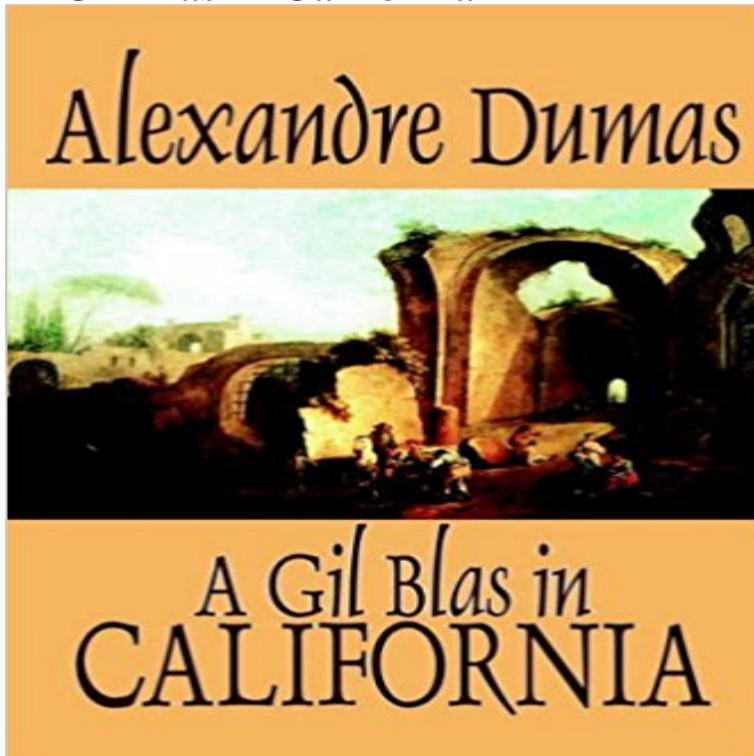


A Gil Blas in California



Alexandre Dumas works have been translated into nearly 100 languages and he is one of the most widely read French authors. Many of his historical novels of high adventure were originally published as serials, including *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *The Three Musketeers*, *Twenty Years After*, and *The Vicomte de Bragelonne: Ten Years Later*. His novels have been adapted since the early twentieth century for nearly 200 films. It seems extraordinary that a story of American life, and especially so competently written a tale of so romantic a period in American expansion as the California gold-rush of 49 should have been lost to American readers so long. But it has been, for since it was published in Brussels in 1852, no English translation of the petit original volume has been discovered. *Californie* appeared shortly after Dumas had reached the zenith of his career. *Le Comte de Monte Cristo* was far behind; *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne* was fresh from his fecund mind; so, too, were *La Tulipe noire* and *Olympe de Cleves*. Ahead were *Les Blancs et les Bleus*, *Les Louves de Machecoul*, and -- his ruinous newspaper ventures in Paris. One may speculate to no end and with little profit on the circumstances surrounding the writing of *Californie*. One cant help but wonder, at the same time, if it might not have been the subject of numerous reminiscential conversations between Dumas and his last great love -- Ada Isaacs Menken -- Mazeppa, boasting that she had never lived with Houston; it was General Jackson, and Methuselah, and other big men -- who, from captivating the hearts of California gallants, dashed to the arms of the King of Romance.

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