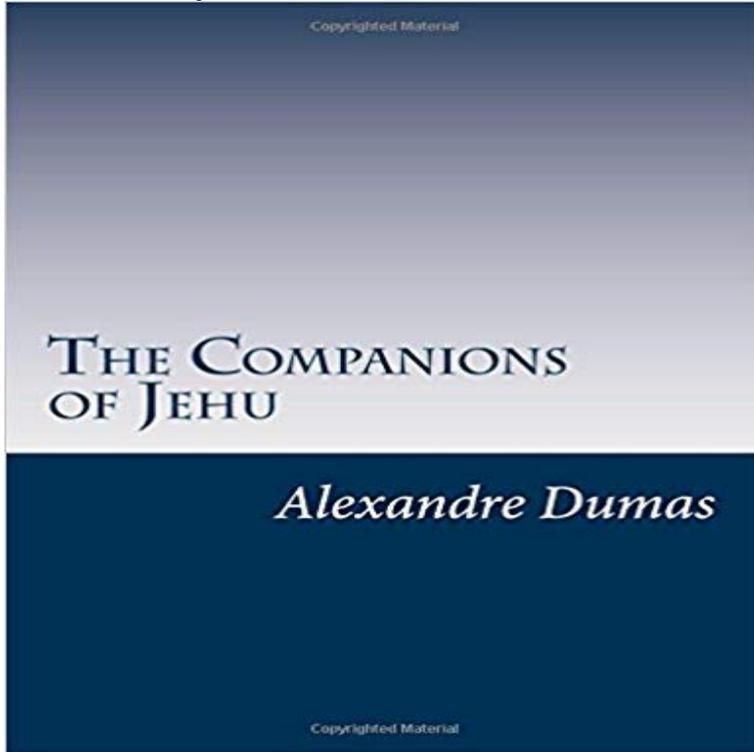


The Companions of Jehu



Just about a year ago my old friend, Jules Simon, author of *Devoir*, came to me with a request that I write a novel for the *Journal pour Tous*. I gave him the outline of a novel which I had in mind. The subject pleased him, and the contract was signed on the spot. The action occurred between 1791 and 1793, and the first chapter opened at Varennes the evening of the king's arrest. Only, impatient as was the *Journal pour Tous*, I demanded a fortnight of Jules Simon before beginning my novel. I wished to go to Varennes; I was not acquainted with the locality, and I confess there is one thing I cannot do; I am unable to write a novel or a drama about localities with which I am not familiar. In order to write *Christine* I went to Fontainebleau; in writing *Henri III*. I went to Blois; for *Les Trois Mousquetaires* I went to Boulogne and Bethune; for *Monte-Cristo* I returned to the Catalans and the Chateau d'If; for *Isaac Laquedem* I revisited Rome; and I certainly spent more time studying Jerusalem and Corinth from a distance than if I had gone there. This gives such a character of veracity to all that I write, that the personages whom I create become eventually such integral parts of the places in which I planted them that, as a consequence, many end by believing in their actual existence. There are even some people who claim to have known them. In this connection, dear readers, I am going to tell you something in confidence only do not repeat it. I do not wish to injure honest fathers of families who live by this little industry, but if you go to Marseilles you will be shown there the house of Morel on the Cours, the house of Mercedes at the Catalans, and the dungeons of Dantes and Faria at the Chateau d'If. When I staged *Monte-Cristo* at the Theatre-Historique, I wrote to Marseilles for a plan of the Chateau d'If, which was sent to me. This drawing was for the use of the scene painter. The artist to whom I had recourse

forwarded me the desired plan. He even did better than I would have dared ask of him; he wrote beneath it: View of the Chateau d'If, from the side where Dantes was thrown into the sea. I have learned since that a worthy man, a guide attached to the Chateau d'If, sells pens made of fish-bone by the Abbe Faria himself. There is but one unfortunate circumstance concerning this; the fact is, Dantes and the Abbe Faria have never existed save in my imagination; consequently, Dantes could not have been precipitated from the top to the bottom of the Chateau d'If, nor could the Abbe Faria have made pens. But that is what comes from visiting these localities in person. Therefore, I wished to visit Varennes before commencing my novel, because the first chapter was to open in that city. Besides, historically, Varennes worried me considerably; the more I perused the historical accounts of Varennes, the less I was able to understand, topographically, the king's arrest.

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