

ROMANTIC
SPAIN

VOL. II.

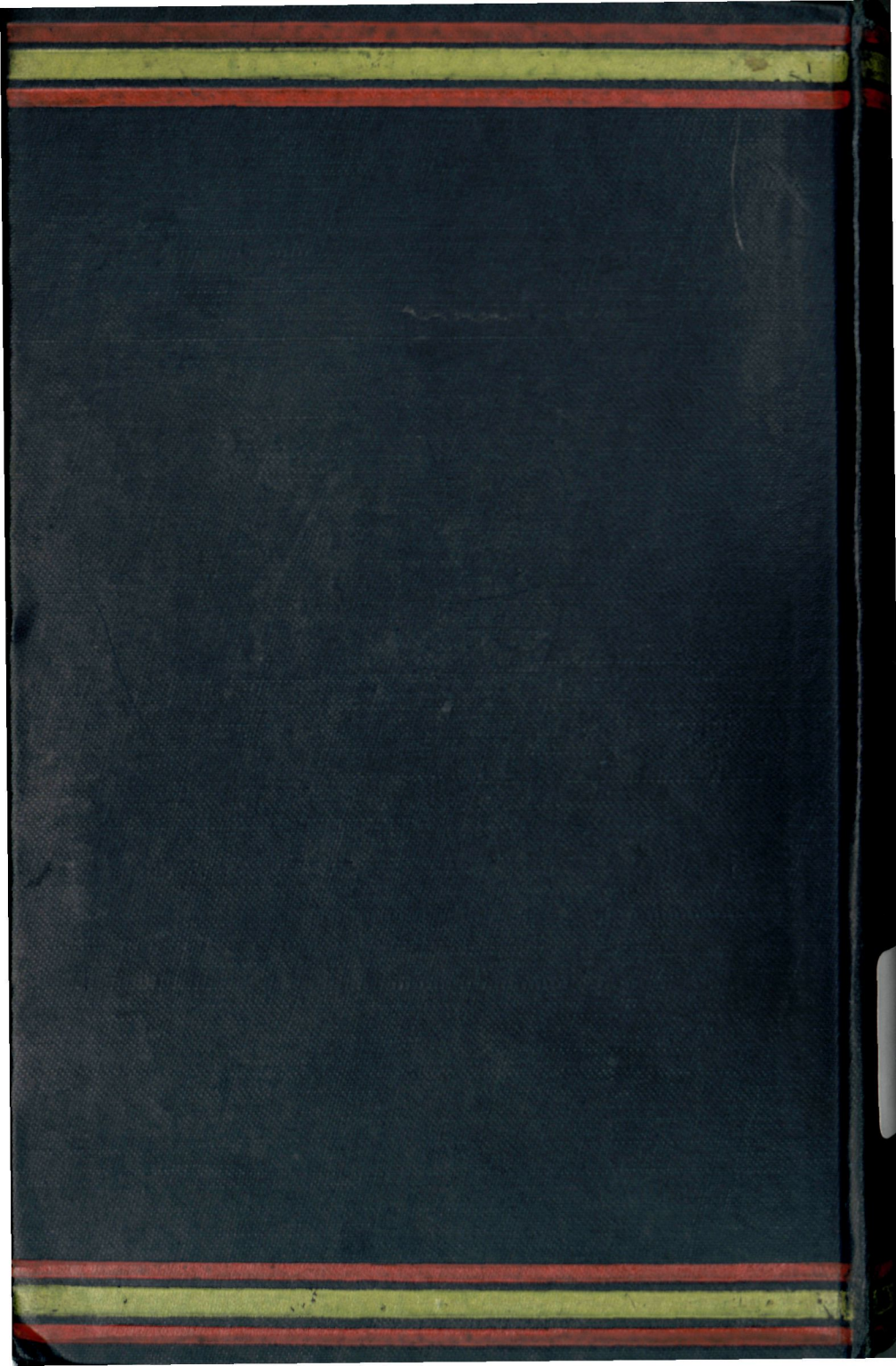
J. A. O'SHEA

AUTHOR OF

*"Leaves from
the Life of
A Special
Correspondent"*

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ROMANTIC SPAIN:

A RECORD OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCES.

ROMANTIC SPAIN:

A Record of Personal Experiences.

BY

JOHN AUGUSTUS O'SHEA,

AUTHOR OF

"LEAVES FROM THE LIFE OF A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT,"

"AN IRON-BOUND CITY," ETC.

"Oh, lovely Spain! renowned, romantic land!"

CHILDE HAROLD.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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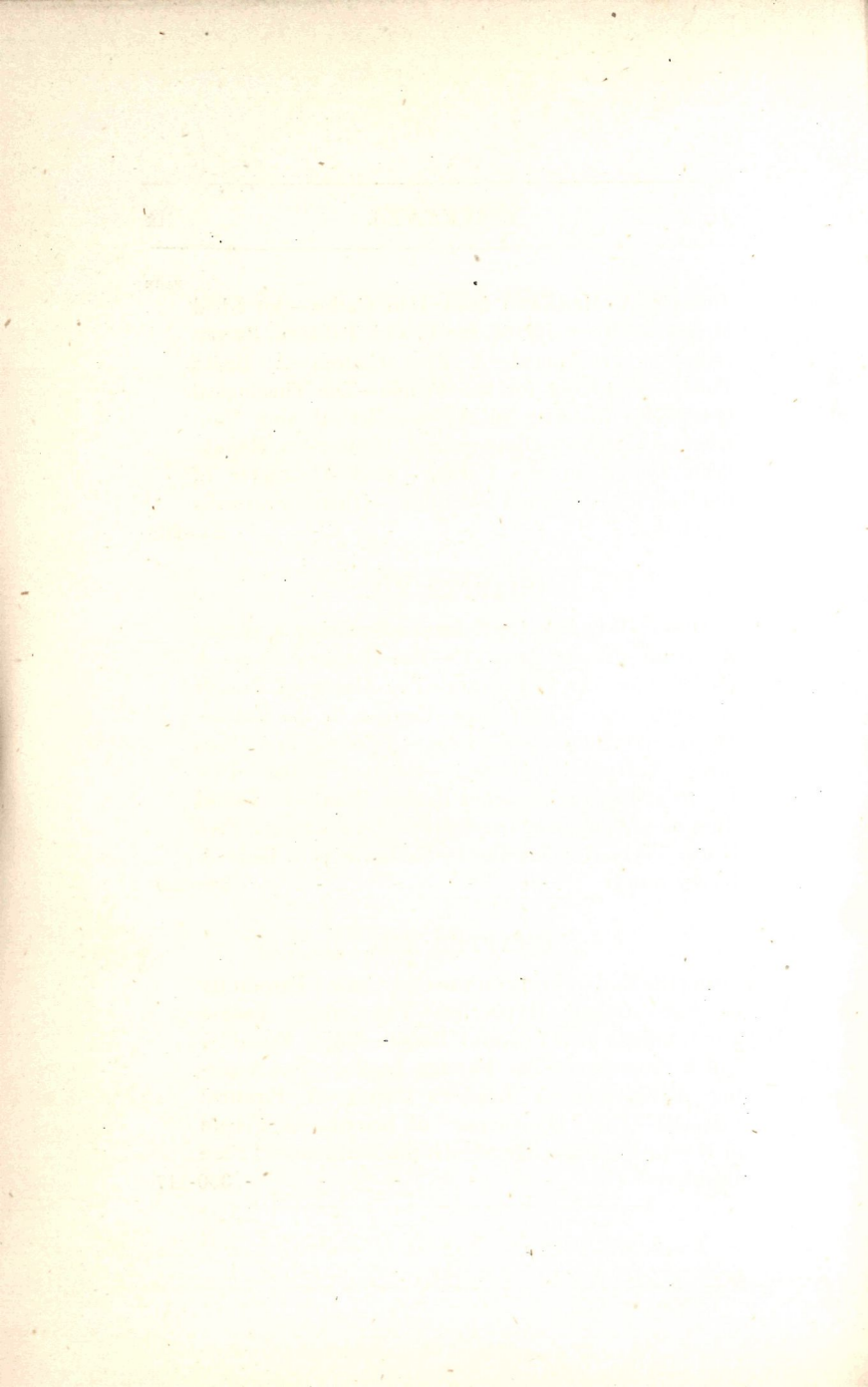
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ROMANTIC SPAIN.

CHAPTER I.

A Tidy City—A Sacred Corpse—Remarkable Features of Puerto—A Calesa—Lady Blanche's Castle—A Typical English Engineer—British Enterprise—"Success to the Cadiz Waterworks!"—Visit to a Bodega—Wine and Women—The Coming Man—A Strike.

PUERTO DE SANTA MARIA has the name of being the neatest and tidiest city in Spain, and neatness and tidiness are such dear homely virtues, I thought I could not do better than hie me thither to see if the tale were true. With a wrench I tore myself from the soft capital of Andalusia, delightful but demoralizing. I was growing lazier every day I spent there; I felt energy oozing out of every pore of my body; and in the end I began to get afraid that if I stopped much longer I should only be fit

to sing the song of the sluggard :—“ You have waked me too soon, let me slumber again.’ Seville is a dangerous place ; it is worse than Capua ; it would enervate Cromwell’s Ironsides. Happily for me the mosquitoes found out my bedroom, and pricked me into activity, or I might not have summoned the courage to leave it for weeks, the more especially as I had a sort of excuse for staying. The Cardinal Archbishop had promised a friend of mine to let him inspect the body of St. Fernando, and my friend had promised to take me with him. Now, this was a great favour. St. Fernando is one of the patrons of Seville ; he has been dead a long time, but his corpse refuses to putrefy, like those of ordinary mortals ; it is a sacred corpse, and in a beatific state of preservation. Three times a year the remains of the holy man are uncovered, and the faithful are admitted to gaze on his incorruptible features. This was not one of the regular occasions ; the Cardinal Archbishop had made an exception in compliment to my friend, who is a rising young diplomat, so that the favour was really a favour. I declined it with thanks—very much

obliged, indeed—pressure of business called me elsewhere—the cut-and-dry form of excuse; but I never mentioned a word about the mosquitoes. I told my friend to thank the prelate for his graciousness; the prelate expressed his sorrow that my engagements did not permit me to wait, and begged that I would oblige him by letting the British public know the shameful way he and his priests were treated by the Government. They had not drawn a penny of salary for three years. This was a fact; and very discreditable it was to the Government, and a good explanation of the disloyalty of their reverences. If a contract is made it should be kept; the State contracted to support the Church, but since Queen Isabella decamped the State had forgotten its engagement.

Puerto de Santa Maria deserves the name it has got. It is a clean and shapely collection of houses, regularly built. People in England are apt to associate the idea of filth with Spain; this, at least in Andalusia, is a mistake. The cleanliness is Flemish. Soap and the scrubbing-brush are not spared; linen is plentiful and spotless, and water is

used for other purposes than correcting the strength of wine. Walking down the long main street with its paved causeways and pebbly roadway, with its straight lines of symmetric houses, coquettish in their marble balconies and brightly-painted shutters and railings, one might fancy himself in Brock or Delft but that the roofs are flat, that the gables are not turned to the street, and that the sky is a cloudless blue. I am speaking now of fine days; but there are days when the sky is cloudy and the wind blows, and the waters in the Bay of Cadiz below surge up sullen and yeasty, and there are days when the rain comes down quick, thick, and heavy as from a waterspout, and the streets are turned for the moment into rivulets. But the effects of the rain do not last long; Spain is what washerwomen would call a good drying country. Beyond its neatness and tidiness, Puerto has other features to recommend it to the traveller. It has a bookseller's shop, where the works of Eugène Sue and Paul de Kock can be had in choice Spanish, side by side with the Carlist Almanack, "by eminent monarchical writers," and the calendar of

the Saragossan prophet (the Spanish Old Moore); but it is not to that I refer—half a hundred Andalusian towns can boast the same. It has its demolished convent, but since the revolution of '68 that is no more a novelty than the Alameda, or sand-strewn, poplar-planted promenade, which one meets in every Spanish hamlet. It has the Atlantic waves rolling in at its feet, and a pretty sight it is to mark the feluccas, with single mast crossed by single yard, like an unstrung bow, moored by the wharf or with outspread sail bellying before the breeze on their way to Cadiz beyond, where she sits throned on the other side of the bay, "like a silver cup" glistening in the sunshine, when sunshine there is. The silver cup to which the Gaditanos are fond of comparing their city looked more like dirty pewter as I approached it by water from Puerto; but I was in a tub of a steamer, there was a heavy sea on and a heavy mist out, and perhaps I was qualmish. Not for its booksellers' shops, for its demolished convent, or for its vulgar Atlantic did this Puerto, which the guide-books pass curtly by as "uninteresting," impress me as interesting,

but for two features that no seasoned traveller could, would, or should overlook; its female population is the most attractive in Andalusia, and it is the seat of an agreeable English colony. I happened on the latter in a manner that is curious, so curious as to merit relation.

I had intended to proceed to Cadiz from Seville after I had taken a peep at Puerto, but that little American gentleman whom I met at Córdoba was with me, and persuaded me to stop by the story of a wonderful castle prison, a sort of *Tour de Nesle*, which was to be seen in the vicinity, where the *bonne amie* of a King of Spain had been built up in the good old times when monarchs raised favourites from the gutter one day, and sometimes ordered their weazands to be slit the next. This show-place is about a league from Puerto, in the valley of Sidonia, and is called El Castillo de Doña Blanca. We took a calesa to go there. My companion objected to travelling on horseback; he could not stomach the peculiar Moorish saddle with its high-peaked cantle and crupper, and its catch-and-carry stirrups. We took a calesa, as I have said.

To my dying day I shall not forget that vehicle of torture. But it may be necessary to tell what is a calesa. Procure a broken-down hansom, knock off the driver's seat, paint the body and wheels the colour of a roulette-table at a racecourse, stud the hood with brass nails of the pattern of those employed to beautify genteel coffins, remove the cushions, and replace them with a wisp of straw, smash the springs, and put swing-leathers underneath instead, cover the whole article with a coating of liquid mud, leave it to dry in a mouldy place where the rats shall have free access to the leather for gnawing practice, return in seven years, and you will find a tolerably correct imitation of that decayed machine, the Andalusian calesa. It is more picturesque than the Neapolitan *corricolo*; it is all ribs and bones, and is much given to inward groaning as it jerks and jolts along. Such a trap we took; the driver lazily clambered on the shafts, and away hobbled our lean steed.

The road to Lady Blanche's Castle is like that to Jordan in the nigger songs; it is "a hard road to travel"—a road full of holes and quagmires and

jutting rocks ; and yet the driver told me it had once been a good road, but that was in the reign of Queen Isabella. Everything seems to have been allowed to go to dilapidation since. On the outskirts of Puerto we passed an English cemetery ; I am glad to say it is almost uninhabited. If there is an English dead settlement there ought to be a live one, I reasoned, unless those who are buried here date from Peninsular battles. The first part of the road to Blanche's Castle is level, and bordered with thick growths of prickly pear ; there is a view of the sea, and of the Guadalate, spanned by a metal bridge—a Menai on a small scale. Farther on, as we get to a district called La Piedad, the country is diversified by swampy flats at one side and sandy hills at the other. Blanche's Castle was a commonplace ruin, a complete “sell,” and we turned our horse's head rather savagely. As we were coming back, the little American shortening the way by Sandford and Merton observations of this nature—“ Prickly pear makes a capital hedge ; no cattle will face it ; the spikes of the plant are as tenacious as fish-hooks. The fibres of the aloe are unusually strong ; they make better cordage than

hemp, but will not bear the wet so well"—a sight caught my eyes which caused me to stare. A tall young fellow, with his trousers tucked up, was wading knee-deep in the bottoms beside the road. He wore a suit of Oxford mixture.

“Who or what is that gentleman?” I asked the driver.

“An English engineer,” was the answer.

I stopped the calesa, hailed him, and inquired was he fond of rheumatic fever. He laughed, and pronounced the single word, “Duty.” A little word, but one that means much. A Spanish engineer would never have done this; they are great in offices and at draughting on paper, but they seldom tuck up their sleeves, much less their trousers, to labour out of doors as the young Englishman was doing. I made his acquaintance, and he willingly consented to show me over the works in which he was engaged, which were intended to supply Cadiz with water. In England water is to be had too easily to be estimated at its proper value. At Cadiz it is a marketable commodity. Even the parrots there squeak “agua.” Every drop of rain that falls is carefully gathered