

**LEO: A
NOVEL, VOL. II**

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Leo: a novel, Vol. II by Dutton Cook

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DUTTON COOK

**LEO: A
NOVEL, VOL. II**

L E O .

A NOVEL.

BY DUTTON COOK,

AUTHOR OF "A PRODIGAL SON," "PAUL FOSTER'S DAUGHTER,"
ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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L E O .



CHAPTER I.

MONSIEUR ANATOLE.

THE Surrey side of the River Thames: beneath the shadow of a celebrated and magnificent hospital for the insane. "A densely-populated district." A narrow, dirty street, ill-built, ill-paved, ill-lighted, in perpetual disagreement with sewerage commissioners and waterwork companies. Children swarming in the gutter, extremely dirty, yet sublimely happy after their manner; pigeons on the roofs, poultry in the front areas, skylarks in the kitchens, rabbits in the back-yards, cats and dogs everywhere.

Fairly in this street, if you made inquiry (as

for the purposes of this narrative it is desirable that you should make inquiry) for the house of one Mrs. Birks, you would be bidden to pass along the right-hand side of the roadway until you came to a door with a brass-plate upon it—"name of Jugwell,"—and you would be informed that *that* was Mrs. Birks'. The houses, of course, were numbered according to modern practice. But the neighbourhood unconsciously reverted to a former condition of things, and denoted the houses by especial characteristics. In preference to pointing out a particular edifice, as No. 10, say, or No. 11, they elected to define it as "the house where Mrs. Jones's mangle were," or "the house with the blackbird in the front airy," or "next door but two to the coal-shed," or "directly opposite to Smith's, the goldbeater's." Mrs. Birks let lodgings. She was a widow: she had been twice married. Her first husband's name had been Jugwell; hence the name on the door-plate.

On the first floor of Mrs. Birks' house, in the front room—small, with a dingy neatness about its fittings, with crumpled chintz curtains, and ragged-seated cane chairs—were two of Mrs. Birks' lodgers. There was a soiled cloth on the table; in the middle a black teapot, with a chipped spout and

broken handle. Bread and butter, some withered watercresses, a pewter pot containing beer, a litter of knives, forks, spoons, and crockery completed the furnishing of the table. There was a closeness about the room; entering it, you felt a strong desire to throw open the windows; the odour of stale tobacco-smoke was strong; a dull fire burned in the grate; a tall, untidy man in a dull red flannel shirt was on his knees before it, toasting a red herring—a tall, swarthy, muscular man, with a full jaw, rolling black eyes, and a scowling forehead. He rose from before the fire and dashed the fish on the table angrily—noisily.

“There!” he cried, with an oath, “my patience is gone. What a time it takes to cook a herring. Well”—(a shout and an imprecation)—“you have been dipping into this beer at a pretty rate!”

He turned to his companion stretched on the hard horse-hair sofa. He was reading a torn fragment of newspaper;—it had contained the herring. A fat, blonde man, with a fawn-coloured moustache, and a vacuous expression. He gave a coarse, loose laugh.

“I had the chance, doctor,” he said; “I couldn’t help availing myself of it.”

He spoke thickly, as though his tongue were

too large for his mouth—as though the gear and tackle of his voice were not well under control. He laughed again when he had finished.

The man addressed as “doctor” growled threateningly; then set to work at his breakfast, tearing his food with his hands—devouring ravenously, in rather a wild-beast fashion. Having finished the beer, he refreshed himself with the milder drink contained in the teapot. The man on the sofa, contemplating him with a sort of mindless enjoyment of his proceedings.

A third man entered the room.

“*Bong joor, Mounseer!*” said the man on the sofa, with exaggerated mispronunciation.

“Good morning, my captain,” said the newcomer, bowing politely, and pressing a withered, skeleton-like hand upon his breast. It was the small Frenchman of the *Café de l’Univers*—Tithonus—M. Anatole. He wore an old-fashioned blue brocaded dressing-gown, much puffed on the top of the sleeves, high in the collar, with two small buttons close together high up between his shoulders; on his head, above the profuse black hair, a soiled velvet smoking-cap, plentifully overlaid with tarnished silver cord, and stuck on jauntily at the side. His black specks of eyes