



## The Count of Monte Cristo

Alexander Dumas (1802 - 1870)

Read by:	David Clarke	Format:	3 MP3 CDs in DVD case
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Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo* is as familiar to the reading public today as it was when it was published in France in 1844. Much of the familiarity is in all likelihood due to the several film adaptations of the complex story, but also due to the timeless tropes and archetypes within the story that speak deeply to the human condition. A man is unjustly imprisoned and loses years of his life to mind numbing incarceration. On the verge of suicide he meets a fellow inmate, a kind and elderly priest, who is also unjustly imprisoned. The priest becomes the man's mentor and teaches him many things. The priest dies and the young man, now fourteen years older, sews himself into the dead man's shroud and is tossed into the sea, from where he's rescued by smugglers, only to begin the second half of his life's journey. This tale of death and resurrection, as old as Calvary and the empty tomb, sets the stage

for one man's return to the land of living, flush with wealth and title, empowered to do as he will with those who'd caused him such devastating harm. The themes of vengeance and forgiveness then struggle for primacy. In the nineteenth century it is said that books, the primary source of entertainment for a literate public, were purchased "by the pound," which is to say audiences appreciated longer and more complex plots. Dumas, in *The Count of Monte Cristo*, as well as in *The Three Musketeers*, his two most popular novels, did not disappoint.

**Alexandre Dumas** (July 24, 1802 – December 5, 1870) was a writer who was bigger than life, large hearted, expansive, egotistical (though in an endearing way) and verbal. He could talk forever, especially when the subject happened to be himself. He was also the kind of writer who would have made a fortune in Hollywood had he born a century later than his actual birth in 1802 to a French nobleman and a freed black slave in the French colony, Saint Domingue, now Haiti. He began his a career as a successful playwright, but soon took to the novel form and the 19th Century practice of extending story lines for serial publication. Like many novelists of that era, Dumas was comfortable with volume and the organic growth of plot lines intersecting and crossing one another from their common origin at the story's beginning, known today as the inciting incident. Many of his works have been made into movies, and more than one of his works (*The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*) have been adapted to the silver screen several times over several generations. Although Dumas was married, like many members of the French nobility, he was well known for his numerous affairs, mistresses and children born out of wedlock. A man of great appetites Dumas died at the age of 68 in 1870 and was buried in the Pantheon.