to retain for him impregnable and unimpaired. For Alexandra dreamed of the succession of her heir

to an absolutely undiminished autocratic sway over the greatest Empire in Europe, and she strove to maintain it for him in all its fullness.

La Revue des Deux Mondes

GOOD OLD DUMAS

BY OSCAR BROWNING

DUMAS, the author of *Monte Cristo* and *The Three Musketeers*, is known to all the civilized world. Into how many languages has *The Count of Monte Cristo* been translated? Many believe that the lovely island which bounds with its serrated peaks the expanse of the Tyrrhene Sea has derived its name from the book, and that the King and Queen of Italy go to shoot moufflons in the corries of a romance. That Dumas is the prince of modern novelists; that he is greater than Walter Scott, a rival to Balzac; that he has fancy, wit, a caressing style, and a penetrating insight into the most complicated and subtle folds of human character, is known to few, because they have not read the works in which these qualities are revealed. We may doubt whether he was conscious himself of where his strength lay. He began as a writer of plays. The success of *Henri III* gave him more pleasure than any succeeding triumph; the persecutions which beset *Anthony* were as savory as laudation would have been. He won his position as a novelist almost by accident, following the imperious bent of a genius which for a long time concealed not only its origin, but its course.

Dumas has suffered from being a master of Historical Romance. He is supposed to have kept a workshop like the *bottega* of Perugino or the *Seminar* of a German Professor. A number of assistants would write portions of history from given books,

strictly according to order; then the Master came, gave the touch of genius, and the work took its place among the immortals. What we know of Dumas's methods of composition does not support this idea. He would miss his train at a French village, call for paper, pen, and ink, and, as with Byron at Ouchy, before daybreak the novel was half finished or the play entirely written. Ghosts are common enough in all art. In the Entrance Book of the Record Office the name of Carlyle stands next to that of his German spectre. Carlyle once spent half an hour there, no more, because it made his head ache. The Ghost produced pages of erudition which his employer used and then abused. The old French hack said to Gautier: 'Est-ce que j'ai fait du bon Théo ce matin?' without a blush on the cheek of either. To many German histories the pupils supply the erudition, the professor the pedantry. When shall we deteutonize that science and learn to follow French guides?

Since the beginning of this year the present writer has spent his leisure hours in reading the volumes of Dumas which he did not know before. His lending library contains over a hundred works of that author, and of these he has read about seventy or eighty, each with increasing pleasure. Calmann-Lévy's catalogue exhibits over two hundred and fifty volumes of Dumas Père, including twenty-five of plays, but most of them are out of print. *La Tulipe Noire* is well known to English readers, but it is by no means the best. The history is dragged in, and the psychology is weak. Do Englishmen know *Amaury*, an excellent novel founded on medical research, to which for a time Dumas was devoted? Do they know *Georges*, a masterpiece, in which Dumas's mulatto father supplies the hero and Mauritius the scenery? Have they

read *Le Trou d'Enfer*, a German story like *Anne of Geierstein*, which shows that our author could be as much at home in a *Vehmgericht* as on a boulevard? *Catharine Blum* is a charming tale for young misses, while *Le Père la Ruine* is a terrible tragedy, full of tenderness and poetry, incidentally throwing a lurid light on the sufferings caused by the restoration of the Bourbons. Then there are the Animal Stories, *Mes Bêtes* and the like, which show that the tender-hearted master knew all about the psychology of dogs and monkeys, and especially of cats, and in this respect is a rival of Rudyard Kipling.

His historical novels are among the few which an historian can read with pleasure. He is more accurate in detail than Scott, but like him is unrivaled in reproducing the atmosphere of the age. His Froissart and De Comines novels are skipworthy, but when he comes to Catharine de Medici and Henri Quatre he is a magician. His analysis of the mentality of that much misunderstood sovereign, Charles IX, has never been equaled. The French Revolution series is too long, and probably owes much to Ghosts; many pages may be turned over rapidly. Italian translations of these abound in Roman street barrows; who that knows French can endure an Italian translation? The *carillon* of Dumas is inimitable. His writings are distinguished by their manliness, their purity, and elevation of tone. There is not a particle of lubricity, even when the subject makes it almost impossible to avoid it. He says himself that out of a hundred works there are only two which a mother might hesitate to place in her daughter's hands. I do not know which they are; I have never come across them. The French would have a better literature if they had followed the father rather than the son,

We plead, therefore, for a stronger interest in Dumas Père, and for an effort to place him on the pedestal on which he deserves to stand. His was a noble nature. He was never jealous of his contemporaries, and valued his son far more than himself. Messrs. Methuen began some time ago a translation of Dumas's novels, but it is hopeless to translate the untranslatable. Perhaps Messrs. Nelson will publish the whole of Dumas's works in shilling volumes. In that way an old man may look forward to possessing a set of books which will secure him against ever having a gloomy hour, and protect him against the insidious inroads of a full old age.

The Athenæum

ON RIVERS

BY A. V. COOKMAN

IN every view of retirement I have a river. Other likable things hover in my mind between indistinctness and nothingness, none of them mattering more than another. In the last establishment I shall keep there will probably be more dogs than horses, and I have no great hopes that the lawn will be either smooth enough or broad enough to take a tennis net with dignity. Yet I never doubt that a river will flow somewhere within hearing. There is a certain magnificence in the meanest cottage that happens to stand by a stream. No man need fear to play the host while he can take his guests casually down his garden to the river. The mirrored image of trees, the foam and thunder of weirs, or the mannerishness of the slightest beck will confer a finer distinction upon him than a square hall and amazing statuary. Whatever of glory there is in mere possession may be had by the side of a river, and in all water there seems

something evocative of a curious pride, as of people who live by the sea and in summer hint darkly of its winter storms, and strive in winter to impress you with the peculiar glory of a summer sea, as if you could never quite understand. Only a few men, I think, have in their vision of the later years of life no place for running water. They can content themselves away from streams, noting perhaps with keener pleasure the occasional cry of a bird, the stubborn creaking of a massive tree constrained by the wind, or a shout from the field where the young men will be still playing cricket. Such reminding things will keep in check for them their tragic fears of age, though giving me but faint assurance against a creeping sense of saplessness. I must establish myself by a river, not to watch it constantly or over-consciously as if I were a monomaniac, but whenever I feel tired of the things I then happen to be doing.

I have never yet managed to settle in which part of the world I shall find the river I most desire to possess for myself. I am certain that it will be none of those wide, glaring water courses which deface plains like the plains of Lombardy and exist merely to conduct away the great rushes of water that come periodically from the mountains. Yet from the little streams which rive themselves along these hard water courses I would take a color — a certain rusty green, a marvelous peacock green — for my own river. It needs but a brief consideration to show that it would be very easy to choose the wrong place and die out with the miserable feeling that one had never known what one wanted. Traffic, in the first place, is an intolerable thought. I should establish no intimacy with a river which bore along its surface so much as a barge. After the passage of a barge it would be mine no longer. I