

side. On the strength of his dare-devil disposition and of his ability, as one who is half a gentleman, to speak up to the "silk stocking" squires he is made leader of the Stockbridge mob, and becomes in the time of the riots ultimate boss of the village. He madly loves Desire, an aristocratic young beauty, whose connections and interests are, of course, all with the other side. Perez, in his capacity of des-

pot, can be of the greatest service to Desire and her family; and so dire are their distresses that the refined and tender girl is glad to buy protection with the only means in her power. Although she detests the ruffian, she lets him kiss her freely once in a while. Events draw the pair more and more closely together. And so the story goes.

Carl Hovey.

THE DEGENERATION OF THE HISTORICAL NOVEL

It has become one of the common-places of literary comment that the average person does not like to take his fiction seriously. He has cares enough of his own, as a rule, without troubling himself about the physical discomforts or mental anguish of fellow-mortals, whom he frequently does not understand and, what is more, does not want to. There are plenty of people, no doubt, who could hardly be hired to read Tolstoy or Maupassant or Prévost; people who look upon books like *Folly Corner* or *The Touchstone* as the caviare of fiction, to be discreetly set aside for the literary gourmet. What they want is a story which will take them out of themselves for the time being, away from the click of the stock-ticker and the ring of the telephone, and all the rest of this machine-made life of to-day; which will show them a world in which the men are all brave and the women fair, and all sorts of delightfully impossible things happen as plausibly and convincingly as once upon a time they seemed to happen to Jack the Giant Killer and all his kith and kin of the nursery books.

After all, this taste for good historical novels is a thoroughly legitimate and healthy taste. The only pity is that really good historical novels are so rare. The truth is, that the purveyors of this class of fiction to-day are under a considerable disadvantage; it has grown far harder than it used to be to produce the necessary illusion. That part of the reading public which has no use for the realistic novel nevertheless has learned to demand that its historic romances—Tudor or

Stuart or Valois, Colonial or Revolutionary, as the case may be—shall all be documented with a care of which Scott or Dumas never dreamed. Besides, the modern novelist finds that the great and stirring epochs of history have been largely pre-empted, and that if he would introduce into his pages any big figures of the past, a Richard Cœur de Lion or a Henry of Navarre, he not only has the historic facts to contend with, but finds himself confronted with the still more formidable task of satisfying the popular ideal based upon the Richard of *Ivanhoe* or the Henry of the Valois trilogy. Nothing betrays the weakness of the Stanley Weyman school more than a comparison of the Richelieu of *Under the Red Robe* with the Richelieu of *Les Trois Mousquetaires*. It is small wonder that so many writers take refuge in obscurer epochs and remoter regions, where fewer ghosts of the past, in the shape of musty chronicles, can rise up to give them the lie.

Properly, however, an historical novel worthy of the name should have some great event for a background, like the massacre of St. Bartholomew or the execution of Charles I.; and scenes like these, if they are to live, must be treated on a rather big, rather Titanic scale. Now, with all his defects of style and of method, there is, after all, something rather Titanic about Dumas the Elder—something, at all events, which his collaborator Maquet never quite got, after all his long apprenticeship, and which his modern imitators do not get at all. They saturate themselves with Dumas, much

as a sponge absorbs water; then the sponge is squeezed, and we get back the water again, a trifle muddier, perhaps, but, nevertheless, essentially the same water.

To any one who knows his Dumas well this class of books is particularly exasperating. There is a constant, teasing, elusive resemblance, a fugitive reminiscence of parallel passages which cannot be run to earth. One of the best illustrations of this which can be found is *The Helmet of Navarre*, which is at present running its triumphal course as a serial. To begin with, it is considerably above the average, the action moving forward with a rapidity and a verve that are rather exceptional. And, secondly, the author to a certain extent seems to challenge comparison, by choosing for her scene the very times of the famous Valois series, taking up the course of French history at the very point where Dumas left it in *Les Quarante-Cinq*.

At the outset of Miss Runkle's story her principal character, Felix Broux, sets out for Paris to seek his fortune, just as the typical Dumas hero, big or little, always does—D'Artagnan or Ange Pitou, or the illustrious Forty-Five, to cite a wholesale case. His first night in the city is passed at the sign of "L'Amour de Dieu," which somehow reminds us of the "Fier Chevalier" in *Les Quarante-Cinq*, and, like the latter hostelry, overlooks the windows of a house in which some of the most stirring events of the story are to take place. Like the typical Dumas hero also, Felix has a patron in Paris, but he has somewhat more than the ordinary amount of trouble in securing an audience, and meanwhile his spirit of adventure leads him into all sorts of difficulties and perils, and makes him a duellist and a prisoner twice within the first twenty-four hours, all of which is eminently Dumasesque. And having, in the course of these events, given his word of honour to an enemy to deliver a certain message faithfully, Felix braves his patron's anger rather than be false to his promise, even when it turns out that the message involved a plot against his patron's life—a rather close parallel to Dumas's Ernauton de Carmaignes, who, under like circumstances, faces imprisonment rather than surrender a letter he has promised to deliver, although that

letter contains a state secret which threatens the life of the king. Later on, the author temporarily disposes of her leading villain by the simple expedient of having him arrested through mistaken identity—an expedient which is a commonplace in the Dumas stories, from the time when Athos allows himself to be arrested in place of D'Artagnan to the veritable comedy of errors played by Arnaud du Thill and Martin-Guerre in *Les Deux Dianes*. Still another commonplace is the rescue of a hard-pressed duellist, through the expedient of having a door open providentially behind him, as in the case of Bussy in *La Dame de Monsoreau*, and of Mordaunt in *Vingt ans Après*. In the latest instalment of *The Helmet of Navarre* Miss Runkle also utilises this device for rescuing her two principal characters when hard pressed by a score of opponents.

Now, *The Helmet of Navarre* is not an exceptional case. This same sort of structural resemblance would be very easy to trace in a large proportion of current historical romances. In the two hundred and ninety odd volumes which comprise his works in the Calmann Levy edition, Dumas covered a good deal of ground, and the modern novelist, unless he has a phenomenal imagination, would do better not to read too much of him, or he will find himself baffled in the attempt to get away from his model.

But to say that these modern stories are largely servile imitations of *Les Trois Mousquetaires* and *La Reine Margot* is merely to state a truism, and not at all to explain Dumas's obvious superiority. Perhaps one of the simplest explanations which can be offered is, that Dumas resembles his favourite heroes, his D'Artagnan, and Chicot and Bussy, rather closely in one respect—he is not easily overawed by rank. He treats his royal puppets quite as unceremoniously as he does his lacqueys, and shows us their foibles and their frailties quite as relentlessly. Among his less-known volumes there is one which bears the title *Great Men in Their Dressing-Gowns*, in the preface to which he points out that the popular proverb that no man is a hero to his valet is, like most popular proverbs, composed of some truth and a good deal of falsehood. For his own part, he believes that the really great man will be

the gainer if he is sometimes stripped of his robes of state and placed upon a pedestal, so that he may be seen from all sides. A statue, he says, is always better than a bas-relief. And so he practises what he preaches, the good Dumas, and strips his royal puppets quite ruthlessly. He delights in getting behind the scenes of court life, and showing us kings and queens, not literally as they were, perhaps, but as they might have been, with all their intrigues and jealousies, their laughter and their tears, their favours and their vengeance. It is rather haphazard history that he gives us, much of the time; but, true or false, his Henrys and his Louis are people of real flesh and blood, with rather more human passions than the average, and with abundant opportunity to gratify them. He has a rather riotous imagination, too, and a page from *Queen Marguerite's Memoirs*, a scrap of *chronique scandaleuse* from Brantôme, will give him material for a whole chapter—inimitable chapters, too, many of them.

But there is another point of difference scarcely less striking than his unceremonious treatment of historic facts. Dumas's novels are essentially men's novels, his heroes men's heroes, his pictures of life drawn often with something of a Rabelaisian freedom and humour. The modern historical novels—at least those which enter the competition of big editions—are love stories, pure and simple, in which true love runs its proverbially stormy course, and after the requisite duels have been fought, the obstacles overcome and the enemy worsted, the curtain is run down to the sound of marriage bells. The Dumas novel, let us be devoutly thankful, is built upon a different model. It is primarily a story of adventure, a special development of the Picaresco novel, and not a love story in any proper acceptance of the term. From first to last he recognises man's love as being of man's life literally a thing apart; his daily concern is his king and his own honour. And because Dumas did not believe in good fortune in both love and war, the love episodes are almost invariably tragic. Sometimes it is the woman who is the victim, like Constance in *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, or Geneviève in *Le Chevalier du Maison-Rouge*, or Aïssa, in the rather ghastly ending of *Le Bâtard*

de Mauleon; sometimes it is the lover who is murdered, like Coconnas and La Mole in *La Reine Margot*, or Bussy in *La Dame de Monsoreau*, or Bannière in *Olympè de Cleves*. Sometimes the hero's love is not returned, as in the case of the Vicomte de Bragelonne, or La Joyeuse in *Les Quarante-Cinq*. Indeed, only one exception comes to mind in which the hero and heroine have a prospect of living happily ever after, and that is in the rather insignificant volume of *Ascanio*.

It is rather odd that an author who can draw a hundred different types of men, each one a vivid and unmistakable creation, should have been at such a complete loss when it comes to painting a woman. Dumas's women, with few exceptions, may be divided into two classes—caricatures and nonentities, and all best distinguished as black, brown or fair. Many of them are little more than mere symbols of sex—women who bestow their favours lightly, and pass gracefully from the arms of one lover to another. One of the rare exceptions is Marguerite of Valois, and for this we have to thank the lady's memoirs rather than Dumas's insight into feminine psychology.

The character of Marguerite is only one of the many features which stamp the Valois series as something apart from the rest of the Dumas novels, and the only wonder is that they are not better known and more widely read nowadays. Yet it is safe to say that of all the people who find delight in Athos, Porthos, Aramis and D'Artagnan, and that scarcely less illustrious quartette, Grimaud, Mousqueton, Bazin and Planchet, not one in ten has read his admirable Valois trilogy, *La Reine Margot*, *La Dame de Monsoreau* and *Les Quarante-Cinq*. And yet they are well worth the reading, even though they will never usurp first place in the affections of those who find a perennial delight in *Les Trois Mousquetaires*. To some extent they belong to a lower plane; they contain no group of characters, bound together by an enduring friendship, or inspired by any such lofty motives as the saving of a king's life or the protection of a queen's honour. Indeed, they contain no characters at all worthy to rank with the immortal four—with Athos, "the gentlest and noblest voice of honour;" with D'Ar-

tagnan, "the frankest and rudest voice of sincerity," or even with the ponderous Porthos or Aramis, the friend of duchesses. And yet there are many compen-

sations. To begin with, they portray an epoch unsurpassed in the annals of France for picturesqueness and for tragic interest, the period from the massacre of



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From "Characters of Romance." By William Nicholson.

CHICOT.

St. Bartholomew to the closing days of the House of Valois. They possess a special atmosphere of their own—an atmosphere of old chronicles and old amours, of Marguerite and her Memoirs, of Brantôme and his *Dames Galantes*. Nowhere else has Dumas allowed himself to paint in quite such flamboyant colours the violent contrasts of those times; the pomp and glitter of a corrupt court, the reckless carnage in the dim-lit streets; yet, overdrawn as they are, his pictures leave a very definite impression of the lack of sex-honour and the cheapness of human life in those days of the ascendancy of Catherine de Medici. And if, in detailing court scandals—the frailties of Queen Margot, the complaisance of Henry IV.—he permits himself at times too broad a license, the frankly Rabelaisian spirit in which it is all done goes far toward disarming criticism. And who could fail to smile over such a veritable *conte drôlatique* as that of St. Luc's wedding night?

After all, even if there is no second D'Artagnan, there are a good many characters in the Valois series which deserve a prominent place in the gallery of Dumas's heroes. There are La Mole and Coconnas, and the valiant Bussy, whom Marguerite herself declared to have been born "to be the terror of his enemies, the glory of his master and the hope of his friends;" there is Chicot, the prince of jesters, and faithful adherent of a king whom he loved but could not respect; and Father Gorenflot, a figure which refuses to be forgotten, a Rabelaisian figure with a Gargantuan appetite; and last but by no means least, there is Henry of Navarre, the most vivid and best-rounded portrait of all the French kings that Dumas has given us, "il était bien de la Gascogne gasconnante et ne degasconnait jamais," is the final verdict, which is not to be improved upon.

Of the stirring scenes in these volumes there is none that will rank with D'Artagnan's memorable interview with Richelieu after the execution of Milady,

or when he dictates his own terms to Anne of Austria, while Mazarin is held as hostage, or that later occasion when he wrings from Louis XIV. the order for Athos's release from imprisonment. Neither is there any instance of such foolhardy courage as the famous breakfast on the bastion at La Rochelle. But there is plenty of good fighting, nevertheless, notably in the death scene of Bussy, and in Chicot's inimitable duel with Brother Borromée, in the private room of *La Corne d'Abondance*. D'Artagnan's memorable ride to London is closely rivalled by Chicot's solitary journey to Navarre, while the chapter in which Chicot turns Latinist is one which remains without a parallel. And if one must pick out the scene which of all others stands out as most worthy of remembrance, it is that of the siege of Cahors, when Henry of Navarre, entering battle for the first time, finds himself in a veritable panic of fear, and catching up a battle-axe in hands which almost refuse to hold it, by sheer strength of will forces his shaking limbs into the very front ranks of the storming party, and is the first to enter the breach in the walls. "Chicot, did you ever see such a coward?" he asks. "No, sire," replies Chicot, "I never saw *such* cowardice; it is terrible!"

It is a matter of no little satisfaction that the new edition of the Valois romances, recently issued by the Messrs. Crowell and Company, has rendered these works accessible in their entirety to English readers, in a fairly adequate translation, and in a form which will make an attractive addition to the library shelves. The illustrations have the somewhat negative merit of not doing any especial violence to our preconceived ideas of the characters depicted. On the other hand, Mr. Nicholson's presentment of the immortal Chicot, like that of Porthos in the same series of drawings, is an achievement fully worthy of the genius which inspired it.

Frederic Taber Cooper.

SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN

Perhaps the pleasing rhythmic quality of the combination "Gilbert and Sullivan" has had its effect on the ear, so that the mention of one without the other sounds as strange as would that of Castor or Damon without his fellow; but a sufficient explanation of the merger of identity is the general ignorance in America of the independent work of each of the famous collaborators. Two or three ballads and hymn-tunes excepted, Sullivan's reputation in this country rests solely on his comic operas; and Gilbert, who wrote a whole repertory of successful plays, is here scarcely associated with any of them but *Pygmalion and Galatea*. Sir Arthur Sullivan's recent death offers an opportune occasion to consider him as an independent figure in the world of music. For even if, in time to come, his position is based mainly on his collaborations with Gilbert, it should be remembered that the operettas constitute only a part of his life work, and owe their vitality and musical superiority largely to the fact that the composer had broadened his natural talents by exercising them in many branches of his art.

Sullivan had established his position as one of the foremost English composers long before he met Gilbert. Almost from infancy he showed signs of rare musical ability; and his father, a bandmaster by profession, gladly encouraged him to look on music as the field of his career. At the age of eight he wrote his first composition; even before this he had learned to play the various instruments in his father's band. A chorister in the Chapel Royal at twelve, he attracted the attention of masters and fellow-pupils by his rapid advancement. In 1856 he entered the competition for the Mendelssohn scholarship, then first thrown open; and although the youngest of the seventeen candidates, he was successful. His progress won for him an extension of the scholarship for two years in succession, and he was sent to Leipzig to complete his studies. Young Sullivan was not slow to appreciate the exceptional advantages of having a corps of instructors such as Moscheles, Plaidy, Rietz, Hauptmann and David; and the letters written during this period show him full of enthusiasm for his work. An extract from

one to his father is significant of his confidence in himself and early independence of judgment. He is composing incidental music to Shakspeare's *Tempest*, and says: "I am very anxious to know if you will like my music. It is very different to any you have heard. For instance (bar quoted). But of course it is not often I go into such extremes as that. At first it may sound rather harsh, but you will soon grow accustomed to it, and most probably like it very much." Such assurance is worthy of Wagner himself! But it was warranted by results. Returning to England in 1862, at the age of twenty, he came prominently before the musical world with his *Tempest* music. "There has been no such first appearance in England in our time," wrote the eminent critic Chorley. In a few short years he had further enriched the literature of music by the symphony in E, the *In Memoriam*, *Marmion* and *Di Ballo* overtures and *The Prodigal Son* and *The Light of the World*, both oratorios. During this period also he made several essays in the field of dramatic music, besides writing a large number of songs whose popularity in England is still unabated.

In 1866 a performance of Offenbach's farce, *Les Deux Aveugles*, suggested to Sullivan an Anglicised form of opera bouffe, or comic opera, to give it the English equivalent. With Mr. F. C. Burnand, the editor of *Punch*, he wrote *Cox and Box* and *La Contrabandista*. Shortly afterward he was introduced to Gilbert, and their first joint production was *Thespis*, remembered to-day for the charming ballad "The Little Maid of Arcadie." It was no chance meeting that brought the two together. Gilbert was a successful playwright. *Pygmalion and Galatea*, his most popular work, appeared two years before, and prior to this he had made all England laugh at his "Bab Ballads." Sullivan's tentative efforts with Burnand had shown to his friends his special gifts in the field of light opera; and what more natural than that they should expect happy results from a combination of talents so exactly complementary? *The Trial by Jury*, which followed *Thespis*, was received with great favour. It was written for D'Oyly