

TWO "MISSING" WORKS OF ALEXANDRE DUMAS, PÈRE

by DOUGLAS MUNRO

This article is primarily concerned with the "missing" manuscripts of two works by Alexandre Dumas, père, *Le comte de Moret* and *Pietro Tasca*. But these, it should be noted, are not alone among his works in being "missing", for various other manuscripts of his, all plays, may also, for a variety of reasons, be counted as lost. First, I may instance the manuscript of *Les Gracques*. This was one of his early attempts at writing a tragic drama, in verse, and in *Comment je devins auteur dramatique*¹ he states "Je composai d'abord une tragédie des 'Gracques', de laquelle je fis justice, en la brûlant aussitôt sa naissance"—that would be in 1827. L.-Henry Lecomte repeats this statement,² as does Quérard³ who goes on to refer to Dumas' *Fiesque de Lavagna*, which was another drama in verse, adapted from Schiller, the manuscript of which, according to him, went the same way as that of *Les Gracques*. It may well be that Dumas did burn the manuscripts, but could it be possible that some sheets escaped the flames or that there were earlier drafts?

There was next, possibly written more or less at the same time as *Les Gracques*, a prose drama entitled *Les puritaines d'Écosse*, which was drawn from Scott's *Old Mortality*. Dumas, in collaboration with Frédéric Soulié, had planned the outline of the play and had indeed started writing it, but, again according to Lecomte,⁴ it was never finished. Dumas confirmed this in his *Mes mémoires*⁵ where he wrote: "[Scott] avait deux caractères qui séduisaient invinciblement Soulié, c'étaient John Balfour de Burley et Bothwell. Le sujet choisi, nous nous mîmes avec ardeur à l'œuvre; mais nous avions beau nous réunir, le plan n'avancait pas". Presumably, whatever was written has vanished for ever.

The influence of Scott on Dumas was quite extraordinary.

¹ *Théâtre complet de Alex. Dumas* (Paris, 1874), (1)-34.

² *Alexandre Dumas, 1802-1870. Sa Vie Intime. Ses Œuvres* (Paris, 1902), p. 107.

³ *Les supercheries littéraires dévoillées* (Paris, 1847), p. 426.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁵ (Paris, 1863), iv. chap. cviii, p. 267.

Several years earlier than the attempt at writing *Les puritaines d'Écosse*, he had written a "Mélodrame en 3 actes et à grand spectacle" entitled *Ivanhoe*. Fortunately, this is one manuscript which has not been lost; it is now held by the Bibliothèque de Dieppe (Cat. MS. 81 / AS 15), having been given to that library by Dumas, fils, in or about 1886. It comprises thirty-four white, numbered leaves, written on both recto and verso, with, on the first leaf, *Ivanhoe* in Dumas' hand. The play was performed at the Dieppe Casino in May 1966 by the 'Compagnie Jehan-Ango', and in the announcement of the performance it was stated that this "spectacular melodrama" was written in 1819. Dumas was then only seventeen years old.

About 1835 Dumas wrote a play of five acts and six tableaux, with an epilogue, to which he chose to give the title *L'Écossais*. This was based on *Quentin Durward* and apparently closely followed the original. It was never performed or published. Charles Glinel in his article "Le théâtre inconnu d'Alexandre Dumas père",⁶ wrote: "Le manuscrit original, composé vers 1835 ou 1836, retrouvé par Frédérick Lemaître en 1871, donné par lui au libraire Laplace, fut remis par ce dernier le 7 juin 1877 à Alexandre Dumas fils. Nous avons acquis après la mort de Laplace une copie de "L'Écossais" qu'il fait exécuter soigneusement par Mlle. Augustine Métayer, et qui est élégamment reliée avec un curieux récit du sort du manuscrit original et avec les pièces justificatives". What happened to the original is now not known.

Then there is the five-act play *Gulliver* which, again, was neither performed nor published. The curious thing here is that Dumas' publishers Calmann-Lévy, in their *Catalogue raisonné des œuvres de Alexandre Dumas*, issued in 1902, the centenary of the year of his birth, reproduced on page (17) a "page autographe d'Alexandre Dumas' 'Gulliver', féerie inédite". Lecomte⁷ wrote: "Sont entièrement perdus: 'Jane Eyre', drame en 5 actes; 'Les âmes vaillantes', drame en 5 actes, destiné à L'Ambigu; 'Gulliver', féerie en 5 actes, pour laquelle Dumas traita en 1850 avec la Porte-Saint-Martin, sans que cette convention eût des suites; et 'Samson', opéra fait avec Edouard Duprez, et dont quelques fragments furent exécutés à l'école spéciale de chant, en 1856".

⁶ *Revue Biblio-Iconographique*, 6^e année (1899), 3^e Série, pp. 10-11.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 173.

The manuscript must be presumed to be lost. In so far as *Samson* is concerned, there was published in 1856 *Première séance de l'année 1856. Exécution de fragments de l'opéra (inédit) de 'Samson', poème de MM. Alex. Dumas et Ed. Duprez.* Vaugirard, Impr. Choynet, 8vo., pp. 8. I shall refer to *Les âmes vaillantes* later in this article, but, as regards *Jane Eyre*, which obviously was based on the Charlotte Brontë novel, Dumas referred to it at some length in his 'causerie' "Comment j'ai fait jouer à Marseille le drame des 'Forestiers'", published in *Bric-à-brac*,⁸ and Charles Glinel simply mentions it, entitling it *Jeanne [sic] Eyre*, along with *Les âmes vaillantes*, in his article 'Le théâtre inconnu d'Alexandre Dumas père'⁹ as "ne se retrouvent pas".

There is a further original manuscript of a Dumas drama which is most certainly irretrievably lost, nor was it ever published. It is of a comic opera in two acts entitled *La Bacchante (Thaïs)*, written in collaboration with Adolphe de Leuven and Amédée de Beauplan, with music by Eugène Gauthier, and first performed at the Opéra-Comique on 4 November 1858. Glinel, in the article "Le théâtre inconnu d'Alexandre Dumas père", wrote:¹⁰ "Dumas avait eu l'idée avec de Leuven et Amédée de Beauplan un opéra-comique sur un sujet antique, intitulé 'Thaïs', sorte de pendant de 'Galathée'. Il avait même écrit, et nous en avons le manuscrit, les trois premières scènes du livret. Tous trois convinrent de déplacer l'action et d'en changer l'époque. La scène se passa dès lors dans une villa de Florence, en 1550, et la pièce dont il s'agit devint 'La Bacchante'. Elle était écrite surtout pour Marie Cabel. Une indisposition du ténor Jourdan interrompit les représentations après la troisième soirée et Meyerbeer dont on répétait 'Le Pardon de Ploërmel', écrit aussi pour Mme Cabel, fit si bien que 'La Bacchante' ne fut pas reprise". Unfortunately, the libretto and score were both destroyed in a fire in the Salle Favart. Glinel went on to write, in a further instalment of *Le théâtre inconnu*,¹¹ "Heureusement M. de Spoelberch de Louvenjoul avait obtenu des auteurs une copie du livret et d'Eugène Gautier [sic] une réduction au piano de l'œuvre musicale. 'La Bacchante' n'est donc pas perdue pour tout le monde et nous devons à l'obligeance inépuisable

⁸ Paris, 1861, vol. 1.

⁹ Op. cit., p. 15.

¹⁰ Op. cit., 2^e [sic] année (1899), 3^e série, p. 515.

¹¹ Op. cit., 6^e année (1899), 3^e série, p. 7.

sable du savant bibliophile et dilettante bruxellois la copie intégrale du livret”.

Finally, there was a translated version of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* which was again neither performed nor published and which, apparently, was made in collaboration with Paul Meurice. *Romeo et Juliette* consisted of five acts and eleven tableaux, and, according to Glinel,¹² the entire manuscript was in the hand of Meurice. Although this may have been so, I am inclined to the belief that Dumas, in fact, did the translating, dictating it to his friend. Charles Chincholle¹³ stated that the play was in alexandrines, and Benjamin Pifteau¹⁴ told of Dumas reading it to his friends in his chambers in the Rue de Richelieu somewhere about 1864. What happened to the original manuscript is unknown, but it seems at one stage to have been passed by Meurice to Dumas, fils, who allowed Glinel to make a copy of it. Thereafter it disappeared. Extracts from it may be found in several of Dumas’ works, most notably in his *Souvenirs d’une favorite* and *La fille du marquis* and, oddly enough, in his *Grand dictionnaire de cuisine*, where he quotes forty-one lines from the play in his article dealing with the preparing and cooking of larks.

I. LE COMTE DE MORET The Vicissitudes of a ‘Vanished’ Romance

Between 17 October 1865 and 23 March 1866, with only occasional lapses, Dumas contributed as a ‘feuilleton’ to a Paris daily literary paper, *Les Nouvelles*, an historical romance entitled *Le comte de Moret*. *Les Nouvelles*, a short-lived and seemingly not very successful venture, was founded by one Jules Noriac. It was first published on 20 September 1865, ran into difficulties in the Spring of 1866, and was taken over by Dumas on his own account and renamed, on 18 November 1866, *Le Mousquetaire*, after that earlier and most famous of his journals, the original series of which had ceased publication on 7 February 1857.

Copies of *Les Nouvelles* were lodged with the Bibliothèque Nationale, but the ‘run’ is now incomplete and lacks those numbers published on 18 and 21 October, 1, 2, 3 and 27

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹³ *Alexandre Dumas Aujourd’hui* (Paris, 1867), p. 22.

¹⁴ *Alexandre Dumas en Manches de Chemise* (Paris, 1884), p. 16.

November 1865, and 1 March 1866, in all of which parts of *Le comte de Moret* appeared.

The romance hinges on the war in Piedmont and the imaginary career of Antoine, comte de Moret, the illegitimate son of Henri IV, who was believed to have been killed during the battle of Castelnaudary in 1632, although his body was never found. A legend persisted that, seriously wounded, he had escaped finally to die as an aged hermit in Anjou during the reign of Louis XIV.

Dumas' story opened on 5 December 1628 and ended in 1630. It really covers a brief period following the conclusion of *The Three Musketeers* with the return of Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu from the siege of La Rochelle. Other historical personages in the romance are the two queens, Anne of Austria and Marie de Medici, the duchesse de Chevreuse, and Montmorency. And Dumas introduces a new soldier of fortune—Etienne Latil—who has many of the attractive characteristics of d'Artagnan.

In 1850 Dumas had already written what was, in effect, the sequel to *Le comte de Moret*, a story entitled *La Colombe*, related in the form of letters and dealing with the imagined fate of that remarkable man. The period covered by *La Colombe*, according to the dating of the letters, was 5 May 1637 to 10 September 1638, although their contents covered events both at, as well as after, the battle of Castelnaudary. The writing of a story in the form of letters is a most unusual one for Dumas, but it worked successfully.

La Colombe never appeared in serial form and was first published in Belgium as: *La colombe, / par / Alexandre Dumas. / Bruxelles, / Librairie du Panthéon / 1850*. The format is $15 \times 9\frac{1}{2}$ cm. and the number of pages 128. It appeared in the publishers' series *La Nouveauté Littéraire* with yellow paper wrappers. One other edition, in a slightly larger format and of 112 pages, was published in Brussels in the same year by Alphonse Lebègue.

Both these editions preceded the book's first publication in France under the title of *Histoire d'une colombe*, by Alexandre Cadot (1851, 8vo., 2 volumes, pp. 305 and 319), the second volume including Dumas' *Chateaubriand* and *Le roi Pépin*. The *Semaine Littéraire du Courrier des États-Unis. Recueil Choisi de romans, feuilletons, ouvrages historiques et dramatiques, en prose et en vers des auteurs modernes les plus renommés* (New-York, F. Gailardet), published the work in 1853 under the title of *La colombe*, volume 5, part 4, pp. (1)-34 in double columns.

The first appearance of the work in English was in the *London Journal* in 1857, and it was again published by Methuen in Alfred Allinson's translation in 1906. It was never published as a translation in the United States.

Copies of *Les Nouvelles* must have found their way to the United States, and a first, emasculated translation of *Le comte de Moret* appeared and was, as stated on the verso of the title, "entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1867 by Henry L. Williams". The title-page reads as follows: "*The / count of Moret: / or, / Richelieu and his rivals. / By Alexandre Dumas, / Author of Monte-Christo, The three guardsmen, etc., etc. / Translated from the French / By Henry L. Williams, Jr. / New York; / Published by Henry L. Williams, / 119 Nassau Street*". The book is in-octavo and consists of pages (3)-160 printed in double columns; there are fifty-five chapters and an epilogue. The translator has omitted pages from the conclusion of Dumas' original and substituted material of his own, giving, moreover, no indication that he has done so. There is, indeed, another gap in one run of ten chapters. Williams must have had no knowledge of the logical sequence of the story which had been written earlier as *La Colombe*, otherwise he would surely never have had the ineptitude to rewrite the conclusion as he did.

In the following year the book was published again. It appeared as: *The count of Moret; / or, / Richelieu and his rivals. / by / Alexander Dumas. / Author of The count of Monte Cristo, The chevalier, etc., etc., / Translated from the French of Alexander Dumas, / by Henri L. Williams, Jr. /, for Peterson's edition of Alexander Dumas' great works. / Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson & brothers; / 306 Chestnut Street. The verso of the title consists of the publishers' 'blurb', a shortened list of titles by Dumas published by Peterson, and the necessary "entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1868, by T. B. Peterson & brothers". The book measures 23.3 × 14.3 cm., and is a reprint of the 1867 Williams edition with the same pagination.*

I have also been able to trace another, but mutilated, copy of the work in an American private institutional library. Lacking its title-page, it has 266 pages printed in double columns, and measures 24 cm.; there is no epilogue. No advertisements remain to help identification, but on internal evidence it would appear virtually certain that it is a copy of the edition published in New York by George Munro (c. 1876) in his *Seaside Library*.

The edition published by Williams (and this, incidentally, is the only work by Dumas translated by Williams which he published himself) was in the New York Public Library. Their copy, however, no longer exists and it is by courtesy of that institution that I possess a microfilm copy of that particular printing of Williams' version. The Peterson & Brothers edition is still, fortunately, with the British Library. The Library of Congress in its Main and Official Catalogues does not locate any copies, and its National Union Catalogue refers only to the edition in the New York Public Library which is no longer extant. James Kelly's *American Catalogue of Books* lists simply, "'The count of Moret'. Translated by Williams. 8vo., paper, 75 cents, Peterson, 1869"; and Peterson's catalogue in the *Publishers' Trade List Annual*, 1873, even more simply, "'The count of Moret'. Price 75 cents".

To carry the American side of the story further, there appeared among the advertisements for *The Royalist Daughters* and *The Castle of Souday* (both comprising the Williams' version of Dumas' *Les Louves de Machecoul*) a work entitled and spelt equally *The Count of Morian (or Morion)*; or, *Woman's revenge* which, it has been suggested, might have been an announcement for *The count of Moret*. Since both of these last titles were copyrighted by Dick and Fitzgerald of New York in 1862, some four years before *Le comte de Moret* appeared serially, there could obviously be grave doubts as to the authenticity. In fact, this work is by Frederick Soulié, and my copy, with the title "*The count of Morion [sic]; or woman's revenge*. Translated from the French ... by Edward Magauran, esq.", was published in New York by Williams Brothers, 24 Ann-Street. Boston: 6 Water-Street, in 1847.

This is the stage at which it may be said that the book vanished, the only verifiable volume extant of a translated version being the copy held by the British Library.

But, to enliven matters, there was published *Short Stories by Alexandre Dumas*, Ten Volumes in One, New York, Walter J. Black co., n.d. [1927], 8vo., 8 unnumbered pages 'Table of contents', 3 unnumbered pages, 'Introduction' signed 'G.W.B.', (1)-1003 in double columns. In point of fact, these are not short stories. The book is made up of extracts from some of Dumas' well-known and less well-known works, and includes also extracts from some of the spurious titles credited to him. But among these extracts there are eleven genuinely taken from *Le comte de Moret*,

as well as one entitled *The death of Richelieu* which appeared neither in *Les Nouvelles* nor in Williams' version, but which could have been included in the final pages of the original manuscript and for some reason was not published.

In 1936, in what would seem to be the unlikely city of Buenos Aires, there was published: *El conde de Moret*; novela historica que abarca el periodo entre *Los tres mosqueteros*, y *Veinte años despues*. Buenos Aires: Talleres gráficos argentinos L.J. Rosso, 1936, 23¹/₂ cm., pp. 2 preliminary leaves, (7)-581, 1. Page (7) comprises a preface signed "Evaristo Etchecopar", in which he writes: "La presente versión pertenece al Correo de ultramar ... revista del siglo pasado extinguida en 1885 ... En ella apareció el Conde de Moret en 1865 y siguió publicándose periódicamente, hasta que la muerte de Dumas vino a dejarla trunca". Copies of this book are held in the Library of Congress and the New York Public Library, but, strangely, in neither the extensive Biblioteca Nacional nor the Biblioteca de Palacio in Madrid.

The book was printed from the text published in the *Correo de Ultramar* which, from its very name, would have circulated in South America. The Spanish version was apparently made at the time of the serial issue in *Les Nouvelles*, included the material in the copies missing from the Bibliothèque Nationale, and clarified the position regarding Williams' deliberate disregard of ten vital chapters, as well as the other gap in the run of chapters referred to earlier.

To the sounding of trumpets, in 1944 *Le Sphinx rouge* (announced as an unpublished romance by Dumas) burst upon an unsuspecting French public, and *France-Soir* gave a "Version ramassée, limitée aux épisodes essentiels". In fact, *Le Sphinx rouge* was Dumas' *Le comte de Moret*, and the manuscript that reached *France-Soir* comprised only three sections of the original four of the romance. It was written on Dumas' familiar blue paper and each section was paginated separately—the first comprising 117 leaves, the second 120, and the third 171. According to *France-Soir* Dumas had offered the manuscript to an admirer, Madame T ..., née Falcon, sister of the singer Jenny Falcon, and married to a member of the Russian aristocracy whose name was never disclosed.

After the Revolution of 1917 Madame ... 's family emigrated to France, and in 1944 the manuscript became the property of the director of *Les Éditions universelles* and was duly published as

Alexandre Dumas, *Le Sphinx rouge (Roman historique)*. Les Éditions universelles, Paris; on the verso of the title is: "Copyright ... Paris, 1946", and the announcement that 150 numbered copies had been printed on "pur fil des Papeteries de France, ..., constituant authentiquement l'édition originale". The format is $18\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{1}{2}$ cm., with the pagination: (7)-9 'note liminaire', (3), (13)-752, and 3 pages' table of contents, with a frontispiece portrait of Dumas and, underneath, ten holograph lines signed "fin du 3^e volume A Dumas". This edition was reprinted with the same format and pagination in 1947.

It was not long before the readers of the *Bibliothèque de Lectures de Paris* were offered Alexandre Dumas' *Le comte de Moret, Roman historique*. Illustrations de Maurice Sauvyre S.E.P.E. Paris, n.d. [1948], $18\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$ cm., 4 volumes bound in 2, pp. (5)-6 'Alexandre Dumas et "Le comte de Moret"' par Roger Giron, (7)-286, and (5)-268; there are no tables of contents. Each volume has a woodcut frontispiece, and five and four other woodcuts respectively in the text. Twenty-four copies were printed on "papier Marais-crève-cœur". The editorial note on the verso of the title-page of volume 1 contradicts itself when it states that the Bibliothèque Nationale possesses the only copy of the journal in which the romance appeared "en son entier" by then going on to state that unhappily there are a few gaps which have been filled in with, in italics "... simples résumés très concis du texte disparu", which may, of course, have been summaries taken from the re-translated Spanish version. M. Giron states that *Le comte de Moret* was dedicated to Dimitri Pavlovich Narischkine "en mémoire de l'hospitalité royale" which had been given to Dumas when he was in Russia in the years following 1858.

The collation of *Le Sphinx rouge* and *Le comte de Moret*, which are divided respectively into 'parties' and 'volumes', shows that the former, in addition to variations in the text, has had interpolated, in the first division of the book, four new chapter headings, while the second divisions of both books do not vary in so far as the titles of chapters are concerned. Moreover, the third divisions of both books once again vary in several chapter headings, and *Le Sphinx rouge* finally stops short at Chapter XXI of the "troisième partie".

The fourth volume of *Le comte de Moret*, Chapter 1, is Chapter XLIII in Williams' version. Williams' next three chapter headings

are mis-spelt, and after Chapter XLVI he reverts with his numbering to XLV, repeats XLVI, and then goes to XLVII. Chapters VII-XVIII are omitted, but three chapters are interpolated. With his own Chapter L, Williams continues with Chapter XIX from *Le comte de Moret*; Chapter XX is given a garbled title and, after Chapter XXII of the French text (the work finishes at Chapter XXIII), Williams includes in his version the other garbled material which he was unwise enough to subjoin, comprising two chapters and an epilogue.

Subsequently the *Les Éditions universelles* version published as *Le Sphinx rouge* was republished on three occasions. The first was as: *Le Sphinx rouge* / par / Alexandre Dumas / collection Marabout; verso of title "... éditée et imprimée par Gérard & co ..." (Verviers) Belgique; n.d. [c. 1955], 18 × 11.3 cm., pp. 5-539, 4 pages of publishers' advertisements, blank, notes on the book and its author inside back cover, illustrated paper covers. The second as: Alexandre Dumas / *Le Sphinx rouge* / Éditions Galic / ... / Paris; n.d. [1964], 20.7 × 13.2 cm., pp. (1), (11)-373, grey boards, and the third as: Alexandre Dumas / *Le Sphinx rouge* / Éditions Baudelaire / Livre club des Champs-Élysées / ... / Paris, n.d. [1966], 20 × 13 cm., pp. (I)-VII introductory note on Dumas, (1)-530; preceding the title-page is a photograph copy of Daumier's cartoon of Dumas and a photograph of Dumas' monument in the Place Malesherbes, Paris; this has coloured boards. This last edition was reprinted in 1967 with the same format and pagination. None of these reprints includes the "note liminaire" published in the original *Les Éditions universelles* edition.

There can only remain the hope that the missing final leaves of the fourth part of Dumas' holograph manuscript may come to light. This is not as impossible as it may seem, for manuscripts of his works, in whole or in part, have the uncanny knack of appearing quite out of the blue from time to time, and not only in auctioneers' and specialist booksellers' catalogues. Should this happen, we shall then have the Count in Dumas' full romantic portrayal, and perhaps an English translation may be published, not only as a literary curiosity, but on its merits as one of his major romances.

II. PIETRO TASCA

That apparently lost holograph manuscripts of Dumas do in fact reappear entirely unexpectedly may be further exemplified by one such that was offered to me at the beginning of the war through a Jewish émigré from Vienna.

It was no less than the complete manuscript of a play in five acts in prose, wholly written on some ninety loose sheets in Dumas' familiar, beautifully-flowing hand and on his famous blue paper.

The manuscript bore no title or list of characters. The lack of title was possibly due to the loss of the first sheet, on which it was Dumas' invariable custom to write his titles in a large, even script, together with an indication of the acts and tableaux. But there may have been another perfectly good reason, which will be explained later. That there was no list of characters is not unexpected; Dumas rarely, save in a few of his early dramas, troubled to supply this in detail, leaving it doubtless to reveal itself in the course of rehearsals and duly to be supplied by the publisher.

One or two notes were written on the manuscript, one signed by Charles Chincholle. From this it would appear that the manuscript was in Dumas' possession towards the end of his life, when he was very friendly with the young Chincholle who, besides writing an interesting booklet (*Alexandre Dumas Aujourd'hui, avec photographies par Pierre Petit*. Paris, D. Jouast, 1867), contributed to Dumas' journal *Dartagnan* and had brief introductions by Dumas to two of his books — *Dans l'ombre* (Paris, Librairie internationale A. Lacroix, Verbroeckhoven et C^e, Éditeurs ... même maison à Bruxelles, a Leipzig, et a Livourne, 1871) and *Le lendemain de l'amour* (Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1880).

Lacking a title, the play came to me as *Pietro Tasca*, after its main male character. The action of the drama is centred around a miscarriage of justice in the Venice of the Doges towards the end of the fifteenth century. There are alternative versions of the epilogue, and it would seem likely that it may have been the draft of a play which was thrown aside for more urgent work, then forgotten, and finally lost. From the simple fact of a recorded miscarriage of justice, Dumas had woven a satisfying drama, as could be expected in any historical or, indeed, other play he wrote.

To return to what I have mentioned earlier about the lack of title and other information, the holograph manuscript of another

play by Dumas, *Les âmes vaillantes*, has seemingly disappeared, and that title could very well be applicable to *Pietro Tasca*. Glinel, an eminent authority on Dumas, stated¹⁵ that *Les âmes vaillantes* in 5 acts, had been written for the Théâtre Ambigu-Comique, and mentioned a letter from Dumas to Anténor Joly, the then manager of that theatre, dated 26 February 1852 (Collection Ernest Lemaître, Laon). But Noël Parfait, secretary and friend of Dumas during his exile in Brussels between December 1851 and January 1853, in a letter to Glinel dated 5 August 1892, stated that the manuscript of *Les âmes vaillantes* had unfortunately disappeared.

However, and this is where the interest quickens, Dumas, fils, in Paris in January 1872, had a visitor who called himself His Royal Highness Prince George Kastriot Scanderberg, King of Albania and Epirus, hereditary Prince of Croia, and of all the Albanian Colonies, Duke of Saint-Pierre in Galatina, and patrician of Rome, Naples and Venice. He was accompanied by, as Grand Marshal of the Palace, a retired Neapolitan commissioner of police, and, as Captain of the Guard, a retired French police inspector. He told Dumas that he had met his father in Naples in 1862, where the two had become so friendly that Dumas, père, had given him the manuscript of an unpublished play of his entitled *Les âmes vaillantes*.

J. Lucas-Dubreton in his *La vie d'Alexandre Dumas père*,¹⁶ in its English version *Alexandre Dumas the fourth musketeer*,¹⁷ relates how, in October 1862, Dumas had received a letter from the Greco-Albanian Council in London asking him to do for Athens and Constantinople what he had done with Garibaldi for Palermo and Naples. The letter was signed by the Prince of Scanderberg. Two more letters came, addressed “My dear Marquis”, and, according to Lucas-Dubreton, Dumas proved gullible enough at this stage to offer his yacht *Emma* to the ‘Prince’ for the transport of ammunition. Then, one fine day, the Chief of Police of Naples sent for Dumas and told him that the pseudo-Prince was a trickster and intriguer.

In his book *Dumas Father and Son*,¹⁸ Francis Gribble states that Scanderberg’s real name was Del Prato, and that he was the

¹⁵ *Revue Biblio-Iconographique*, 6^e année (1899), 3^e série, p. 15.

¹⁶ Paris, 1927, *Vie des hommes illustres*, No. 14, pp. 209-12.

¹⁷ Translated from the French of J. Lucas-Dubreton by Maida Castelman Darnton (London, 1929), pp. 232-36.

¹⁸ London, 1930, pp. 162-65.

son of an Italian carpenter. In 1859 he had served a sentence of six months imprisonment for fraud. He had come to Paris fully expecting to be safe there, as he knew that the police archives had been burnt during the Commune. He had prospered from the sale of the insignia of a fictitious 'Order of the Commander of Christ'. When the police found out who he was and came to arrest him, they found that he had been warned in time and had disappeared safely into Spain.

I wrote to Francis Gribble asking him whether he could give me any information concerning the manuscript of *Les âmes vaillantes* about which Scanderberg had spoken to Dumas, fils. He replied that the information about the Scanderberg episode had been taken from an article published many years ago in *Le Temps*, but he could not remember the exact date; he added that there was certainly no information about that missing play. I have diligently searched the files of *Le Temps* from the 1870s onwards and cannot find any such article; one may have appeared earlier, but I doubt even this. It may be, of course, that Francis Gribble had been mistaken and was, in fact, referring to an article in some other journal, but, even so, in my research I have never found any reference to *Les âmes vaillantes* in any French periodical published in the 19th century.

Dumas, of course, washed his hands of the whole affair. But did he pass on the manuscript of *Les âmes vaillantes*, and could it have been *Pietro Tasca*, to 'Scanderberg'? The absence of the first sheet is in keeping, for 'Scanderberg' would be very likely to destroy this if he had proposed selling the manuscript; to leave it might have been dangerous if others knew of Dumas' gift and to whom it went.

And now for further proof that this is, indeed, an unknown play by Dumas, whether it be entitled *Les âmes vaillantes* or *Pietro Tasca*. The sheets of blue paper are certainly one indication of its authenticity. Moreover, the writing has all the characteristics and tricks of penmanship that belong to Dumas—he has numbered the sheets of each act separately (but not individual tableaux where there is more than one in each act); that is, each act begins afresh on page 1, the sequence being continued until its conclusion. This manner of pagination is frequently to be noted in his drama manuscripts.

Again, and not an uncommon thing with Dumas, in the haste of writing he has forgotten the exact chosen designation of one

character and another, even making the change in the middle of an act, thus explaining why there is no list of characters; this could be an indication of temporary cessation of work or of a draft, and it may also be the result of the influence of the writing of romances concurrently with dramas, the former gaining by the variation of their designations. In the manuscript there are many turns of expression which are constantly to be met with in his work. There is the noted peculiarity of one speaker repeating part, or even the whole, of another’s words; this is an extremely characteristic tendency and one so easily made irritating, but which Dumas’ genius not only carried off satisfactorily but also frequently turned to masterly effect.

Another common habit in this drama is to marshal phrases or expressions in twos, threes, and even fours. So, too, at the conclusion of act III, the Mask’s words: “Adieu, if you speak the truth, au revoir if you lie” may be connected with not a few Dumas phrases, of which perhaps the most famous is the conclusion to *Le vicomte de Bragelonne*: “Athos, Porthos, au revoir; Aramis, adieu for ever”.

Passing, then, from what may be regarded as proofs of Dumas’ skilful mechanism, I come to the more literary indications. The characters are for the most part essentially of the type beloved by him, including a mysterious masked man (how fond Dumas was of masked executioners; two other examples are provided in “The three musketeers” and in the drama *Cromwell et Charles 1^{er}*, Paris, Marchant, 1835), and a woman who must atone for her guilt in such a way that it will be condoned by the audience. There are any number of clever situations and arresting scenes such as he excelled in, and I will mention but one of a dozen—the powerful opening scene played in a dim light and with no word spoken.

From his first dramatic efforts Dumas made a point of including in his most moving and tragic pieces an occasional lighter touch. In this play there is the conversation between some women and a sacristan, and in the trial scene the naïve and kindly evidence given by the character Felice. Dumas was always careful not to overdo these breaks in the poignancy, unlike Hugo, who often carried them to lengths of farce.

What, then, is the manuscript’s true history, and why was it that it never came to be printed or published? The key to the puzzle may be somewhere among Dumas’ lesser articles or in an unpublished ‘causerie’.

I hold the firm belief that any Dumas manuscript of rarity and importance such as this should belong to France, and so I passed it to the late Jacques Guignard, Conservateur en Chef of the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, and now, handsomely bound, it is in that library.