

**MATED FROM THE
MORGUE: A TALE OF
THE SECOND EMPIRE**

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Mated from the Morgue: A Tale of the Second Empire by John Augustus O'Shea

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JOHN AUGUSTUS O'SHEA

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MORGUE: A TALE OF
THE SECOND EMPIRE**

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A TALE OF THE SECOND EMPIRE

BY

JOHN AUGUSTUS O'SHEA

AUTHOR OF

'LEAVES FROM THE LIFE OF A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT,' 'AN
IRON-BOUND CITY,' 'ROMANTIC SPAIN,' 'MILITARY
MOSAICS,' ETC.

'La Ville de Paris a son grand mâit tout de bronze, sculpté de
victoires, et pour vigie Napoléon.'—DE BALLAC.

LONDON

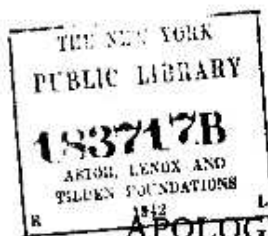
SPENCER BLACKETT

[Successor to J. & R. Saxton]

MILTON HOUSE, 35, ST. BRIDE STREET, E.C.

1889

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APOLOGETIC.

THIS tale, such as it is, has one merit. It is a study of manners, mainly made on the spot, not evolved from the shelves of the British Museum. There is in it, at least, a crude attempt at photography, a process in which sunlight and air have some part, and, therefore, liker to nature than the adumbrations of the reading-room. The localities are faithfully drawn, the persons are not dolls with stuffing of sawdust, but human animals who might have lived—and, mayhap, did live. If the volume does not kill an hour, the writer is murderer only in thought.

TO MY FRIEND,
COLONEL THE BARON CRAIGNISH,
EQUERRY TO
HIS HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF SAXE-COBURG-GOTHA,
This Little Book,
IN TARDY THANK-OFFERING FOR THAT LARGE
LEG OF MUTTON.

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MATED FROM THE MORGUE.

CHAPTER I.

A HOUSELESS DOG.

THE scene is Paris, the Imperial Paris, but not a quarter that is fashionable, wealthy, or much frequented by the tourist. It is the wild, slovenly, buoyant quarter of the Paris of the left bank, known as *le Pays Latin*—the Land of Latin. The quarter of frolic and genius, of vaulting ambition and limp money-bags, of generosity and meanness, of truth and hypocrisy; the quarter which supplies the France of the future with its mighty thinkers, the France of the passing with the forlorn hopes of its revolutions, the world—and the *demi monde* too—very often with its most brilliant and erratic meteors.

The time is the spring of 1866. The chestnut-tree, called the Twentieth of March, in the Champs Elysées, has shown its first blossoms. But the

weather is cold and damp in spite of these deceitful blossoms: the skies weep, and chill winds blow sullenly along the Seine. It is just the weather to make the blaze of a ruddy fire a cheerful sight, and the hiss of the crackling logs a cheerful sound; but there is neither fire nor, indeed, grate or stove wherein to put it, in the cabinet numbered 37, on the fifth story of the Hôtel de Suez, in the Rue du Four, into which we ask the reader to penetrate. A portmanteau, whose half-opened lid betrays 'the poverty of the land,' lies in a corner, a shabby suit of man's wearing apparel hangs carelessly on a chair, and a head, thickly covered with hair, protrudes from the blankets in a little bed in a recess, and out of the mouth in this head protrudes a Turkish pipe of exaggerated length, and out of the same mouth at regular intervals filters a slender thread of smoke. The lips contract and open again, and no smoke comes. The head is elevated, the blankets thrown back, and the shoulders and torso of the smoker appear rising gradually from the bed till they are erect; the bowl of the Turkish pipe is regarded a moment deprecatingly (as if the pipe could have been kept alight without tobacco), and the lips move again, this time to soliloquy:

'Mr. Manus O'Hara, I have a great respect for your father's son: you come of a fine proud spend-thrift old Irish family; but I tell you what, my brilliant friend, if you don't replenish the exchequer

I shall be obliged to cut your society. You're not in a position to pay any more visits to that interesting elderly female acquaintance of yours, your aunt.* Realize your position, sir, I beg of you. You're in a most confounded state of impecuniosity; you haven't a sou left, and I'm afraid your pipe is finally extinguished. Then, that delightful lady in the den of Cerberus below, who was one long smile when you and the sack,† now that you are *en dèche*,‡ is an eternal snarl like a very dog of Hades. When you had money you had a room on the first floor at thirty francs a month; now that you are poor she stuffs you into a garret on the fourth at thirty-five. Perdition catch it, Mr. O'Hara, it's very expensive to be poor. Without cash or credit! Charming position for a young man of genius! If you had a good suit of clothes you might have a chance of getting into the *hôtel des haricots*,§ but with your present raiment there is no danger of your encouraging that horrible temptation of ingenuous youth known as running into debt. It's my private opinion you wouldn't get a box of matches on your solemn oath, let alone your word, at the present crisis in your chequered career. Good heavens! How cold it is! Without cash or credit. That's

* In Paris the pawn-office is called 'my aunt,' as it is nicknamed 'my uncle' in England.

† 'To have the sack,' Paris slang for 'to be in funds.'

‡ To be out of money.

§ The debtors' prison.