



## The Red Sphinx: A Sequel to The Three Musketeers

*Alexandre Dumas , Lawrence Ellsworth (Translation)*

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In 1844, Alexandre Dumas published *The Three Musketeers*, a novel so famous and still so popular today that it scarcely needs introduction. Shortly thereafter he wrote a sequel, *Twenty Years After*, that resumed the adventures of his swashbuckling heroes.

Later, toward the end of his career, Dumas wrote *The Red Sphinx*, another direct sequel to *The Three Musketeers* that begins, not twenty years later, but a mere twenty days afterward. *The Red Sphinx* picks up right where the *The Three Musketeers* left off, continuing the stories of Cardinal Richelieu, Queen Anne, and King Louis XIII—and introducing a charming new hero, the Comte de Moret, a real historical figure from the period. A young cavalier newly arrived in Paris, Moret is an illegitimate son of the former king, and thus half-brother to King Louis. The French Court seethes with intrigue as king, queen, and cardinal all vie for power, and young Moret soon finds himself up to his handsome neck in conspiracy, danger—and passionate romance!

Dumas wrote seventy-five chapters of *The Red Sphinx*, all for serial publication, but he never quite finished it, and so the novel languished for almost a century before its first book publication in France in 1946. While Dumas never completed the book, he had earlier written a separate novella, *The Dove*, that recounted the final adventures of Moret and Cardinal Richelieu.

Now for the first time, in one cohesive narrative, *The Red Sphinx* and *The Dove* make a complete and satisfying storyline—a rip-roaring novel of historical adventure, heretofore unknown to English-language readers, by the great Alexandre Dumas, king of the swashbucklers.

## The Red Sphinx: A Sequel to The Three Musketeers Details

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## From Reader Review *The Red Sphinx: A Sequel to The Three Musketeers* for online ebook

### KayW4 says

I was offered a free copy of this book by NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

So this is a difficult one to judge for a few reasons, mainly that reviewing *The Red Sphinx* really means reviewing the endeavour of compiling, finishing and translating into English this fairly half-baked Dumas sequel. Of course, there are many other sequels to *The Three Musketeers* other than this one out there; some of them by Dumas and many are not. But another Dumas - however desperately padded, as this one undeniably is - is still another Dumas, which means that it's fun and implausible and overwrought in just the ways you want it to be. The translation is solid if not spectacular and this reader at least didn't mind that the seams between Dumas and his collaborators are showing a great deal. Dumas is a shabby writer, and that's part of the fun of reading him: "will he manage to tie this scene together in a way that makes a tiny bit of sense? By gad he's done it!" is a huge part of the enjoyment of reading him. Highly recommended, just don't forget to switch your brain off first!

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### Steve Goble says

A pairing of an unfinished, serialized novel by Dumas with a novella by the same author that sort of serves as the conclusion, this book is, by necessity, somewhat incomplete. But if you loved "*The Three Musketeers*" and other Dumas works, you really need to read this one.

Note: It is a sequel to "*Musketeers*," but does not feature d'Artagnan, Athos, Aramis and Porthos. It is the cardinal's tale, through and through, and has more intrigue and statesmanship than swashbuckling.

Full review at my blog: <https://stevegoblefiction.wordpress.c...>

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### Savasandir says

Uno degli ultimi romanzi storici scritti da quel genio di Dumas, *La Sfinge Rossa* ci catapultava di nuovo nella Francia di Luigi XIII, ma questa volta senza i moschettieri perché, come rivela l'Autore stesso nella prefazione, essendo ormai sepolti da tempo, sarebbe stato come "*evocare non più uomini vivi ma fantasmi*." La storia riprende là dove si era interrotta ne *I Tre Moschettieri*, con il rientro del re a Parigi dopo la vittoria a La Rochelle. Il grande protagonista però è il cardinale di Richelieu che, non ancora all'apice del suo potere, deve in continuazione contrattaccare alle intriganti manovre della regina Anna e di Maria de' Medici, la terribile regina madre.

Il lettore, seduto accanto a Richelieu nel suo studio, lo seguirà nel governo della nazione e nella sua personale ricerca dei mandanti dell'assassinio di Enrico IV, per poi abbandonare Parigi e la Francia ed andare a guerreggiare in Piemonte, in uno di quei gran guazzabugli che erano le guerre di successione europee. E come è norma quando si legge Dumas, oltre a divertirsi il lettore ne esce più edotto, nello specifico non

solo sul processo che portò la Francia nel giro di 50 anni a diventare una delle più grandi potenze Europee proprio per merito di Richelieu, ma anche con la consapevolezza che spetta sempre al grande cardinale gran parte del merito della secolare preminenza culturale della Francia e di Parigi, che scippò alle corti italiane il titolo di capitale europea delle lettere e delle arti e lo detenne incontrastata dal XVIII al XX secolo (temo però che oggi quel titolo sia di nuovo vacante).

Rispetto ai suoi scritti più celebri, qui troviamo un Dumas più profondo, che indaga più dettagliatamente fra le pieghe della Storia, e sembra quasi che voglia rendere un atto di giustizia sia a Richelieu, che perde il ruolo di antagonista supremo dei moschettieri, mantenendo però tutto il suo fascino letterario ed anzi, acquistando parecchio in simpatia, sia, e forse soprattutto, a re Luigi, che ne *I tre moschettieri* fa la parte del marito tontolone (per tacer dei palchi) e che qui invece viene descritto come un debole dallo spirito volitivo, questo sì, ma anche più perspicace di quanto dia ad intendere.

Inoltre, svolgendosi la vicenda fra il 1628 e il 1630, alla peste che imperversò in quel periodo in Europa è dedicato un intero capitolo dagli inevitabili echi manzoniani, Dumas stesso arriva a citare *I Promessi Sposi* nel bel mezzo della narrazione.

Un Dumas più storico, è vero, ma che non rinuncia alla sua *verve*, i momenti spassosi non mancano ed il libro si chiude con un ultimo, buffissimo capitolo che è tutto un programma.

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## **Sud666 says**

The Red Sphinx was Dumas' "sequel" to the Three Musketeers. Just as a warning, not a single Musketeer makes even so much as a cameo appearance. This is Dumas' ode to Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu. Obviously Dumas admired the Cardinal and much is made of him in this tale.

It is a book very heavy on politics. It is the interplay of the King with his mother and wife and brother. It is Cardinal Richelieu walking that political tightrope for the good of the King and France. If you don't really care about the machinations on behalf of Marie de Medicis (the Queen Mother) and Anne of Austria (Queen of France) to manipulate Louis XIII and destroy Cardinal Richelieu-then you will not like this detailed historical fiction. For that is what this is. A fictional account of palace intrigue, Richelieu's brilliance, Louis XIII's prevarication and a little bit of adventure, some sword fighting and even a military campaign add some color to an otherwise political based story.

So why three stars? Well the story never ends. Dumas never finished it. It ends rather abruptly. In the edition I bought, it includes the short story "The Dove" which is allegedly the answer to the intrigues. It is. Somewhat. It was written years before Red Sphinx and doesn't always translate well into Red Sphinx. I didn't like the Dove. Thus due to the non-ending and the rather poor quality of the Dove this is a 3 star book. The Red Sphinx had it been finished would likely have been a 4-5 star review. I found it interesting and Dumas' style lends the impression of a action/spy thriller far ahead of it's time. The illustrations were really nice too. Shame it never ended.

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## **Terry says**

2.5 – 3 stars

One thing that is perhaps important to get out of the way first: the subtitle 'A Sequel to the Three Musketeers' is both from one perspective the truest statement that could be made about this novel and also, as most readers coming to this book will take it, the most egregious lie possible (there is certainly not an Athos, Porthos, Aramis, or D'Artagnan to be found anywhere amongst its pages). The only way this book can truly be considered a sequel to the Three Musketeers is in a purely chronological sense since it takes place very soon after the events of the first book. Indeed the fact that the central villain in the one becomes the main hero of the other (more on this below) makes the claim even less tenable and one might even say that this book actually takes the Three Musketeers and flips it on its head. In regards to a close connection between the two works, let's just say they occur in the same era and leave it at that.

I was somewhat dubious about this book when I first heard about it given the proliferation of Dumas forgeries throughout history made in an attempt to cash in on his more famous tales, and the very real possibility that even if this was genuine the fact that it has only been published (widely at least) now might speak to its relative lack of literary merit. It's definitely not in the same league as *The Three Musketeers* or *The Count of Monte Cristo*, but that being said it is a fine work, albeit one that is unfortunately incomplete. Dumas does a good job as usual at creating vivid characters and putting them into suitably melodramatic situations against the backdrop of history. Historical and political events are front and centre in this tale and as such the title given to this edition, 'The Red Sphinx', is much more appropriate than the one it first had in serial publication ('The Comte de Moret', given here as an alternate title). Cardinal Richelieu, the 'red sphinx' of the title, is by far the more likely protagonist of the story than the aforementioned Count, an illegitimate son of Henri IV whose adventures as invented by Dumas also occur in the pages. These adventures, as swashbuckling and romantic as they may be, have much less to do with the meat of the novel and even his love affair with the possibly invented Isabelle de Lautrec seem little more than footnotes when compared to the overarching shadow of the Cardinal and his actions in securing his hold over the monarch of France and France's own rising place on the stage of Europe.

Thus readers coming to this book expecting a 'sequel to the Three Musketeers' will indeed be surprised at this predominance of the Cardinal who now is no longer the scheming villain grasping for power against a noble family that are merely his pawns, but more or less the hero of the story, holding France together by his own genius and daring. Indeed Dumas paints such a vivid picture of the in-fighting, greed and venality of the French court that one wonders how it could have survived without such a man controlling it from behind the throne (or frankly why the musketeers would have bothered to be their champions in the more famous book). Centering on the weak-willed and feckless Louis XIII, his grasping and scheming mother Marie de Medicis, his cowardly and treacherous brother Gaston, Duc d'Orleans, and his unfaithful wife Anne of Austria, intent on supporting her Austrian and Spanish family against France, the royal house seems ripe for its own downfall from within. It suddenly seems less surprising to see Richelieu as the hero as it is apparent that he is the one man competent enough to keep the ship of France on an even keel even in the midst of the royal chaos around him.

As I said I enjoyed the novel, though I wish Dumas had been able to pull together a more coherent plot and there are some problems: the story of the Comte de Moret's love for Isabelle de Lautrec barely gets off the ground and, quite frankly, is the least interesting part of the story; an intriguing character created by Dumas in the form of the swashbuckling sword-for-hire Etienne Latil gets only enough time in the pages to make us wish he was there more often; and our real hero, Cardinal Richelieu, is barely getting his pieces in place on the chess board of Europe before the story breaks off. Alas Dumas never finished the tale and we don't get the chance to see how he was going to bring all the strands together in the end. The editor cobbles something of an ending to the story by adding the novella 'The Dove' as the capstone. On the face of it this makes

eminent sense as it was a story Dumas had written years earlier in epistolary form, detailing the final end to the love between the Comte de Moret and Isabelle de Lautrec. I personally found it a little less than satisfying, however, given the fact that I thought the romance to be one of the weakest (and least interesting) threads of the novel.

I am perhaps not doing a very good job at encouraging people to read this book and that is certainly not my intention. I enjoyed my time with the Cardinal and his men and wish Dumas had finished the tale, but ultimately I imagine this book is likely to be of primary interest to Dumas aficionados and completists.

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## **Helen says**

Well, it may be only January but I think I already know one book which will be appearing on my books of the year list this December! Having read and enjoyed all of Alexandre Dumas' d'Artagnan novels over the last few years (beginning with a re-read of *The Three Musketeers* and ending with *The Man in the Iron Mask*), imagine my delight when I discovered that Dumas had written yet another Musketeers sequel – *The Red Sphinx*, which is being made available in a new English translation this month. Bearing in mind that this is a later Dumas novel, written towards the end of his career on the urging of his publishers, I was pleased to find, almost as soon as I started reading, that it was living up to my expectations!

I don't think it's at all necessary to have read *The Three Musketeers* first; *The Red Sphinx* is set in the same world – that is, in the 17th century at the court of Louis XIII of France – but it also stands alone and if you're hoping to be reacquainted with d'Artagnan, Athos, Porthos and Aramis, you'll be disappointed as the four friends don't appear at all in this book. However, it does contain many of the same elements that made the original novel so much fun to read. There are dashing young heroes and beautiful heroines; duels, battles and sieges; spies and smugglers; secret messages, clever disguises, letters written in code – and political and romantic intrigue in abundance.

Beginning only a few weeks after the events of *The Three Musketeers* ended, the novel opens in Paris at the Inn of the Painted Beard where a hunchbacked marquis is trying to persuade swordsman Etienne Latil to assassinate a rival. When Latil hears that the man he is required to kill is the Comte de Moret, illegitimate son of the late King Henri IV, he refuses to accept the mission and a fight breaks out during which both Latil and the marquis are injured. As fate would have it, upstairs in the inn at that very moment are the Comte de Moret himself and one of the Queen's ladies, who have met in disguise to arrange for Moret to attend a meeting with the Queen.

At the meeting, Moret, who has only recently returned to France from Italy, delivers some letters to the Queen, Anne of Austria, the King's mother Marie de' Medici, and the King's brother, Gaston d'Orleans, and learns that they are plotting the downfall of Cardinal Richelieu, the Red Sphinx of the title. Now, in *The Three Musketeers*, the Cardinal is portrayed as a villain; in *The Red Sphinx*, he is very much a hero. With an intelligence network stretching across half of Europe, he is shown to be a formidably clever man but also a loyal one who always acts with France's best interests at heart – and although he's accused of having too much influence over the king, it's evident that he is trying to use his influence for the good of the country.

I can't possibly describe the plot of this novel in any more detail; it's so complex that I wouldn't know where to start. I think it's enough to say that most of it is devoted to the power struggle between Cardinal Richelieu and his allies on one side and the two queens and Gaston d'Orleans on the other, with the ineffectual young king caught in the middle. Dumas spends a lot of time introducing us to each character who plays a part in

the story, even the minor ones, and although this makes the book longer than it probably needed to be, I didn't mind because the amusing anecdotes he provides about them are so entertaining. He also includes whole chapters dedicated to explaining the political situation in France and across Europe or to describing the progress of key battles – and I'll confess to not finding these very interesting. In general, though, I thought the balance was right and despite the length of the book it held my attention from beginning to end.

One important thing to know about *The Red Sphinx* is that it was never actually finished! In his introduction to the new edition, Lawrence Ellsworth (who is also responsible for the wonderful translation) suggests that maybe Dumas struggled to write an ending because he had already done this in an earlier work. This means that the novel comes to a rather abrupt end with several plot points left unresolved. Annoying – but not as annoying as it could have been, because Ellsworth comes to the rescue by pairing *The Red Sphinx* with another little-known Dumas work, *The Dove*. This is a short story (actually more of a novella) which continues the adventures of two of our main characters, the Comte de Moret and Isabelle de Lautrec, and brings at least some of the threads of the story to a satisfying conclusion.

*The Dove* was written earlier in Dumas' career than *The Red Sphinx* and has a very different feel, being told in the form of letters carried by a dove. It's an unashamedly sentimental story, but I loved it. I found it beautifully romantic and perfectly paced, with the suspense building and building from one letter to the next.

I will, of course, be reading more by Dumas – I have an upcoming re-read of one of my favourite books, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, planned – but I was also so impressed by Lawrence Ellsworth's translation that I've had a look to see what else he has done. It seems that he has also edited *The Big Book of Swashbuckling Adventure*, which sounds very appealing. One to add to the wishlist, I think!

*Thanks to Pegasus Books for providing a copy of this book for review via NetGalley.*

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## Squire says

My third Dumas book, in translation. And a new addition to my short list of favorite authors.

*Le Comte de Moret*, also known as *Le Sphinx Rouge*, was originally serialized in 1865-1866.; but it was left unfinished when the publisher went under and Dumas never returned to it. *The Dove*, which completes the story of Le Comte de Moret and Isabelle de Lautrec was published in 1850. Translator Lawrence Ellsworth has brought them together in one volume and the result is nothing short of magnificent.

It's only been a year since I read *The Three Musketeers*, for the first time, but I'd already forgotten how fun Dumas is to read. His witty, pointed dialogue; dramatic set pieces; and exceptional characterizations make his historical romances come to memorable life.

Make no mistake, this novel + novella is not in the same class as *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*. It is a novel of political intrigue more than swashbuckling action. A lot of modern readers might become impatient with *The Red Sphinx* as the first two thirds of the book dwell on the political maneuvering of the Cardinal de Richelieu in protecting King Louis XIII and France from court and international conspiracies. But when it does swing into action, it is cinematic, exciting and suspenseful. For me, though, the last third of the book was a bit of a let down compared to the first 500 pages.

There was also a couple of annoying format issues: Ellsworth italicizes the letters and missives in the book;

but twice, the interrupting action of the character reading which the letter gets italicized along with the presentation of the letter. Worth noting as it caused me to stop reading, but quickly forgotten as Dumas' gorgeous narrative continued.

But it is *The Dove*, in its first English language publication, that is the real jewel of this book. Astonishingly told in an exchange of letters format, it is a stunning conclusion to *The Red Sphinx*. Beautiful and suspenseful, it put me in a misty-eyed state.

I found the pedigree of the translator to be refreshing. He grew up reading pulp fiction stories of Edgar Rice Burroughs and Robert E. Howard which led him to J.R.R. Tolkien, H. Rider Haggard and Arthur Conan Doyle. He learned French specifically to read Dumas and the memoirs of Richelieu in their original language. He became a writer for TSR (Dungeons&Dragons) and hosted live action role-playing in the 70s and 80s. No stuffy academian HE.!

Highly recommended for fans of Dumas, French history and political novels.

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### **Karine says**

Set four days after the conclusion of *The Three Musketeers*, Dumas' unfinished novel has some wonderful moments of adventure, intrigue, and romance but no musketeers. Instead, the focus is on Cardinal Richelieu's heroic efforts to protect Louis XIII from numerous plots. Unfortunately, this often involves lengthy explanations of 17th century politics. It cuts off abruptly, just as the story becomes exciting again. *The Dove*, the short story that the translator selected as a coda, does not resolve the political intrigues, but it is a beautifully written resolution to the main romance. Don't skip the translator's historical notes, which are excellent.

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### **Monty desai says**

D'ARTAGNAN ROMANCES BOOK 1.5:

THE EVENTS IN THIS BOOK FOLLOW RIGHT AWAY AFTER THE CLIMAX THAT HAPPENED IN THE THREE MUSKETEERS (BOOK 1 OF THE SERIES).

IN THIS BOOK THERE IS MORE EXPOSURE OF THE CARDINAL RICHELIEU'S CHARACTER WHICH IS A CENTRAL CHARACTER IN THE WHOLE PLOT.

THE NEW DYNAMIC CHARACTER THAT YOU WILL LOVE IS THE COMTE DE MORET...THIS CHARACTER IS AMAZING AND THE LOVE BETWEEN HIM AND ISABELLE IN THE SHORT STORY "THE DOVE (PART 2 OF THIS BOOK) IS VERY TOUCHING AND BREATHTAKING...

A VERY GOOD BOOK AND ADDITION TO THIS PROMISING SERIES..

THE ONLY DISAPPOINTING PART WAS THE THREE MUSKETEERS ARE NOT PART OF THIS PLOT OR DON'T SHOW UP...

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### **Greg says**

I'm rating the book higher than is my wish because my bad experience with it has much to do with it being a *Zeno's Nightmare Doorstop* for an audiobook narrator. Dumas seemed averse to effing pronouns so I got to



pronounce every snot-laden Francophone name four times per sentence for EIGHT. HUNDRED. PAGES. I get paid, but I'm glad he's dead.

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### **Megan says**

4.5 stars.

Despite how long it took me to get through this one, I really enjoyed it. Dumas is always a fun read, even with his long, rambling passages that often seem to be sidetracking from the plot entirely. The humour was great in this one, and I loved all the snide observations and comments that were strewn throughout. I should point out however, that, despite the title, none of the four musketeers make an appearance, though there are allusions to a some of the events of a 'previous novel' that 'readers may be familiar with'.

This is a period of history that I don't know much about, so it was nice to have quite a large focus on Cardinal Richelieu, who was such a big player in French and European politics back then. Obviously, there were a few facts and ideas that were embellished or made up for entertainment purpose - the 'facts' around Louis XIII's parentage, for example, and the very historically-vague relationship that Anne of Austria had with the English Duke of Buckingham. But, Dumas is a storyteller, and storytellers often bend the truth to fit their own purpose.

It's a shame that the 'Red Sphinx' manuscript was unfinished, but that of 'The Dove' works really well to provide an ending - at least for the story of the Comte de Moret and Isabelle. I did find the change in style a little jarring though ('The Dove' is told through an exchange of letters sent via a dove), and it took me a while to work out that the letters were written by two different people rather than a single author. It was also a little confusing initially as to whom was writing which letter, but once the plot cleared that up, it was much more coherent.

Overall, a highly enjoyable read, though I can't deny that I missed the presence of Milady de Winter at the cardinal's side.

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### **John Wirenius says**

A follow up to The Three Musketeers with Richelieu as the hero? Brilliant, from beginning to end, with the wily Cardinal foiling plots, launching counterplots and being wittily sarcastic throughout. (Will someone please get a script to Peter Capaldi stat?)

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### **Lubinka Dimitrova says**

An Alexandre Dumas work - definitely, but a sequel to the Three Musketeers - certainly not; these promotional half truths do more a disservice to the book that enhance its acceptance by the public. I also feel that a bit more editing would have been beneficial for the final outcome - I wouldn't have missed some annoying anachronisms, some overly lengthy historical passages and the overload of adverts for his other novels, which we love and cherish anyways. I also didn't quite appreciate some of Dumas' trademark - but often rather absurd - coincidences, although I suppose there's no cure for that.

Still, a new novel by Dumas could never be a disappointment for the completist at heart. His captivating writing style, albeit somewhat muddled by the penny-a-line convention, his lively characters, his humor, the intrigue, the passion, the historical background that we get to know in detail- all that is more than enough for me to say that I truly enjoyed this novel, even despite its untimely cliffhanger of an ending, and the slightly ridiculous novella added to this edition. Richelieu was among my favorite characters even when portrayed as a villain in the Three Musketeers, so this vindication is most welcome for his numerous fans.

Last, but not least, the translator did a magnificent job of rendering this book into English, and I couldn't be more satisfied with the result. Thanks to him and to the gifted narrator, this book turned out to be much more enjoyable than I expected after reading the initial impressions here.

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## **Faouzia says**

I would like to thank NetGalley and the publisher for this copy.

I have always enjoyed reading the stories of Alexandre Dumas as French literature was an integral part of my days at school, especially with the Three Musketeers. So it was a little bit strange for me to read Dumas in English!

I admit that i have never heard of this book of Dumas before, so i was doubly pleased when reading it. And the translation work was really good, at least from my humble point of view.

Now, about the story itself, it was quite interesting, as all Dumas's stories are, but it did not feature the famous three Musketeers at all. It treated the events that happened after their story. Of course, a Sequel to the Three Musketeers cannot possible work without the one and only Cardinal Richelieu, but it introduced another very interesting character, Antoine de Bourbon Comte de Moret and his tragic love story with Isabelle de Lautrec.

I liked how Dumas always included real life events and shaped his stories around them, many times it felt like a history lesson, a very interesting one. The way he painted the court life, the very diverse set of characters, the intrigues, the betrayals, the love affairs, the wars, the treaties, the loss and the victory. Each time i closed the book, i felt like leaving a time capsule, where i was for a moment in the France of the 17th century.

The fascinating thing about this particular book is that Dumas never actually finished it. But as it turned out, he wrote in some previous period a short story featuring the "end" of the story of Le Comte de Moret and Isabelle. The publisher of this edition have done a great work putting the original manuscript with the short story, it would have been rather dissapointing otherwise.

And for me, that short story was the best part of the whole book. Dumas was able to conjure the pure feelings of two broken souls in so few pages, those words were so powerful.

I definitely recommend this book the classics lovers, you would enjoy it a lot.

As for me, i think at some point i'll want to read it again in French. I don't know why, but i always feel that there is something magical to read the words that author put himself.

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## **Althea Ann says**

Below are three quotes from this Dumas novel that let the reader know what they're in for:

"Readers who already know these historical facts may complain that these are unnecessary details that just get in the way of the picturesque and the novel. Such readers are welcome to pass over these details, but we included them for those unfamiliar with history or for those who, attracted by the ambitious title of this historical romance, hope to learn something from it."

"Our readers may find this chapter a bit long and dry, but our respect for history leads us to reproduce every detail of this great meeting in the Luxembourg that decided on the war in Italy, including all the speeches of the two cardinals. Our claim is that a historical novel should entertain both those readers who know the history it's based upon, and those who are learning about it from what we write."

"The gravity of the historical events we recount sometimes distracts us from the joys or sorrows they bring to the hearts of our characters."

The first two quotes allude to the wealth of historical detail in these book. I think Dumas has a point here, and one of the reasons I enjoy historical novels is indeed to learn something from them. The third quote - where Dumas admits that sometimes he lets those historical details distract him from the emotional drama of the fictional story - is unfortunately true, and it is a weakness in the book, more so than in other Dumas novels I've read. There are, as one should expect, scenes of swashbuckling action, surprising lustiness and scandal, and laugh-out-loud humor; but the plot as a whole is rather meandering and unfocused. It did not move quickly. You can tell that Dumas is extremely enthused by the period in history where he sets his tales, and it's clear as well that he feels passionately about the figure of Cardinal Richelieu, around whom the book is woven. But still, the story isn't really going anywhere, although it contains quite a few engaging scenes along the way. Honestly, I think this is why Dumas left the novel unfinished. The seventy-five existing chapters were originally published in serial format before the tale sputtered out, and were not collected for publication until decades later, in 1946. This is the first English translation to become available.

However, included here as an 'ending', or possibly a coda to "The Red Sphinx" (or, "The Comte de Moret,") is a separate novella, "The Dove," which is also a previously untranslated work. This dramatically sentimental tale of tragically separated lovers who languish alone could not be more different in tone and writing style, although the setting (and characters) may be the same. It's tightly plotted, concise, emotional (possibly to a fault) and poetic. It's a tale to read while languidly picnicking in the gardens of a folly, or reclining on a bench outside a romantic grotto. I loved it.

Overall, I would say, if you are a Dumas fan, of course, the publication of this book is a major event, and you should definitely read it. If you are not yet familiar with Dumas, however, don't start here. Go for one of the more well-known classics. However, even in that case, this volume is **STILL** worth getting for 'The Dove,' which is a quick read.

I leave you with two more quotes.

One thought-provoking:

"In every society throughout history, there has always been a conservative party that opposes all new ideas as violations of tradition. This party prefers the known routine to an unknown future: that is to say, progress.

The adherents of the status quo, favoring stagnation over movement, death versus life, saw in Richelieu a revolutionary whose efforts to reform society would just cause unrest. And Richelieu was not just the enemy of conservatives, but of the entire Catholic world. Without him, Europe would have been at peace."

And one simply clever:

"Wine tended to bring out the religion in him, as it put him in a state of grace."

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