

**OXFORD FRENCH SERIES. LE DEMI-
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PROSE. EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION
AND NOTES BY HUGH ALLISON SMITH
AND ROBERT BELL MICHELL**

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ALEXANDRE DUMAS

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ALEXANDRE DUMAS FILS

Oxford French Series

By AMERICAN SCHOLARS

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ALEXANDRE DUMAS FILS

LE
DEMI-MONDE
COMÉDIE

EN CINQ ACTES, EN PROSE

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

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PERSONNAGES

OLIVIER DE JALIN
DE NANJAC
HIPPOLYTE RICHOND
DE THONNERINS
PREMIER DOMESTIQUE
DEUXIÈME DOMESTIQUE
TROISIÈME DOMESTIQUE
LA BARONNE SUZANNE D'ANGE
LA VICOMTESSE DE VERNIÈRES
VALENTINE DE SANTIS
MARCELLE
UNE FEMME DE CHAMBRE

À PARIS

Au premier acte et au cinquième, chez Olivier; au deuxième, chez la vicomtesse; au troisième et au quatrième, chez Suzanne.



INTRODUCTION

THE *Demi-Monde* is probably the most important and significant of the plays of Dumas fils.¹ It is true that he had inaugurated realistic drama three years earlier in the *Dame aux Camélias* (1852), but this first play, popular as it has been, was written while he was still a disciple of his father and of Romanticism, and before he had taken any attitude or position of his own. Its striking note of realism had sounded the call for a new dramatic school, but the subject-matter and philosophy of this new school had not yet been indicated.

With the *Demi-Monde* he inaugurated Social Drama; a realistic study of the social problems of his day as he saw them manifested in the society of Paris with

¹ Alexandre Dumas (1824-1895) was the illegitimate son of Alexandre Dumas, the famous novelist and dramatist, the author of *Monte Cristo*, *les Trois Mousquetaires*, etc. The chief plays of A. Dumas fils are: *la Dame aux Camélias* (1852); *le Demi-Monde* (1855); *la Question d'argent* (1857); *le Fils naturel* (1858); *un Père prodigue* (1859); *l'Ami des femmes* (1864); *les Idées de Mme Aubray* (1867); *Une Visite de Noces* (1871); *la Princesse Georges* (1871); *la Femme de Claude* (1873); *Monsieur Alphonse* (1873); *l'Étrangère* (1876); *la Princesse de Bagdad* (1881); *Denise* (1885); *Francillon* (1887).

For plays, see *Théâtre complet*, Calmann Lévy, 7 volumes. For the most complete treatment of his plays and dramatic career consult Petit de Julleville, *Histoire de la langue et de la littérature française*, volume 8, pp. 86-113.

which he was acquainted. Moreover, in this play he has not only discovered a new field or subject-matter for the drama, the study of contemporary social problems, but he shows clearly what his own attitude is to be toward the kind of social questions which almost exclusively interested him. He is no longer a follower of the Romantics. Although obsessed quite as much as they were by the all absorbing theme of love and passion, his philosophy is just the contrary of theirs. With them, love was a god who could do no wrong; with Dumas, love and passion are studied chiefly as a danger in life and society. Marguerite Gautier, so sympathetically painted in the *Dame aux Camélias*, and known by so many aliases in Romantic literature, has here become Suzanne d'Ange, incapable of real love, heartless, an adventuress endeavoring to break into honorable society. She is judged and condemned with the eye of the sternest of moralists. Her attacks on honest society must be thwarted by all means, even, it would seem, by the most dishonorable.

However, the *Demi-Monde* is not to be praised simply for creating social drama and for illustrating the philosophy of its author. It has other good qualities and less common ones. Those mentioned above would alone hardly give it the honor, usually accorded, of being Dumas' masterpiece. It is, from the dramatic standpoint, one of his best constructed dramas, the one perhaps in which he has put the largest number of his many striking merits as a dramatist and observer,