



The Black Count: Glory, Revolution, Betrayal, and the Real Count of Monte Cristo

Tom Reiss

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Pulitzer Prize, Biography/Autobiography, 2013

By the author of the internationally best-selling biography *The Orientalist*, *The Black Count* brings to life one of history's great forgotten heroes: a man almost unknown today yet with a personal story that is strikingly familiar. His swashbuckling exploits appear in *The Three Musketeers*, and his triumphs and ultimate tragic fate inspired *The Count of Monte Cristo*. His name is Alex Dumas. Father of the novelist Alexandre Dumas, Alex has become, through his son's books, the model for a captivating modern protagonist: The wronged man in search of justice.

Born to a black slave mother and a fugitive white French nobleman in Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti), Alex Dumas was briefly sold into bondage but then made his way to Paris where he was schooled as a sword-fighting member of the French aristocracy.

He was only 32 when he was given command of 53,000 men, the reward for series of triumphs that many regarded as impossible, and then topped his previous feats by leading a raid up a frozen cliff face that secured the Alps for France. It was after his subsequent heroic service as Napoleon's cavalry commander that Dumas was captured and cast into a dungeon - and a harrowing ordeal commenced that inspired one of the world's classic works of fiction.

The Black Count is simultaneously a riveting adventure story, a lushly textured evocation of 18th-century France, and a window into the modern world's first multi-racial society. But it is also a heartbreaking story of the enduring bonds of love between a father and son. Drawing on hitherto unknown documents, letters, battlefield reports and Dumas' handwritten prison diary, *The Black Count* is a groundbreaking masterpiece of narrative nonfiction.

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