

**The Life of Lazarillo Of Tormes,
His Fortunes and Misfortunes as
Told by Himself**

By

Anonymous

Prologue

I think it is good that such remarkable things as these, which may never have been heard of or seen before, should come to the attention of many people instead of being buried away in the tomb of oblivion. Because it might turn out that someone who reads about them will like what he reads, and even people who only glance lightly through this book may be entertained.

Pliny says along these lines that there is no book—no matter how bad it is—that doesn't have something good in it. And this is all the more true since all tastes are not the same: what one man won't even touch, another will be dying to get. And so there are things that some people don't care for, while others do. The point is that nothing should be destroyed or thrown away unless it is really detestable; instead, it should be shown to everybody, especially if it won't do any harm and they might get some good out of it.

If this weren't so, there would be very few people who would write for only one reader, because writing is hardly a simple thing to do. But since writers go ahead with it, they want to be rewarded, not with money but with people seeing and reading their works, and if there is something worthwhile in them, they would like some praise. Along these lines too, Cicero says: "Honor promotes the arts."

Does anyone think that the first soldier to stand up and charge the enemy hates life? Of course not; a craving for glory is what makes him expose himself to danger. And the same is true in arts and letters. The young preacher gives a very good sermon and is really interested in the improvement of people's souls, but ask his grace if he minds when they tell him, "Oh, what an excellent sermon you gave today, Reverend!" And So-and-so was terrible in jousting today, but when some rascal praised him for the way he had handled his weapons, he gave him his armor. What would he have done if it had really been true?

And so everything goes: I confess that I'm no more saintly than my neighbors, but I would not mind it at all if those people who find some pleasure in this little trifle of mine (written in my crude style) would get wrapped up in it and be entertained by it, and if they could see that a man who has had so much bad luck and so many misfortunes and troubles does exist.

Please take this poor effort from a person who would have liked to make it richer if only his ability had been as great as his desire. And since you told me that you wanted me to write down all the details of the matter, I have decided not to start out in the middle but at the beginning. That way you will have a complete picture of me, and at the same time those people who received a

large inheritance will see how little they had to do with it, since fortune favored them, and they will also see how much more those people accomplished whose luck was going against them, since they rowed hard and well and brought their ship safely into port.

I. Lazaro Tells about His Life and His Parents

You should know first of all that I'm called Lazaro of Tormes, and that I'm the son of Tome Gonzales and Antona Perez, who were born in Tejares, a village near Salamanca. I was actually born in the Tormes River, and that's how I got my name. It happened this way: My father (God rest his soul) was in charge of a mill on the bank of that river, and he was the miller there for more than fifteen years. Well, one night while my mother was in the mill, carrying me around in her belly, she went into labor and gave birth to me right there. So I can really say I was born in the river.

Then when I was eight years old, they accused my father of gutting the sacks that people were bringing to the mill. They took him to jail, and without a word of protest he went ahead and confessed everything, and he suffered persecution for righteousness' sake. But I trust God that he's in heaven because the Bible calls that kind of man blessed. At that time they were getting together an expedition to go fight the Moors, and my father went with them. They had exiled him because of the bad luck that I've already told about, so he went along as a muleteer for one of the men, and like a loyal servant, he ended his life with his master.

My widowed mother, finding herself without a husband or anyone to take care of her, decided to lie at the side—I mean, stay on the side—of good men and be like them. So she came to the city to live. She rented a little house and began to cook for some students. She washed clothes for some stableboys who served the Commander of La Magdalena, too, so a lot of the time she was around the stables. She and a dark man—one of those men who took care of the animals—got to know each other. Sometimes he would come to our house and wouldn't leave till the next morning; and other times he would come to our door in the daytime pretending that he wanted to buy eggs, and then he would come inside.

When he first began to come I didn't like him, he scared me because of the color of his skin and the way he looked. But when I saw that with him around there the food got better, I began to like him quite a lot. He always brought bread and pieces of meat, and in the winter he brought in firewood so we could keep warm.

So with his visits and the relationship going right along, it happened that my mother gave me a pretty little black baby, and I used to bounce it on my knee and help keep it warm.

I remember one time when my black stepfather was playing with the little fellow, the child noticed that my mother and I were white but that my stepfather wasn't and he got scared. He ran to my mother and pointed his finger at him and said, "Mama, it's the bogeyman!" And my stepfather laughed: "You little son-of-a-bitch!"

Even though I was still a young boy, I thought about the word my little brother had used, and I said to myself: How many people there must be in the world who run away from others when they don't see themselves.

As luck would have it, talk about Zaide (that was my stepfather's name) reached the ears of the foreman, and when a search was made they found out that he'd been stealing about half of the barley that was supposed to be given to the animals. He'd pretended that the bran, wool, currycombs, aprons, and the horse covers and blankets had been lost; and when there was nothing else left to steal, he took the shoes right off the horses' hooves. And he was using all this to buy things for my mother so that she could bring up my little brother.

Why should we be surprised at priests when they steal from the poor or at friars when they take things from their monasteries to give to their lady followers, or for other things, when we see how love can make a poor slave do what he did?

And they found him guilty of everything I've said and more because they asked me questions and threatened me too, and I answered them like a child. I was so frightened that I told them everything I knew—even about some horseshoes my mother had made me sell to a blacksmith.

They beat and tarred my poor stepfather, and they gave my mother a stiff sentence besides the usual hundred lashes: they said that she couldn't go into the house of the Commander (the one I mentioned) and that she couldn't take poor Zaide into her own house.

So that matters wouldn't get any worse, the poor woman went ahead and carried out the sentence. And to avoid any danger and get away from wagging tongues, she went to work as a servant for the people who were living at the Solano Inn then. And there, while putting up with all kinds of indignities, she managed to raise my little brother until he knew how to walk. And she even raised me to be a good little boy who would take wine and candles to the guests and do whatever else they told me.

About this time a blind man came by and stayed at the inn. He thought I

would be a good guide for him, so he asked my mother if I could serve him, and she said I could. She told him what a good man my father had been and how he'd died in the battle of Gelves for the holy faith. She said she trusted God that I wouldn't turn out any worse a man than my father, and she begged him to be good to me and look after me, since I would be an orphan now. He told her he would and said that I wouldn't be a servant to him, but a son. And so I began to serve and guide my new old master.

After he had been in Salamanca a few days, my master wasn't happy with the amount of money he was taking in, and he decided to go somewhere else. So when we were ready to leave, I went to see my mother. And with both of us crying she gave me her blessing and said, "Son, I know that I'll never see you again. Try to be good, and may God be your guide. I've raised you and given you to a good master; take good care of yourself."

And then I went back out to my master who was waiting for me.

We left Salamanca and we came to a bridge; and at the edge of this bridge there's a stone statue of an animal that looks something like a bull. The blind man told me to go up next to the animal, and when I was there he said, "Lazaro, put your ear up next to this bull and you'll hear a great sound inside of it."

I put my ear next to it very simply, thinking he was telling the truth. And when he felt my head near the statue, he doubled up his fist and knocked my head into that devil of a bull so hard that I felt the pain from its horns for three days. And he said to me, "You fool, now learn that a blind man's servant has to be one step ahead of the devil." And he laughed out loud at his joke.

It seemed to me that at that very instant I woke up from my childlike simplicity and I said to myself, "He's right. I've got to open my eyes and be on my guard. I'm alone now, and I've got to think about taking care of myself."

We started on our way again, and in just a few days he taught me the slang thieves use. When he saw what a quick mind I had he was really happy, and he said, "I can't give you any gold or silver, but I can give you plenty of hints on how to stay alive." And that's exactly what he did; after God, it was this fellow who gave me life and who, although he was blind, enlightened me and showed me how to live.

I like to tell you these silly things to show what virtue there is in men being able to raise themselves up from the depths, and what a vice it is for them to let themselves slip down from high stations.

Well, getting back to my dear blind man and telling about his ways, you should know that from the time God created the world there's no one He made smarter or sharper than that man. At his job he was sly as a fox. He knew over

a hundred prayers by heart. He would use a low tone, calm and very sonorous, that would make the church where he was praying echo. And whenever he prayed, he would put on a humble and pious expression—something he did very well. And he wouldn't make faces or grimaces with his mouth or eyes the way others do.

Besides this he had thousands of other ways of getting money. He told everyone that he knew prayers for lots of different things: for women who couldn't have children or who were in labor; for those women who weren't happy in their marriage—so that their husbands would love them more. He would give predictions to expectant mothers about whether they would have a boy or a girl. And as far as medicine was concerned, he said that Galen never knew the half of what he did about toothaches, fainting spells, and female illnesses. In fact, there was no one who would tell him they were sick that he couldn't immediately say to them: "Do this, and then is; take this herb, or take that root."

And so everyone came to him—especially women—and they believed everything he told them. He got a lot out of them with these ways I've been telling about; in fact, he earned more in a month than a hundred ordinary blind men earn in a year.

But I want you to know, too, that even with all he got and all that he had, I've never seen a more greedy, miserly man. He was starving me to death. He didn't even give me enough to keep me alive! I'm telling the truth: If I hadn't known how to help myself with my wily ways and some pretty clever tricks, I would have died of hunger lots of times. But with all his know-how and carefulness I outwitted him, so that I always—or usually—really got the better of him. The way I did this was I played some devilish tricks on him, and I'll tell about some of them, even though I didn't come out on top every time.

He carried the bread and all the other things in a cloth bag, and he kept the neck of it closed with an iron ring that had a padlock and key. And when he put things in or took them out, he did it so carefully and counted everything so well that no one in the world could have gotten a crumb from him. So I'd take what little he gave me, and in less than two mouthfuls it would be gone.

After he had closed the lock and forgotten about it, thinking that I was busy with other things, I would begin to bleed the miserly bag dry. There was a little seam on the side of the bag that I'd rip open and sew up again. And I would take out bread— not little crumbs, either, but big hunks—and I'd get bacon and sausage too. And so I was always looking for the right time to score, not on a ball field, but on the food in that blasted bag that the tyrant of a blind man kept away from me.

And then, every time I had a chance I'd steal half copper coins. And when

someone gave him a copper to say a prayer for them—and since he couldn't see—they'd no sooner have offered it than I would pop it into my mouth and have a half-copper ready. And as soon as he stuck out his hand, there was my coin reduced to half price. Then the old blind man would start growling at me. As soon as he felt it and realized that it wasn't a whole copper he'd say, "How the devil is it that now that you're with me they never give me anything but half coppers, when they almost always used to give me a copper or a two-copper piece? I'd swear that this is all your fault."

He used to cut his prayers short, too; he wouldn't even get halfway through them. He told me to pull on the end of his cloak whenever the person who asked for the prayer had gone. So that's what I did. Then he'd begin to call out again with his cry, "Who would like to have me say a prayer for him?" in his usual way.

And he always put a little jug of wine next to him when we ate. I would grab it quickly and give it a couple of quiet kisses before I put it back in its place. But that didn't go on for very long: he could tell by the number of nips he took that some was missing. So to keep his wine safe he never let the jug out of reach; he'd always hold on to the handle. But not even a magnet could attract the way I could with a long rye straw that I had made for that very purpose. And I'd stick it in the mouth of the jug and suck until—good-bye, wine! But the old traitor was so wary that I think he must have sensed me, because from then on he stopped that and put the jug between his legs. And even then he kept his hand over the top to make sure.

But I got so used to drinking wine that I was dying for it. And when I saw that my straw trick wouldn't work, I decided to make a spout by carving a little hole in the bottom of the jug and then sealing it off neatly with a little thin strip of wax. When it was mealtime, I'd pretend I was cold and get in between the legs of the miserable blind man to warm up by the little fire we had. And the heat of it would melt the wax, since it was such a tiny piece. Then the wine would begin to trickle from the spout into my mouth, and I got into a position so that I wouldn't miss a blasted drop. When the poor fellow went to drink he wouldn't find a thing. He'd draw back, astonished, then he'd curse and damn the jar and the wine, not knowing what could have happened.

"You can't say that I drank it, Sir," I said, "since you never let it out of your hand."

But he kept turning the jug around and feeling it, until he finally discovered the hole and saw through my trick. But he pretended that he hadn't found out.

Then one day I was tipping on my jug as usual, without realizing what was in store for me or even that the blind man had found me out. I was sitting

the same as always, taking in those sweet sips, my face turned toward the sky and my eyes slightly closed so I could really savor the delicious liquor. The dirty blind man saw that now was the time to take out his revenge on me, and he raised that sweet and bitter jug with both his hands and smashed it down on my mouth with all his might. As I say, he used all his strength, and poor Lazaro hadn't been expecting anything like this; in fact, I was drowsy and happy as always. So it seemed like the sky and everything in it had really fallen down on top of me. The little tap sent me reeling and knocked me unconscious, and that enormous jug was so huge that pieces of it stuck in my face, cutting me in several places and knocking out my teeth, so that I don't have them to this very day.

From that minute I began to hate that old blind man. Because, even though he took care of me and treated me all right and fixed me up, I saw that he had really enjoyed his dirty trick. He used wine to wash the places where the pieces of the jug had cut me, and he smiled and said, "How about that, Lazaro? The very thing that hurt you is helping to cure you." And he made other witty remarks that I didn't particularly care for.

When I had about recovered from the beating and the black and blue marks were nearly gone, I realized that with a few more blows like that the blind man would have gotten rid of me. So I decided to be rid of him. But I didn't run away right then; I waited until I could do it in a safer and better way. And although I wanted to be kind and forgive the blind man for hitting me with the jug, I couldn't because of the harsh treatment he gave me from then on. Without any reason he would hit me on the head and yank on my hair. And if anyone asked him why he beat me so much, he would tell them about the incident with the jug: "Do you think this boy of mine is just some innocent little fellow? Well, listen and see if you think the devil himself would try anything like this."

After they'd heard about it, they would cross themselves and say, "Well—who would ever think that such a little boy would do anything like that!"

Then they'd laugh at the prank and tell him, "Go on, beat him.

God will give you your reward."

And this advice he followed to the letter.

So, for revenge, I'd lead him down all the worst roads on purpose to see if he wouldn't get hurt somehow. If there were rocks, I'd take him right over them; if there was mud, I'd lead him through the deepest part. Because even though I didn't keep dry myself, I would have given an eye if I could have hurt two eyes of that man who didn't even have one. Because of this, he was always beating me with the end of his cane so that my head was full of bumps,

and with him always pulling on my hair a lot of it was gone. I told him I wasn't doing it on purpose and that I just couldn't find any better roads, but that didn't do any good. The old traitor saw through everything and was so wary that he wouldn't believe me any more.

So that you can see how smart this shrewd blind man was, I'll tell you about one of the many times when I was with him that he really seemed to show a lot of perception. When we left Salamanca, his plan was to go to Toledo because the people were supposed to be richer there, although not very free with their money. But he pinned his hopes on this saying: "You'll get more water from a narrow flowing stream than you will from a deep dry well." And we'd pass through the best places as we went along. Where we were welcomed and were able to get something, we stayed; where this didn't happen, we'd move on after a few days.

And it happened that as we were coming to a place called Almorox when they were gathering the grapes, a grape picker gave him a bunch as alms. And since the baskets are usually handled pretty roughly and the grapes were very ripe at the time, the bunch started to fall apart in his hand. If we had thrown it in the sack, it and everything it touched would have spoiled. He decided that we'd have a picnic so that it wouldn't go to waste—and he did it to please me, too, since he'd kicked and beat me quite a bit that day. So we sat down on a low wall, and he said: "Now I want to be generous with you: we'll share this bunch of grapes, and you can eat as many as I do. We'll divide it like this: you take one, then I'll take one. But you have to promise me that you won't take more than one at a time. I'll do the same until we finish, and that way there won't be any cheating."

The agreement was made, and we began. But on his second turn, the traitor changed his mind and began to take two at a time, evidently thinking that I was doing the same. But when I saw that he had broken our agreement, I wasn't satisfied with going at his rate of speed. Instead, I went even further: I took two at a time, or three at a time—in fact, I ate them as fast as I could. And when there weren't any grapes left, he just sat there for a while with the stem in his hand, and then he shook his head and said, "Lazaro, you tricked me. I'll swear to God that you ate these grapes three at a time."

"No, I didn't," I said. "But why do you think so?"

That wise old blind man answered, "Do you know how I see that you ate them three at a time? Because I was eating them two at a time, and you didn't say a word."

I laughed to myself, and even though I was only a boy, I was very much aware of the sharpness of that blind man.

But, so that I won't talk too much, I won't tell about a lot of humorous and interesting things that happened to me with my first master. I just want to tell about how we separated, and be done with him.

We were in Escalona, a town owned by the duke of that name, at an inn, and the blind man gave me a piece of sausage to roast for him. When the sausage had been basted and he had sopped up and eaten the drippings with a piece of bread, he took a coin out of his purse and told me to go get him some wine from the tavern. Then the devil put an idea in my head, just like they say he does to thieves. It so happened that near the fire there was a little turnip, kind of long and beat up; it had probably been thrown there because it wasn't good enough for stew.

At that moment he and I were there all alone, and when I whiffed the delicious odor of the sausage, I suddenly got a huge appetite—and I knew that all I would get of it would be the smell. But the thought of eating that sausage made me lose all my fear: I didn't think for a minute what would happen to me. So while the blind man was getting the money out of his purse, I took the sausage off the spit and quickly put the turnip on. Then the blind man gave me the money for the wine and took hold of the spit, turning it over the fire, trying to cook the very thing that hadn't been cooked before because it was so bad.

I went for the wine, and on the way I downed the sausage. When I came back I found that sinner of a blind man holding the turnip between two slices of bread. He didn't know what it was yet, because he hadn't felt of it. But when he took the bread and bit into it, thinking he would get part of the sausage too, he was suddenly stopped cold by the taste of the cold turnip. He got mad then, and said, "What is this, Lazarillo?"

"You mean, 'Lacerated,'" I said. "Are you trying to pin something on me? Didn't I just come back from getting the wine? Someone must have been here and played a joke on you."

"Oh, no," he said. "I haven't let the spit out of my hand. No one could have done that."

I kept swearing that I hadn't done any switching around. But it didn't do me any good—I couldn't hide anything from the sharpness of that miserable blind man. He got up and grabbed me by the head and got close so he could smell me. And he must have smelled my breath like a good hound. Really being anxious to find out if he was right, he held on tight and opened my mouth wider than he should have. Then, not very wisely, he stuck in his nose. And it was long and sharp. And his anger had made it swell a bit, so that the point of it hit me in the throat. So with all this and my being really frightened, along with the fact that the black sausage hadn't had time to settle in my stomach, and especially with the sudden poking in of his very large nose, half choking

me—all these things went together and made the crime and the snack show themselves, and the owner got back what belonged to him. What happened was that before the blind man could take his beak out of my mouth, my stomach got so upset that it hit his nose with what I had stolen. So his nose and the black, half-chewed sausage both left my mouth at the same time.

Oh, Almighty God! I was wishing I'd been buried at that very moment, because I was already dead. The perverse blind man was so mad that if people hadn't come at the noise, I think he would have killed me. They pulled me out of his hands, and he was left with what few hairs had still been in my head. My face was all scratched up, and my neck and throat were clawed. But my throat really deserved its rough treatment because it was only on account of what it had done that I'd been beaten. Then that rotten blind man told everyone there about the things I'd done, and he told them over and over about the jug and the grapes and this last incident.

They laughed so hard that all the people who were going by in the street came in to see the fun. But the blind man told them about my tricks with such wit and cleverness that, even though I was hurt and crying, I felt that it would have been wrong for me not to laugh too.

And while this was going on I suddenly remembered that I'd been negligent and cowardly, and I began to swear at myself: I should have bitten off his nose. I'd had the opportunity to do it; in fact, half of the work had already been done for me. If only I'd clamped down with my teeth, I'd have had it trapped. Even though it belonged to that skunk, my stomach would probably have held it better than it held the sausage; and since there wouldn't have been any evidence, I could have denied the crime. I wish to God I'd have done it. It wouldn't have been a bad idea at all!

The lady running the inn and the others there made us stop our fighting, and they washed my face and throat with the wine I'd brought for him to drink. Then the dirty blind man made up jokes about it, saying things like: "The truth of the matter is I use more wine washing this boy in one year than I drink in two." And: "At least, Lazaro, you owe more to wine than you do to your father—he only gave you life once, but wine has brought you to life a thousand times."

Then he told about all the times he'd beaten me and scratched my face and then doctored me up with wine.

"I tell you," he said, "if there's one man in the world who will be blessed by wine, it's you."

And the people who were washing me laughed out loud, while I was swearing.

But the blind man's prophecy wasn't wrong, and since then I've often thought about that man who must have had a gift for telling the future. And I feel sorry about the bad things I did to him, although I really paid him back, since what he told me that day happened just like he said it would, as you'll see later on.

Because of this and the dirty tricks the blind man played on me, I decided to leave him for good. And since I had thought about it and really had my mind set on it, this last trick of his only made me more determined. So the next day we went into town to beg. It had rained quite a bit the night before, and since it was still raining that day, he went around praying under the arcades in the town so we wouldn't get wet. But with night coming on and there still being no let up, the blind man said to me, "Lazaro, this rain isn't going to stop, and the later it gets the harder it's coming down. Let's go inside the inn before there's a real downpour."

To get there we had to cross over a ditch that was full of water from the rain. And I said to him; "Sir, the water's too wide to cross here, but if you'd like, I see an easier place to get across, and we won't get wet either. It's very narrow there, and if we jump we'll keep our feet dry."

That seemed like a good idea to him, and he said, "You're pretty clever. That's why I like you so much. Take me to the place where the ditch is narrow. It's winter now, and I don't care for water any time, and especially not when I get my feet wet."

Seeing that the time was ripe, I led him under the arcades, to a spot right in front of a sort of pillar or stone post that was in the plaza—one of those that hold up the overhanging arches of the houses. And I said to him, "Sir, this is the narrowest place along the whole ditch."

It was really raining hard and the poor man was getting wet. This, along with the fact that we were in a hurry to get out of the water that was pouring down on us—and especially because God clouded his mind so I could get revenge—made him believe me, and he said, "Point me in the right direction, and you jump over the water."

I put him right in front of the pillar. Then I jumped and got behind the post like someone waiting for a bull to charge, and I said to him, "Come on, jump as far as you can so you'll miss the water."

As soon as I'd said that, the poor blind man charged like an old goat. First he took one step back to get a running start, and then he hurled himself forward with all his might. His head hit the post with a hollow sound like a pumpkin. Then he fell over backward, half dead, with his head split open.

"What? You mean to say you smelled the sausage but not the post? Smell

it, smell it!" I said, and I left him in the hands of all the people who had run to help him.

I reached the village gate on the run, and before night fell I made it to Torrijos. I didn't know what God had done with him, and I never made any attempt to find out.

II. How Lazaro Took up with a Priest and the Things That Happened to Him with That Man

I didn't feel very safe in that town, so the next day I went to a place named Maqueda. There I met up with a priest (it must have been because of all my sins). I started to beg from him, and he asked me if I knew how to assist at mass. I told him I did, and it was the truth: even though that sinner of a blind man beat me, he'd taught me all kinds of good things, too, and this was one of them. So the priest took me in, and I was out of the frying pan and into the fire. Because even though the blind man was the very picture of greed, as I've said, he was an Alexander the Great compared to this fellow. I won't say any more, except that all the miserliness in the world was in this man. I don't know if he'd been born that way, or if it came along with his priest's frock.

He had an old chest that he kept locked, and he kept the key tied to his cassock with a leather cord. When the holy bread was brought from church, he'd throw it in the chest and lock it up again. And there wasn't a thing to eat in the whole place, the way there is in most houses: a bit of bacon hanging from the chimney, some cheese lying on the table or in the cupboard, a basket with some slices of bread left over from dinner. It seemed to me that even if I hadn't eaten any of it, I would have felt a lot better just being able to look at it.

The only thing around was a string of onions, and that was kept locked in a room upstairs. I was rationed out one onion every four days. And if anyone else was around when I asked him for the key to get it, he'd reach into his breast pocket and untie the key with great airs, and he'd hand it to me and say, "Here. Take it, but bring it back as soon as you're through, and don't stuff yourself." And this as if all the oranges in Valencia were up there, while there really wasn't a damned thing, as I said, besides the onions hanging from a nail. And he had those counted so well that if I (being the sinner that I am) had taken even one extra onion, I would really have been in for it.

So there I was, dying of hunger. But if he wasn't very charitable to me, he was to himself. A good five coppers' worth of meat was his usual fare for supper. I have to admit that he did give me some of the soup, but as for the

meat—I didn't even get a whiff of it. All I got was a little bread: that blasted man wouldn't give me half of what I really needed! And on Saturdays everyone around here eats head of mutton, and he sent me for one that cost six coppers. He cooked it and ate the eyes, the tongue, the neck, the brains and the meat in the jaws. Then he gave me the chewed-over bones; he put them on a plate and said, "Here, eat this and be happy. It's a meal fit for a king. In fact, you're living better than the Pope."

"May God grant you this kind of life," I said under my breath.

After I had been with him for three weeks, I got so skinny that my legs wouldn't hold me up out of sheer hunger. I saw that I was heading right straight for the grave if God and my wits didn't come to my rescue. But there was no way I could trick him because there wasn't a thing I could steal. And even if there had been something, I couldn't blind him the way I did the other one (may he rest in peace if that blow on the head finished him off). Because even though the other fellow was smart, without that valuable fifth sense he couldn't tell what I was doing. But this new guy—there isn't anyone whose sight was as good as his was.

When we were passing around the offering plate, not a penny fell into the basket that he didn't have it spotted. He kept one eye on the people and the other on my hands. His eyes danced in their sockets like quicksilver. Every cent that was put in was ticked off in his mind. And as soon as the offering was over, he would take the plate away from me and put it on the altar.

I wasn't able to get a penny away from him all the time I lived with him—or, to be more precise, all the time I died with him. He never sent me to the tavern for even a drop of wine: what little he brought back from the offering and put in the chest he rationed out so that it lasted him a whole week. And to cover up his terrible stinginess, he would say to me, "Look, son, we priests have to be very moderate in our eating and drinking, and that's why I don't indulge the way other people do." But that old miser was really lying, because when we prayed at meetings or at funerals and other people were paying for the food, he ate like a wolf and drank more than any old, thirsty quack doctor.

Speaking of funerals, God forgive me but I was never an enemy of mankind except during them. This was because we really ate well and I was able to gorge myself. I used to hope and pray that God would kill off someone every day. We'd give the sacraments to the sick people, and the priest would ask everyone there to pray. And I was certainly not the last to begin—especially at extreme unction. With all my heart and soul I prayed to God—not that His will be done, as they say, but that He take the person from this world.

And when one of them escaped (God forgive me), I damned him to hell a

thousand times. But when one died, I blessed him just as much. Because in all the time that I was there—which must have been nearly six months—only twenty people died. And I really think that I killed them; I mean, they died at my request. Because I think that the Lord must have seen my own endless and awful dying, and He was glad to kill them so that I could live. But at that time I couldn't find any relief for my misery. If I came to life on the days that we buried someone, I really felt the pangs of hunger when there wasn't any funeral. Because I would get used to filling myself up, and then I would have to go back to my usual hunger again. So I couldn't think of any way out except to die: I wanted death for myself sometimes just as much as for the others. But I never saw it, even though it was always inside of me.

Lots of times I thought about running away from that penny-pinching master, but I didn't for two reasons. First, I didn't trust my legs: lack of food had made them so skinny that I was afraid they wouldn't hold me up. Second, I thought a while, and I said: "I've had two masters: the first one nearly starved me to death, and when I left him I met up with this one; and he gives me so little to eat that I've already got one foot in the grave. Well, if I leave this one and find a master who is one step lower, how could it possibly end except with my death?" So I didn't dare to move an inch. I really thought that each step would just get worse. And if I were to go down one more step, Lazaro wouldn't make another peep and no one would ever hear of him again.

So there I was, in a terrible state (and God help any true Christian who finds himself in those circumstances), not knowing what to do and seeing that I was going from bad to worse. Then one day when that miserable, tightfisted master of mine had gone out, a tinker came to my door. I think he must have been an angel in disguise, sent down by the hand of God. He asked me if there was anything I wanted fixed. "You could fix me up, and you wouldn't be doing half bad," I said softly but not so he could hear me. But there wasn't enough time so I could waste it on witty sayings and, inspired by the Holy Spirit, I said to him, "Sir, I've lost the key to this chest, and I'm afraid my master will beat me. Please look and see if one of those keys you have will fit. I'll pay you for it."

The angelic tinker began to try out the keys on his chain, one after the other, and I was helping him with my feeble prayers. Then, when I least expected it, I saw the face of God, as they say, formed by the loaves of bread inside that chest. When it was all the way open I said to him, "I don't have any money to give you for the key, but take your payment from what's in there."

He took the loaf of bread that looked best to him, and he gave me the key and went away happy, leaving me even happier. But I didn't touch a thing right then so that the loss wouldn't be noticeable. And, too, when I saw that I was the Lord of all that, I didn't think my hunger would dare come near me. Then

my miserly old master came back, and—thank God—he didn't notice the missing loaf of bread that the angel had carried off.

The next day, when he left the house, I opened my breadly paradise and sank my hands and teeth into a loaf, and in a flash I made it invisible. And, of course, I didn't forget to lock up the chest again. Then I began to sweep the house very happily, thinking that from now on my sad life would change. And so that day and the next I was happy. But it wasn't meant for that peace to last very long because on the third day real tertian fever struck.

It happened that I suddenly saw that man who was starving me to death standing over our chest, moving the loaves of bread from one side to the other, counting and recounting them. I pretended not to notice, and silently I was praying, hoping, and begging, "Saint John, blind him!" After he had stood there quite a while, counting the days and the loaves on his fingers, he said, "If I weren't so careful about keeping this chest closed, I'd swear that someone had taken some of the loaves of bread. But from now on, just to close the door on all suspicion, I'm going to keep close track of them. There are nine and a half in there now."

"May God send you nine pieces of bad news, too," I said under my breath. It seemed to me that what he said went into my heart like a hunter's arrow, and my stomach began to rumble when it saw that it would be going back to its old diet. Then he left the house. To console myself I opened the chest, and when I saw the bread I began to worship it—but I was afraid to "take any in remembrance of Him." Then I counted the loaves to see if the old miser had made a mistake, but he had counted them much better than I'd have liked. The best I could do was to kiss them over and over, and as delicately as I could, I peeled a little off the half-loaf on the side where it was already cut. And so I got through that day but not as happily as the one before.

But my hunger kept growing, mainly because my stomach had gotten used to more bread during those previous two or three days. I was dying a slow death, and finally I got to the point that when I was alone the only thing I did was open and close the chest and look at the face of God inside (or at least that's how children put it). But God Himself—who aids the afflicted—seeing me in such straits, put a little thought into my head that would help me. Thinking to myself, I said: This chest is big and old, and it's got some holes in it, although they're small. But he might be led to believe that mice are getting into it and are eating the bread. It wouldn't do to take out a whole loaf: he'd notice that it was missing right away, since he hardly gives me any food at all to live on. But he'll believe this all right.

And I began to break off crumbs over some cheap tablecloths he had there. I would pick up one loaf and put another one down, so that I broke a few little

pieces off of three or four of them. Then I ate those up just as if they were bonbons, and I felt a little better. But when he came home to eat and opened the chest, he saw the mess. And he really thought that mice had done the damage because I'd done my job to perfection, and it looked just like the work of mice. He looked the chest over from top to bottom, and he saw the holes where he suspected they'd gotten in. Then he called me over and said, "Lazaro, look! Look at what a terrible thing happened to our bread this evening!"

And I put on a very astonished face and asked him what it could have been.

"What else," he said, "but mice? They get into everything."

We began to eat, and—thank God—I came out all right in this, too. I got more bread than the miserable little bit he usually gave me because he sliced off the parts he thought the mice had chewed on, and said, "Eat this. The mouse is a very clean animal."

So that day, with the extra that I got by the work of my hands—or of my fingernails, to be exact—we finished our meal, although I never really got started.

And then I got another shock: I saw him walking around carefully, pulling nails out of the walls and looking for little pieces of wood. And he used these to board up all the holes in the old chest.

"Oh, Lord!" I said then. "What a life full of misery, trials, and bad luck we're born into! How short the pleasures of this hard life of ours are! Here I was, thinking that this pitiful little cure of mine would get me through this miserable situation, and I was happy, thinking I was doing pretty well. Then along came my bad luck and woke up this miser of a master of mine and made him even more careful than usual (and misers are hardly ever not careful). Now, by closing up the holes in the chest, he's closing the door to my happiness, too, and opening the one to my troubles."

That's what I kept sighing while my conscientious carpenter finished up his job with nails and little boards, and said, "Now, my dear treacherous mice, you'd better think about changing your ways. You won't get anywhere in this house."

As soon as he left, I went to see his work. And I found that he didn't leave a hole where even a mosquito could get into the sorry old chest. I opened it up with my useless key, without a hope of getting anything. And there I saw the two or three loaves that I'd started to eat and that my master thought the mice had chewed on, and I still got a little bit off of them by touching them very lightly like an expert swordsman.

Since necessity is the father of invention and I always had so much of it, day and night I kept thinking about how I was going to keep myself alive. And I think that hunger lit up my path to these black solutions: they say that hunger sharpens your wits and that stuffing yourself dulls them, and that's just the way it worked with me.

Well, while I was lying awake one night thinking about this—how I could manage to start using the chest again—I saw that my master was asleep: it was obvious from the snoring and loud wheezing he always made while he slept. I got up very, very quietly, and since during the day I had planned out what I would do and had left an old knife lying where I'd find it, I went over to the sorry-looking chest, and in the place where it looked most defenseless, I attacked it with the knife, using it like a boring tool.

It was really an old chest, and it had been around for so many years that it didn't have any strength or backbone left. It was so soft and worm-eaten that it gave in to me right away and let me put a good-sized hole in its side so I could relieve my own suffering. When I finished this, I opened the slashed-up chest very quietly, and feeling around and finding the cut-up loaf, I did the usual thing—what you've seen before.

Feeling a little better after that, I closed it up again and went back to my straw mat. I rested there and even slept a while. But I didn't sleep very well, and I thought it was because I hadn't eaten enough. And that's what it must have been because at that time all the troubles of the King of France wouldn't have been able to keep me awake. The next day my master saw the damage that had been done to the bread along with the hole I'd made, and he began to swear at the mice and say, "How can this be? I've never even seen a mouse in this house until now!"

And I really think he must have been telling the truth. If there was one house in the whole country that by rights should have been free of mice, it was that one, because they don't usually stay where there's nothing to eat. He began to look around on the walls of the house again for nails and pieces of wood to keep them out. Then when night came and he was asleep, there I was on my feet with my knife in hand, and all the holes he plugged up during the day I unplugged at night.

That's how things went, me following him so quickly that this must be where the saying comes from: "Where one door is closed, another opens." Well, we seemed to be doing Penelope's work on the cloth because whatever he wove during the day I took apart at night. And after just a few days and nights we had the poor pantry box in such a shape that, if you really wanted to call it by its proper name, you'd have to call it an old piece of armor instead of a chest because of all the nails and tacks in it.

When he saw that his efforts weren't doing any good, he said, "This chest is so beat up and the wood in it is so old and thin that it wouldn't be able to stand up against any mouse. And it's getting in such bad shape that if we put up with it any longer it won't keep anything secure. The worst part of it is that even though it doesn't keep things very safe, if I got rid of it I really wouldn't be able to get along without it, and I'd just end up having to pay three or four pieces of silver to get another one. The best thing that I can think of, since what I've tried so far hasn't done any good, is to set a trap inside the chest for those blasted mice."

Then he asked someone to lend him a mousetrap, and with the cheese rinds that he begged from the neighbors, the trap was kept set and ready inside the chest. And that really turned out to be a help to me. Even though I didn't require any frills for eating, I was still glad to get the cheese rinds that I took out of the mousetrap, and even at that I didn't stop the mouse from raiding the bread.

When he found that mice had been into the bread and eaten the cheese, but that not one of them had been caught, he swore a blue streak and asked his neighbors, "How could a mouse take cheese out of a trap, eat it, leave the trap sprung, and still not get caught?" The neighbors agreed that it couldn't be a mouse that was causing the trouble because it would have had to have gotten caught sooner or later. So one neighbor said to him, "I remember that there used to be a snake around your house—that must be who the culprit is. It only stands to reason: it's so long it can get the food, and even though the trap is sprung on it, it's not completely inside, so it can get out again."

Everyone agreed with what he'd said, and that really upset my master. From then on he didn't sleep so soundly. Whenever he heard even a worm moving around in the wood at night, he thought it was the snake gnawing on the chest. Then he would be up on his feet, and he'd grab a club that he kept by the head of the bed ever since they'd mentioned a snake to him, and he would really lay into that poor old chest, hoping to scare the snake away. He woke up the neighbors with all the noise he made, and he wouldn't let me sleep at all. He came up to my straw mat and turned it over and me with it, thinking that the snake had headed for me and gotten into the straw or inside my coat. Because they told him that at night these creatures look for some place that's warm and even get into babies' cribs and bite them. Most of the time I pretended to be asleep, and in the morning he would ask me, "Didn't you feel anything last night, son? I was right behind the snake, and I think it got into your bed: they're very cold-blooded creatures, and they try to find a place that's warm."

"I hope to God it doesn't bite me," I said. "I'm really scared of it."

He went around all excited and not able to sleep, so that—on my word of honor—the snake (a male one, of course) didn't dare go out chewing at night, or even go near the chest. But in the daytime, while he was at church or in town, I did my looting. And when he saw the damage and that he wasn't able to do anything about it, he wandered around at night—as I've said—like a spook.

I was afraid that in his wanderings he might stumble onto my key that I kept under the straw. So it seemed to me that the safest thing was to put it in my mouth at night. Because since I'd been with the blind man my mouth had gotten round like a purse, and I could hold twenty or thirty coppers in it—all in half-copper coins—and eat at the same time. If I hadn't been able to do that I couldn't have gotten hold of even a copper that the blasted blind man wouldn't have found: he was always searching every patch and seam on my clothes. Well, as I say, I put the key in my mouth every night, and I went to sleep without being afraid that the zombie master of mine would stumble onto it. But when trouble is going to strike, you can't do a thing to stop it.

The fates—or to be more exact, my sins—had it in store for me that one night while I was sleeping my mouth must have been open, and the key shifted so that the air I breathed out while I was asleep went through the hollow part of the key. It was tubular, and (unfortunately for me) it whistled so loud that my master heard it and got excited. He must have thought it was the snake hissing, and I guess it really sounded like one.

He got up very quietly with his club in hand, and by feeling his way toward the sound he came up to me very softly so the snake wouldn't hear him. And when he found himself so close, he thought that it had come over to where I was lying, looking for a warm place, and had slipped into the straw. So, lifting the club up high, and thinking that he had the snake trapped down there and that he would hit it so hard that he'd kill it, he swung down on me with such a mighty blow that he knocked me unconscious and left my head bashed in.

Then he saw that he'd hit me (I must have really cried out when the blow leveled me), and—as he later told me—he reached over and shouted at me, calling my name and trying to revive me. But when his hands touched me and he felt all the blood, he realized what he'd done, and he went off to get a light right away. When he came back with it he found me moaning with the key still in my mouth: I had never let loose of it, and it was still sticking half out—just like it must have been when I was whistling through it.

The snake killer was terrified, wondering what it could be. He took it all the way out of my mouth and looked at it. Then he realized what it was because its ridges matched his key exactly. He went to try it out, and he solved

the crime. Then that cruel hunter must have said: "I've found the mouse and the snake that were fighting me and eating me out of house and home."

I can't say for sure what happened during the next three days because I spent them inside the belly of the whale. But what I've just told I heard about from my master when I came to; he was telling what had happened in detail to everyone who came by. At the end of three days, when I was back in my senses, I found myself stretched out on my straw bed with my head all bandaged up and full of oils and salves. And I got scared and said, "What is this?"

The cruel priest answered, "It seems that I caught the mice and snakes that were ruining me."

I looked myself over, and when I saw how badly beaten up I was, I guessed what had happened.

Then an old lady who was a healer came in, along with the neighbors. And they began to take the wrappings off my head and treat the wound. When they saw that I was conscious again, they were very happy, and they said, 'Well, he's got his senses back. God willing, it won't be too serious.'

Then they began to talk again about what had happened to me and to laugh. While I—sinner that I am—I was crying. Anyway, they fed me, and I was famished, but they really didn't give me enough. Yet, little by little, I recovered, and two weeks later I was able to get up, out of any danger (but not out of my state of hunger) and nearly cured.

The next day when I'd gotten up, my master took me by the hand and led me out the door, and when I was in the street he said to me: "Lazaro, from now on you're on your own—I don't want you. Go get yourself another master, and God be with you. I don't want such a diligent servant here with me. You could only have become this way from being a blind man's guide."

Then he crossed himself as if I had the devil in me and went back into his house and closed the door.

III. How Lazaro Took up with a Squire and What Happened to Him Then

So I had to push on ahead, as weak as I was. And little by little, with the help of some good people, I ended up in this great city of Toledo. And here, by the grace of God, my wounds healed in about two weeks. People were always giving me things while I was hurt, but when I was well again, they told me, "You—you're nothing but a lazy, no-good sponger. Go on—go find yourself a

good master you can work for."

"And where will I meet up with one of those," I said to myself, "unless God makes him from scratch, the way he created the world?"

While I was going along begging from door to door (without much success, since charity seemed to have gone up to heaven), God had me run into a squire who was walking down the street. He was well dressed, his hair was combed, and he walked and looked like a real gentleman. I looked at him, and he looked at me, and he said, "Boy, are you looking for a master?"

And I said, "Yes, sir."

"Well, come with me," he said. "God has been good to you, making you run into me. You must have been doing some good praying today."

So I went with him. And I thanked God that he asked me to go along because—with his nice-looking clothes and the way he looked—I thought he was just what I needed.

It was morning when I found my third master. And I followed him through most of the city. We went through squares where they were selling bread and different things. And I was hoping and praying that he would load me up with some of the food they were selling because it was just the right time for shopping. But very quickly, without stopping, we went right past those places. Maybe he doesn't like what he sees here, I thought, and he wants to buy his groceries somewhere else.

So we kept on walking until it was eleven o'clock. Then he went into the cathedral, and I was right behind him. I saw him listen to mass and go through the other holy ceremonies very devoutly, until it was over and the people had gone. Then we came out of the church.

We began to go down a street at a good clip. And I was the happiest fellow in the world, since we hadn't stopped to buy any food. I really thought my new master was one of those people who do all their shopping at once, and that our meal would be there, ready and waiting for us, just the way I wanted—and, in fact, the way I needed.

At that minute the clock struck one—an hour past noon—and we came to a house where my master stopped, and so did I. And pulling his cape to the left, he took a key out of his sleeve and opened the door, and we both went into the house. The entrance was dark and gloomy: it looked like it would make anyone who went in afraid. But inside there was a little patio and some fairly nice rooms.

Once we were in, he took off his cape: he asked me if my hands were clean, and then we shook it out and folded it. And blowing the dust very

carefully off a stone bench that was there, he put the cape down on top of it. And when that was done, he sat down next to it and asked me a lot of questions about where I was from and how I'd happened to come to that city.

I talked about myself longer than I wanted to because I thought it was more a time to have the table set and the stew dished up than to tell him about all that. Still, I satisfied him about myself, lying as well as I could. I told him all my good points but kept quiet about the rest, since I didn't think that was the time for them. When that was over, he just sat there for a while. I began to realize that that was a bad sign, since it was almost two o'clock and I hadn't seen him show any more desire to eat than a dead man.

Then I began to think about his keeping the door locked, and the fact that I hadn't heard any other sign of life in the whole house. The only thing I'd seen were walls: not a chair, not a meat-cutting board, a stool, a table, or even a chest like the one I'd had before. And I began to wonder if that house was under a spell. While I was thinking about this, he said to me, "Boy, have you eaten?"

"No, sir," I said. "It wasn't even eight o'clock when I met you."

"Well, even though it was still morning, I'd already had breakfast. And when I eat like that, I want you to know that I'm satisfied until nighttime. So you'll just have to get along as well as you can: we'll have supper later."

You can see how, when I heard this, I nearly dropped in my tracks—not so much from hunger but because fate seemed to be going completely against me. Then all my troubles passed before my eyes again, and I began to cry over my hardships once more. I remembered my reasoning when I was thinking about leaving the priest: I figured that even though he was mean and stingy, it might turn out that I would meet up with someone worse. So there I was, moping over the hard life I'd had and over my death that was getting nearer and nearer.

And yet, keeping back my emotions as well as I could, I said to him, "Sir, I am only a boy, and thank God I'm not too concerned about eating. I can tell you that I was the lightest eater of all my friends, and all the masters I've ever had have praised that about me right up to now."

"That really is a virtue," he said, "and it makes me appreciate you even more. Because only pigs stuff themselves: gentlemen eat moderately."

I get the picture! I thought to myself. Well, damn all the health and virtue that these masters I run into find in staying hungry.

I went over next to the door and took out of my shirt some pieces of bread that I still had from begging. When he saw this, he said to me, "Come here,

boy. What are you eating?"

I went over to him and showed him the bread. There were three pieces, and he took one—the biggest and best one. Then he said, "Well, well, this does look like good bread."

"It is!" I said. "But tell me, sir, do you really think so now?"

"Yes, I do," he said. "Where did you get it? I wonder if the baker had clean hands?"

"I can't tell you that," I said, but it certainly doesn't taste bad."

"Let's see if you're right," said my poor master.

And he put it in his mouth and began to gobble it down as ferociously as I was doing with mine.

"Bless me, this bread is absolutely delicious," he said.

When I saw what tree he was barking up, I began to eat faster. Because I realized that if he finished before I did, he would be nice enough to help me with what was left. So we finished almost at the same time. And he began to brush off a few crumbs—very tiny ones—that were left on his shirt. Then he went into a little room nearby and brought out a chipped-up jug—not a very new one—and after he had drunk, he offered it to me. But, so I would look like a teetotaler, I said, "Sir, I don't drink wine."

"It's water," he said. "You can drink that."

Then I took the jug, and I drank. But not much, because being thirsty wasn't exactly my trouble. So that's how we spent the day until nighttime: him asking me questions and me answering as best I could. Then he took me to the room where the jug that we'd drunk from was, and he said to me, "Boy, get over there, and I'll show you how this bed is made up so that you'll be able to do it from now on."

I went down to one end, and he went over to the other, and we made up the blasted bed. There really wasn't much to do: it just had a bamboo frame sitting on some benches, and on top of that there was a filthy mattress with the bedclothes stretched over it. And since it hadn't been washed very often, it really didn't look much like a mattress. But that's what it was used for, though there was a lot less stuffing than it needed. We stretched it out and tried to soften it up. But that was impossible because you can't make a really hard object soft. And that blessed packsaddle had hardly a damned thing inside of it. When it was put on the frame, every strut showed through, and it looked just like the rib cage of a real skinny pig. And on top of that starving pad he put a cover of the same stamp: I never could decide what color it was. With the bed made and night on us, he said to me, "Lazaro, it's late now, and it's a

long way from here to the square. And besides, there are a lot of thieves who go around stealing at night in this city. Let's get along as well as we can, and tomorrow, when it's daytime, God will be good to us. I've been living alone, and so I haven't stocked up any groceries: instead, I've been eating out. But from now on we'll do things differently."

"Sir," I said, "don't worry about me. I can spend one night—or more, if I have to—without eating."

"You'll live longer and you'll be healthier too," he answered. "Because as we were saying today, there's nothing in the world like eating moderately to live a long life."

If that's the way things are, I thought to myself, I never will die. Because I've always been forced to keep that rule, and with my luck I'll probably keep it all my life.

And he lay down on the bed, using his pants and jacket as a pillow. He told me to stretch out at his feet, so I did. But I didn't get a damned bit of sleep! The frame struts and my protruding bones didn't stop squabbling and fighting all night long. With all the pains, hunger, and trouble I'd been through, I don't think there was a pound of flesh left on my body. And since I'd hardly had a bite to eat that day, I was groveling in hunger—and hunger and sleep don't exactly make good bedfellows. So I cursed myself (God forgive me!) and my bad luck over and over, nearly all night long. And what was worse, I didn't dare to turn over because I might wake him up. So I just kept asking God for death.

When morning came we got up, and he began to shake out and clean his pants and jacket and his coat and cape (while I stood around like an idle servant!). And he took his own good time about getting dressed. I brought some water for him to wash his hands, and then he combed his hair and put his sword in the belt, and while he was doing that, he said: "If you only knew what a prize this is, boy! I wouldn't sell it for any amount of money in the world. And I'll have you know that of all the swords the famous Toledan swordmaker Antonio made, there isn't one that he put as sharp an edge on as this one has."

And he pulled it out of the sheath and felt it with his fingers and said, "Look here. I'll bet I could slice a ball of wool with it." And I thought to myself: And with my teeth—even though they're not made of steel—I could slice a four-pound loaf of bread.

He put it back in the sheath and strapped it on, and then he hung a string of large beads from the sword belt. And he walked slowly, holding his body straight and swaying gracefully as he walked. And every so often he would put

the tail of the cape over his shoulder or under his arm. And with his right hand on his side, he went out the door, saying, "Lazaro, while I go to mass, you watch the house. Make the bed and fill the pitcher up with water from the river just down below us. Be sure to lock the door so that nothing will get stolen, and put the key on the hinge here so that if I come back while you're gone I can get in."

Then he went up the street with such a stately expression and manner that anyone who didn't know him would think he was a close relative to the Count of Arcos, or at least his valet.

I stood there, thinking: "Bless You, Lord—You give us sickness and You cure us too! My master looks so content that anyone who saw him would think he'd eaten a huge supper last night and slept in a nice bed. And even though it's early in the morning, they'd think he'd had a good breakfast. Your ways are mighty mysterious, Lord, and people don't understand them! With that refined way he acts and that nice-looking cape and coat he'd fool anyone. And who would believe that that gracious man got by all day yesterday on a piece of bread that his servant Lazaro had carried all day and night inside his shirt for safekeeping—not really the most sanitary place in the world—and that today when he washed his hands and face, he dried them on his shirttail because we didn't have any towels? Nobody would suspect it, of course. Oh Lord, how many of these people do You have scattered around the world who suffer for the filth that they call honor what they would never suffer for You!"

So I stood at the door, thinking about these things and looking until my master had disappeared down the long, narrow street. Then I went back into the house, and in a second I walked through the whole place, both upstairs and down, without stopping or finding anything to stop for. I made up that blasted hard bed and took the jug down to the river. And I saw my master in a garden, trying hard to coax two veiled women—they looked like the kind that are always hanging around that place. In fact, a lot of them go there in the summer to take the early morning air. And they go down to those cool riverbanks to eat breakfast—without even bringing any food along; they're sure someone will give them some, since the men around there have got them in the habit of doing that.

As I say, there he was with them just like the troubador Macias, telling them more sweet words than Ovid ever wrote. And when they saw that he was pretty well softened up, they weren't ashamed to ask him for some breakfast, promising the usual payment.

But his pocketbook was as cold as his stomach was warm, and he began to have such hot chills that the color drained from his face, and he started to trip over his tongue and make up some lame excuses.

They must have been pretty experienced women because they caught on to his illness right away and left him there for what he was.

I'd been eating some cabbage stalks, and that was my breakfast. And since I was a new servant, I went back home very diligently without my master seeing me. I decided I'd sweep out a little there, since that's what the place really needed, but I couldn't find anything to sweep with. Then I began to think about what I should do, and I decided to wait until noon for my master because if he came he might bring something to eat; but that turned out to be a waste of time.

When I saw that it was getting to be two o'clock and he still hadn't come, I began to be attacked by hunger. So I locked the door and put the key where he told me to, and then I went back to my old trade. With a low, sickly voice, my hands crossed over my chest, and with my eyes looking up to heaven and God's name on my tongue, I began to beg for bread at the doors of the biggest houses I saw. But I'd been doing this almost from the cradle—I mean I learned it from that great teacher, the blind man, and I turned out to be a pretty good student—so even though this town had never been very charitable, and it had been a pretty lean year besides, I handled myself so well that before the clock struck four I had that many pounds of bread stored away in my stomach and at least two more in my sleeves and inside my shirt.

I went back to the house, and on my way through the meat market I begged from one of the women there, and she gave me a piece of cow's hoof along with some cooked tripe.

When I got home my good master was there, his cape folded and lying on the stone bench, and he was walking around in the patio. I went inside, and he came over to me. I thought he was going to scold me for being late, but God had something better in store. He asked me where I'd been, and I told him, "Sir, I was here until two o'clock, and when I saw that you weren't coming, I went to the city and put myself in the hands of the good people there, and they gave me what you see here."

I showed him the bread and the tripe that I was carrying in my shirttail, and his face lit up, and he said: 'Well, I held up dinner for you, but when I saw that you weren't going to come, I went ahead and ate. But what you've done there is all right because it's better to beg in God's name than it is to steal. That's my opinion, so help me. The only thing I ask is that you don't tell anyone that you're living with me because it will hurt my honor. But I think it would stay a secret anyway, since hardly anyone in this town knows me. I wish I'd never come here!'"

"Don't worry about that, sir," I said. "No one would give a damn about asking me that, and I wouldn't tell them even if they did."

"Well then, eat, you poor sinner. If it's God's will, we'll soon see ourselves out of these straits. But I want you to know that ever since I came to this house nothing has gone right for me. There must be an evil spell on it. You know there are some unlucky houses that are cursed, and the bad luck rubs off on the people who live in them. I don't doubt for a minute that this is one of them, but I tell you that after this month is over, I wouldn't live here even if they gave the place to me."

I sat down at the end of the stone bench, and I kept quiet about my snack so that he wouldn't take me for a glutton. So, for supper I began to eat my tripe and bread, while I was watching my poor master out of the corner of my eye. And he kept staring at my shirttail that I was using for a plate. I hope God takes as much pity on me as I felt for him. I knew just what he was feeling, since the same thing had happened to me lots of times— and, in fact, it was still happening to me. I thought about asking him to join me, but since he told me that he'd already eaten I was afraid he wouldn't accept the invitation. The fact is, I was hoping that the sinner would help himself to the food I had gone to the trouble of getting and that he'd eat the way he did the day before so he could get out of his own troubles. This was really a better time for it, since there was more food and I wasn't as hungry.

God decided to grant my wish—and his, too, I guess. Because he was still walking around, but when I began to eat, he came over to me and said, "I tell you, Lazaro, I've never seen anyone eat with as much gusto as you put into it. Anyone watching you would get hungry on the spot, even if he hadn't been before."

The marvelous appetite you have, I thought to myself, makes you think mine is beautiful.

Still, I decided to help him, since he had opened up a way for me himself. So I said to him, "Sir, a man can do a good job if he has good tools. This bread is absolutely delicious, and the cow's hoof is so well cooked and seasoned that no one could possibly resist its taste."

"Is it cow's hoof?"

"Yes, sir."

"I tell you, there's no better dish in the world. I don't even like pheasant as much."

"Well, dig in, sir, and you'll see how good it really is."

I put the cow's hooves into his, along with three or four of the whiter pieces of bread. And he sat down beside me and began to eat like a man who was really hungry. He chewed the meat off of every little bone better than any

hound of his would have done.

"With garlic sauce," he said, "this is an exceptional dish."

"You don't need any sauce with your appetite," I said under my breath.

"By God, that tasted so good you'd think I hadn't had a bite to eat all day."

That's true as sure as I was born, I said to myself.

He asked me for the water jug, and when I gave it to him it was as full as when I'd first brought it in. Since there was no water gone from it, there was a sure sign that my master hadn't been overeating that day. We drank and went to sleep, very content, like we'd done the night before.

Well, to make a long story short, that's the way we spent the next nine or ten days: that sinner would go out in the morning with his satisfied, leisurely pace, to dawdle around the streets while I was out hoofing it for him.

I used to think lots of times about my catastrophe: having escaped from those terrible masters I'd had and looking for someone better, I ran into a man who not only couldn't support me but who I had to support. Still, I really liked him because I saw that he didn't have anything and he couldn't do more than he was already doing. I felt more sorry for him than angry. And lots of times, just so I could bring back something for him to eat, I didn't eat anything myself.

I did this because one morning the pitiful fellow got up in his shirt and went to the top floor of the house to take care of a certain necessity. And to satisfy my curiosity I unfolded the jacket and pants he'd left at the head of the bed. And I found an old, crumpled-up little purse of satiny velvet that didn't have a damned cent in it, and there wasn't any sign that it had had one for a long time.

"This man," I said, "is poor. And no one can give what he doesn't have. But both the stingy blind man and that blasted miser of a priest did all right in God's name—one of them with a quick tongue and the other one with his hand-kissing. And they were starving me to death. So it's only right that I should hate them and feel sorry for this man."

As God is my witness, even today when I run into someone like him, with that pompous way of walking of his, I feel sorry for them because I think that they may be suffering what I saw this one go through. But even with all his poverty, I'd still be glad to serve him more than the others because of the things I've just mentioned. There was only one little thing that I didn't like about him: I wished that he wouldn't act so superior; if only he'd let his vanity come down a little to be in line with his growing necessity. But it seems to me that that's a rule his kind always keeps: even if they don't have a red cent to

their name, they have to keep up the masquerade. God help them or that's the way they'll go to their graves.

Well, while I was there, getting along the way I said, my bad luck (which never got tired of haunting me) decided that that hard, foul way of life shouldn't last. The way it happened was that, since there had been a crop failure there that year, the town council decided to make all the beggars who came from other towns get out of the city. And they announced that from then on if they found one of them there, he'd be whipped. So the law went into effect, and four days after the announcement was given I saw a procession of beggars being led through the streets and whipped. And I got so scared that I didn't dare go out begging any more.

It's not hard to imagine the dieting that went on in my house and the sadness and silence of the people living there. It was so bad that for two or three days at a time we wouldn't have a bite to eat or even say one word to each other. I knew some ladies who lived next door to us; they spun cotton and made hats, and they kept me alive. From what little they brought in they always gave me something, and I just about managed to get by.

But I didn't feel as sorry for myself as I did for my poor master: he didn't have a damned bite to eat in a week. At least, we didn't have anything to eat at the house. When he went out I don't know how he got along, where he went or what he ate. And if you could only have seen him coming down the street at noon, holding himself straight, and skinnier than a full-blooded greyhound! And because of his damn what-do-you-call it—honor—he would take a toothpick (and there weren't very many of those in the house either) and go out the door, picking at what didn't have anything between them and still grumbling about the cursed place. He'd say, "Look how bad things are. And it's this blasted house that's causing it all. Look how gloomy and dark and dismal it is. As long as we stay here, we're going to suffer. I wish the month were over so we could get out of here."

Well, while we were in this terrible, hungry state, one day—I don't know by what stroke of luck or good fortune—a silver piece found its way into the poor hands of my master. And he brought it home with him, looking as proud as if he had all the money in Venice, and smiling very happily, he gave it to me and said: "Take this, Lazaro. God is beginning to be good to us. Go down to the square and buy bread and wine and meat. Let's shoot the works! And also—this should make you happy—I want you to know that I've rented another house, so we'll only stay in this unlucky place until the end of the month. Damn the place and damn the person who put the first tile on its roof—I should never have rented it. I swear to God that as long as I've lived here I haven't had a drop of wine or a bite of meat, and I haven't gotten any rest. And it's all because of the way this place looks—so dark and gloomy! Go on now,

and come back as quick as you can: we'll eat like kings today."

I took my silver coin and my jug, and hurrying along, I went up the street, heading for the square, very content and happy. But what's the use if my bad luck has it planned for me that I can't enjoy anything without trouble coming along with it? And that's the way this thing went. I was going up the street, thinking about how I would spend the money in the best way possible and get the most out of it. And I was thanking God with all my heart for letting my master have some money, when suddenly I came upon a corpse that a bunch of clergy and other people were carrying down the street on a litter.

I squeezed up next to the wall to let them by, and after the body had gone past there came right behind the litter a woman who must have been the dead man's wife, all dressed up in mourning (and a lot of other women with her). And she came along, crying loudly and saying, "My husband and lord, where are they taking you? It's to that poor, unhappy house, that dark and gloomy house, that house where they never eat or drink!"

And when I heard that, I felt like I had fallen through the ground, and I said, "Oh—no! They're taking this dead man to my house."

I turned around and squeezed through the crowd and ran back down the street as fast as I could toward my house. And when I got inside I closed the door right behind me and called out for my master to come and help me. And I grabbed hold of him and begged him to help me block the door. He was a little stunned, thinking it might be something else, and he asked me, "What is it, boy? Why are you shouting? What's the matter? Why did you slam the door so hard?"

"Oh, sir," I said, "help me! They're bringing a dead man here."

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I stumbled into him just up the way from here, and his wife was coming along saying, 'My husband and lord, where are they taking you? To the dark and gloomy house, the poor, unhappy house, the house where they never eat or drink!' Oh, sir, they're bringing him here."

And I tell you that when my master heard that, even though he didn't have any reason for being very cheerful, he laughed so hard that for a long time he couldn't even talk. In the meantime I had the bolt snapped shut on the door and my shoulder against it to hold them all back. The people passed by with their corpse, and I was still afraid that they were going to stick him in our house. And when he'd had his bellyful of laughter (more than of food) my good master said to me: "It's true, Lazaro, that taking the words of the widow at face value, you had every reason to think what you did. But since it was God's will to do something else and they've gone by, go on and open the door and go get

us something to eat."

"Sir, wait until they've gone down the street," I said.

Finally my master came up to the door that led to the street and opened it, reassuring me—and I really needed that because I was so upset and afraid. So I started up the street again.

But even though we ate well that day, I didn't enjoy it a damn bit. In fact, I didn't get my color back for three days. And my master would grin every time he thought about what I'd done.

So that's what happened to me during those days with my third poor master, this squire, and all the time I was wishing I knew how he'd come to this place and why he was staying here. Because from the very first day that I started serving him, I realized he was a stranger here: he hardly knew anyone, and he didn't associate with very many of the people around here.

Finally my wish came true, and I found out what I wanted to know. One day after we'd eaten fairly well and he was pretty content, he told me about himself. He said he was from Old Castile. And he said the only reason he'd left there was because he didn't want to take his hat off to a neighbor of his who was a high- class gentleman.

"Sir," I said, "if he was the kind of man you say he was and his status was higher than yours, it was only right for you to take your hat off first—after all, you say that he took off his hat, too."

"That is the kind of man he was: his status was higher and he did take his hat off to me. But considering all the time I took mine off first, it wouldn't have been asking too much for him to be civil and make the first move once in a while."

"It seems to me, sir," I told him, "that I wouldn't even think about that—especially with people who are my superiors and are better off than I am."

"You're just a boy," he answered, "and you don't understand honor. That is the most important thing to any self-respecting gentleman these days. Well, I want you to know that I'm a squire—as you can see. But I swear to God that if I meet a count on the street and he doesn't take his hat all the way off his head for me, the next time I see him coming, I'll duck right into a house and pretend that I have some business or other to do there. Or I'll go up another street, if there is one, before he gets up to me—just so I won't have to take off my hat to him. Because a gentleman doesn't owe anything to anyone except God or the King. And it isn't right, if he's a man of honor, for him to let his self-respect fall even for a minute.

"I remember one day when I put a craftsman from my town in his place,

and I felt like strangling him, too, because every time I ran into him he would say, 'God keep you, friend.' 'You little peasant,' I said to him, 'How dare you address me with "God keep you" as if I were just anybody? Where were you brought up?' And from that day on, whenever he saw me, he took off his hat and spoke to me the way he was supposed to."

"But isn't that a good way for one man to greet another: to say

'God keep you'?"

"Damn it!" he said. "That's what they say to the lower classes. But to people who are higher up, like me, they're only supposed to say, 'I hope you are well today, sir.' Or, at least, 'I hope you feel well today' if the person talking to me is a gentleman. So I didn't want to put up with that man from my town who was filling me up to here with his 'God keep you.' And I wouldn't put up with him either. In fact, I won't stand for anyone—including the King himself—to say to me 'God keep you, friend.'"

"Well, I'll be. . . ," I said. "That's why God doesn't help you out. You won't let anyone ask Him to."

"Especially," he said, "because I'm not so poor. In fact, where I'm from I have a huge estate (it's fifty miles from where I was born, right along Costanilla, the main street of Valladolid). And if the houses on it were still standing and kept up, it would be worth more than six thousand pieces of silver—just to give you an idea of how big and grand it would be. And I have a pigeon house that would produce more than two hundred pigeons a year if it hadn't fallen down. And there are some other things I won't mention, but I left them all because of my honor.

"And I came to this city, thinking I'd find a good position. But it hasn't turned out the way I thought it would. I meet lots of canons and other officials of the church, but those people are so tight with their money that no one could possibly get them to change their ways. Lesser men want me, too, but working for them is a lot of trouble. They want you to change from a man into a jack-of-all-trades, and if you won't, they give you the sack. And, generally, the paydays are few and far between; most of the time your only sure way of being paid is when they feed you. And when they want to have a clear conscience and really pay you for the sweat of your brow, your payoff comes from their clothes closet with a sweaty old jacket or a ragged cape or coat. And even when a man has a position with someone of the nobility, he still has his troubles.

"I ask you: aren't I clever enough to serve one of them and make him happy? Lord, if I ran into one, I really think I'd be his favorite—and I could do lots of things for him. Why, I could lie to him just as well as anyone else

could. And I could flatter him like nothing he'd ever seen before. And I'd laugh at his stories and jokes even if they weren't exactly the funniest things in the world. I'd never tell him anything disturbing even if he would be better off knowing it. I would be very conscientious in everything about him, both in word and in deed. And I wouldn't kill myself to do things he wouldn't see. Whenever he was around to hear me, I would always scold the servants so he'd think I was very concerned about him. And if he were scolding one of his servants, I'd step in with some pointed remarks about the culprit that would make the nobleman even madder, while I was appearing to take the servant's side. I would praise the things he liked, but I'd mock and slander the people of the house and even the ones who didn't live there. I would go prying and try to find out about other people's lives so I could tell him about them.

"And I'd do all sorts of other things like this that go on in palaces these days and that people in that sort of a position like. They don't want to see good men in their homes. In fact, they think they're useless, and actually, they hate them. They say they're stupid people you can't deal with and that a nobleman can't confide in them. And smart people these days act with the nobility, as I say, just the way I would. But with my bad luck, I haven't met one of them."

And so my master complained about his unhappy life, too, telling me how admirable he was.

Well, about this time, a man and an old woman came in the door. The man wanted the rent money for the house, and the old lady had rented him the bed and wanted the money for that. They figured up the amount, and for two months' rent they wanted what he couldn't have made in a year. I think it was about twelve or thirteen pieces of silver. And he answered them very courteously: he said that he would go out to the square to change a doubloon and that they should come back that afternoon. But when he left, he never came back.

So they returned in the afternoon, but it was too late. I told them that he still hadn't come back. And when night came and he didn't, I was afraid to stay in the house alone. So I went to the women next door and told them what had happened, and I slept at their place.

The next morning, the creditors returned. But no one was home, so they came to the door of the place I was staying at now and asked about their neighbor. And the women told them, "Here is his servant and the door key."

Then they asked me about him, and I told them I didn't know where he was and that he hadn't come back home after going to get the change. And I said that I thought he'd given both them and me the slip.

When they heard that, they went to get a constable and a notary. And then

they came back with them and took the key and called me and some witnesses over. And they opened the door and went inside to take my master's property until he paid what he owed them. They walked through the entire house and found it empty, just as I've said. And they asked me, "What's become of your master's things—his chests and drapes and furniture?"

"I don't know anything about that," I answered.

"It's obvious," they said, "that last night they must have had it all taken out and carted somewhere else. Constable, arrest this boy. He knows where it is."

Then the constable came over and grabbed me by the collar of my jacket, and he said, "Boy, you're under arrest unless you tell us what's happened to your master's things."

I'd never seen myself in such a fix (I had, of course, been held by the collar lots of times before, but that was done gently so that I could guide that man who couldn't see down the road), and so I was really scared. And while crying, I promised to answer their questions.

"All right," they said. "Then tell us what you know. Don't be afraid."

The notary sat down on a stone bench so he could write out the inventory, and he asked me what things my master had.

"Sir," I said, "according to what my master told me, he has a nice estate with houses on it and a pigeon house that isn't standing any more."

"All right," they said. "Even though it probably isn't worth much, it will be enough to pay off his bill. And what part of the city is it located in?" they asked me.

"In his town," I answered.

"For God's sake, we're really getting far," they said. "And just where is his town?"

"He told me that he came from Old Castile," I replied.

And the constable and notary laughed out loud, and said, "This sort of information would be good enough to pay off your debt even if it was bigger."

The neighbor ladies were there, and they said: "Gentlemen, this is just an innocent boy, and he's only been with that squire a few days. He doesn't know any more about him than you do. Besides, the poor little fellow has been coming to our house, and we've given him what we could to eat out of charity, and at night he's gone to his master's place to sleep."

When they saw that I was innocent, they let me loose and said I was free to go. And the constable and notary wanted the man and the woman to pay them

for their services. And there was a lot of shouting and arguing about that. They said they weren't obligated to pay: there was no reason for them to, since nothing had been attached. But the men said that they had missed out on some other more profitable business just so they could come here.

Finally, after a lot of shouting, they loaded the old lady's old mattress onto a deputy—even though it wasn't very much of a load. And all five of them went off, shouting at each other. I don't know how it all turned out. I think that sinner of a mattress must have paid everyone's expenses. And that was a good use for it because the time it should have spent relaxing and resting from its past strain, it had still been going around being rented out.

So, as I've said, my poor third master left me, and I saw the hand of my bad luck in this, too. It showed how much it was going against me, because it arranged my affairs so backward that instead of me leaving my master—which is what normally happens— my master left and ran away from me.

IV. How Lazaro Went to Work for a Friar of the Order of Mercy and What Happened to Him

I had to get a fourth master, and this one turned out to be a friar of the Order of Mercy. The women I've mentioned recommended me to him. They said he was a relative. He didn't think much of choir duties or eating in the monastery; he was always running around on the outside; and he was really devoted to secular business and visiting. In fact, he was so dedicated to this that I think he wore out more shoes than the whole monastery put together. He gave me the first pair of shoes I ever wore, but they didn't last me a week. And I wouldn't have lasted much longer myself trying to keep up with him. So because of this and some other little things that I don't want to mention, I left him.

V. How Lazaro Went to Work for a Pardoner and the Things That Happened to Him Then

As luck would have it, the fifth one I ran into was a seller of papal indulgences. He was arrogant, without principles, the biggest hawker of indulgences that I've ever seen in my life or ever hope to see—and probably the biggest one of all time. He had all sorts of ruses and underhanded tricks, and he was always thinking up new ones.

When he'd come to a place where he was going to sell these pardons, first he'd give the priests and the other clergy some presents—just little things that really weren't worth much: some lettuce from Murcia; a couple limes or oranges if they were in season; maybe a peach; some pears—the kind that stay green even after they're ripe. That way he tried to win them over so they'd look kindly on his business and call out their congregation to buy up the indulgences.

When they thanked him, he'd find out how well educated they were. If they said they understood Latin, he wouldn't speak a word of it so they couldn't trip him up; instead he'd use some refined, polished-sounding words and flowery phrases. And if he saw that these clerics were "appointed reverends"—I mean that they bought their way into the priesthood instead of by going through school- -he turned into a Saint Thomas, and for two hours he'd speak Latin. Or, at least, something that sounded like Latin even if it wasn't.

When they wouldn't take his pardons willingly, he'd try to find some underhanded way to get them to take them. To do that, he'd sometimes make a nuisance of himself, and other times he'd use his bag of tricks. It would take too long to talk about all the things I saw him do, so I'll just tell about one that was really sly and clever, and I think that will show how good he was at it.

In a place called Sagra, in the province of Toledo, he'd been preaching for two or three days, trying his usual gimmicks, and not one person had bought an indulgence, and I couldn't see that they had any intention of buying any. He swore up and down, and trying to think of what to do, he decided to call the town together the next morning so he could try to sell all the pardons.

And that night, after supper, he and the constable began to gamble to see who would pay for the meal. They got to quarreling over the game, and there were heated words. He called the constable a thief, and the constable called him a swindler. At that point my master, the pardoner, picked up a spear that was lying against the door of the room where they were playing. The constable reached for his sword, that he kept at his side.

The guests and neighbors came running at the noise and shouting we all began to make, and they got in between the two of them to break it up. Both men were really mad, and they tried to get away from the people who were holding them back so they could kill each other. But since those people had come swarming in at all the noise, the house was full of them, and when the two men saw that they couldn't use their weapons they began to call each other names. And at one point the constable said my master was a swindler and that all the pardons he was selling were counterfeit.

Finally, the townspeople saw that they couldn't make them stop, so they decided to get the constable out of the inn and take him somewhere else. And

that made my master even madder. But after the guests and neighbors pleaded with him to forget about it and go home to bed he left, and then so did everyone else.

The next morning my master went to the church and told them to ring for mass so he could preach and sell the indulgences. And the townspeople came, muttering about the pardons, saying that they were forgeries and that the constable himself had let it out while they were quarreling. So, if they hadn't wanted to take any pardons before, they were dead set against it now.

The pardoner went up to the pulpit and began his sermon, trying to stir up the people, telling them that they shouldn't be without the blessings and the forgiveness that would come to them by buying the indulgences.

When he was into the sermon in full swing, the constable came in the church door, and after praying he got up, and with a loud and steady voice he began to speak very solemnly: "My fellow men, let me say a word; afterward, you can listen to whoever you like. I came here with this swindler who's preaching. But he tricked me: he said that if I helped him in his business, we'd split the profits. And now, seeing how it would hurt my conscience and your pocketbooks, I've repented of what I've done. And I want to tell you openly that the indulgences he's selling are forgeries. Don't believe him and don't buy them. I'm not involved with them any longer—either in an open or a hidden way—and from now on I'm giving up my staff, the symbol of my office, and I throw it on the ground so that you'll see I mean it. And if sometime in the future this man is punished for his cheating, I want you to be my witnesses that I'm not in with him and I'm not helping him, but that I told you the truth—that he's a double-dealing liar."

And he finished his speech.

When he'd started, some of the respectable men there wanted to get up and throw the constable out of church so there wouldn't be any scandal. But my master stopped them and told them all not to bother him under penalty of excommunication. He told them to let him say anything he wanted to. So while the constable was saying all that, my master kept quiet, too.

When he stopped speaking, my master told him if he wanted to say anything more he should go ahead. And the constable said, "I could say plenty more about you and your dirty tricks, but I've said enough for now."

Then the pardoner knelt down in the pulpit, and with his hands folded, and looking up toward heaven, he said: "Lord God, to Whom nothing is hidden and everything is manifest, for Whom nothing is impossible and everything is possible, Thou knowest the truth of how unjustly I have been accused. In so far as I am concerned, I forgive him so that Thou, Oh Lord, may forgive me.

Pay no attention to this man who knows not what he says or does. But the harm that has been done to Thee, I beg and beseech Thee in the name of righteousness that Thou wilt not disregard it.

"Because someone here may have been thinking of taking this holy indulgence, and now, believing that the false words of that man are true, they will not take it. And since that would be so harmful to our fellow men, I beg Thee, Lord, do not disregard it; instead, grant us a miracle here. Let it happen in this way: if what that man says is true—that I am full of malice and falseness—let this pulpit collapse with me in it and plunge one hundred feet into the ground, where neither it nor I shall ever be seen again. But if what I say is true—and he, won over by the devil to distract and deprive those who are here present from such a great blessing—if he is saying false things, let him be punished and let his malice be known to all."

My reverent master had hardly finished his prayer when the crooked constable fell flat on his face, hitting the floor so hard that it made the whole church echo. Then he began to roar and froth at the mouth and to twist it and his whole face, too, kicking and hitting and rolling around all over the floor.

The people's shouts and cries were so loud that no one could hear anyone else. Some were really terrified. Other people were saying, "God help him." And others said, "He got what was coming to him. Anyone who lies like he did deserves it."

Finally, some of the people there (even though I think they were really afraid) went up to him and grabbed hold of his arms, while he was swinging wildly at everyone around him. Other people grabbed his legs, and they really had to hold him tight because he was kicking harder than a mule. They held him down for quite a while. There were more than fifteen men on top of him, and he was still trying to hit them; and if they weren't careful he would punch them in the nose.

All the time that master of mine was on his knees up in the pulpit with his hands and eyes fixed on heaven, caught up by the Holy Spirit. And all the noise in the church—the crying and shouting—couldn't bring him out of that mystical trance.

Those good men went up to him, and by shouting they aroused him and begged him to help that poor man who was dying. They told him to forget about the things that had happened before and the other man's awful words because he had been paid back for them. But if he could somehow do something that would take that man out of his misery and suffering, to do it—for God's sake—because it was obvious that the other man was guilty and that the pardoner was innocent and had been telling the truth, since the Lord had shown His punishment right there when he'd asked for revenge.

The pardoner, as if waking from a sweet dream, looked at them and looked at the guilty man and all the people there, and very slowly he said to them: "Good men, you do not need to pray for a man in whom God has given such a clear sign of Himself. But since He commands us not to return evil for evil and to forgive those who harm us, we may confidently ask Him to do what He commands us to do. We may ask His Majesty to forgive this man who offended Him by putting such an obstacle in the way of the holy faith. Let us all pray to Him."

And so he got down from the pulpit and urged them to pray very devoutly to Our Lord, asking Him to forgive that sinner and bring back his health and sanity and to cast the devil out of him if, because of his great sins, His Majesty had permitted one to go in.

They all got down on their knees in front of the altar, and with the clergy there they began to softly chant a litany. My master brought the cross and the holy water, and after he had chanted over him, he held his hands up to heaven and tilted his eyes upward so that the only thing you could see was a little of their whites. Then he began a prayer that was as long as it was pious. And it made all the people cry (just like the sermons at Holy Week, when the preacher and the audience are both fervent). And he prayed to God, saying that it was not the Lord's will to give that sinner death but to bring him back to life and make him repent. And since the man had been led astray by the devil but was now filled with the thought of death and his sins, he prayed to God to forgive him and give him back his life and his health so he could repent and confess his sins.

And when this was finished, he told them to bring over the indulgence, and he put it on the man's head. And right away that sinner of a constable got better, and little by little he began to come to. And when he was completely back in his senses, he threw himself down at the pardoner's feet and asked his forgiveness. He confessed that the devil had commanded him to say what he did and had put the very words in his mouth. First, to hurt him and get revenge. Secondly—and mainly—because the devil himself would really be hurt by all the good that could be done here if the pardons were bought up.

My master forgave him, and they shook hands. And there was such a rush to buy up the pardons that there was hardly a soul in the whole place that didn't get one: husbands and wives, sons and daughters, boys and girls.

The news of what had happened spread around to the neighboring towns, and when we got to them, he didn't have to give a sermon or even go to the church. People came right up to the inn to get them as if they were going out of style. So in the ten or twelve places we went to around there, my master sold a good thousand indulgences in each place without even preaching a

sermon.

While the "miracle" was happening, I have to admit that I was astonished, too, and I got taken in just like the others. But when I saw the way my master and the constable laughed and joked about the business later, I realized that it had all been cooked up by my sharp and clever master.

And even though I was only a boy, it really amused me, and I said to myself: I'll bet these shysters do this all the time to innocent people.

Well, to be brief, I stayed with my fifth master about four months, and I had some hard times with him, too.

VI. How Lazaro Went to Work for a Chaplain and What Happened to Him Then

After this I took up with a man who painted tambourines. He wanted me to grind the colors for him, and I had my trials with him, too.

By now I was pretty well grown up. And one day when I went into the cathedral, a chaplain there gave me a job. He put me in charge of a donkey, four jugs, and a whip, and I began to sell water around the city. This was the first step I took up the ladder to success: my dreams were finally coming true. On weekdays I gave my master sixty coppers out of what I earned, while I was able to keep everything I got above that. And on Saturdays I got to keep everything I made.

I did so well at the job that after four years of it, watching my earnings very carefully, I saved enough to buy myself a good secondhand suit of clothes. I bought a jacket made out of old cotton, a frayed coat with braid on the sleeves and an open collar, a cape that had once been velvety, and an old sword—one of the first ones ever made in Cuellar. When I saw how good I looked in my gentleman's clothes, I told my master to take back his donkey: I wasn't about to do that kind of work any more.

VII. How Lazaro Went to Work for a Constable and Then What Happened to Him

After I left the chaplain I was taken on as bailiff by a constable. But I didn't stay with him very long: the job was too dangerous for me. That's what I decided after some escaped criminals chased me and my master with clubs and

rocks. My master stood there and faced them, and they beat him up, but they never did catch me. So I quit that job.

And while I was trying to think of what sort of a life I could lead so that I could have a little peace and quiet and save up something for my old age, God lit up my path and put me on the road to success. With the help of some friends and other people, all the trials and troubles I'd gone through up till then were finally compensated for, seeing as how I got what I wanted: a government job. And no one ever gets ahead without a job like that.

And that's what I've been doing right up to now: I work in God's service—and yours, too. What I do is announce the wines that are being sold around the city. Then, too, I call out at auctions and whenever anything lost. And I go along with the people who are suffering for righteousness' sake and call out their crimes: I'm a town crier, to put it plainly.

It's been a good job, and I've done so well at it that almost all of this sort of work comes to me. In fact, it's gotten to the point where if someone in the city has wine or anything else to put up for sale, they know it won't come to anything unless Lazarillo of Tormes is in on it.

About this time that gentleman, the Archpriest of San Salvador (your friend and servant), began to notice my abilities and how I was making a good living. He knew who I was because I'd been announcing his wines, and he said he wanted me to marry a maid of his. And I saw that only good, profitable things could come from a man like him, so I agreed to go along with it.

So I married her, and I've never regretted it. Because besides the fact that she's a good woman and she's hardworking and helpful, through my lord, the archpriest, I have all the help and favors I need. During the year he always gives her a few good-sized sacks of wheat, meat on the holidays, a couple loaves of bread sometimes, and his socks after he's through with them. He had us rent a little house right next to his, and on Sundays and almost every holiday we eat at his place.

But there have always been scandalmongers, and I guess there always will be, and they won't leave us in peace. They talk about I don't know what all—they say that they've seen my wife go and make up his bed and do his cooking for him. And God bless them, but they're a bunch of liars.

Because, besides the fact that she's the kind of woman who's hardly happy about these gibes, my master made me a promise, and I think he'll keep it. One day he talked to me for a long time in front of her, and he said to me: "Lazaro of Tormes, anyone who pays attention to what gossips say will never get ahead. I'm telling you this because I wouldn't be at all surprised if someone did see your wife going in and out of my house. In fact, the reason she goes in is

very much to your honor and to hers: and that's the truth. So forget what people say. Just think of how it concerns you—I mean, how it benefits you."

"Sir," I said, "I've decided to be on the side of good men. It is true that some of my friends have told me something of that. The truth is, they've sworn for a fact that my wife had three children before she married me, speaking with reverence to your grace since she's here with us."

Then my wife began to scream and carry on so much that I thought the house with us in it was going to fall in. Then she took to crying, and she cursed the man who had married us. It got so bad that I'd rather I'd died than have let those words of mine slip out. But with me on one side and my master on the other, we talked to her and begged her so much that she finally quit her crying. And I swore to her that as long as I lived I'd never mention another word about the business. And I told her I thought it was perfectly all right—in fact, that it made me happy—for her to go in and out of his house both day and night because I was so sure of her virtue. And so we were all three in complete agreement.

So, right up to today we've never said another word about the affair. In fact, when I see that someone wants to even start talking about it, I cut him short, and I tell him: "Look, if you're my friend, don't tell me something that will make me mad because anyone who does that isn't my friend at all. Especially if they're trying to cause trouble between me and my wife. There's nothing and nobody in the world that I love more than her. And because of her, God gives me all sorts of favors—many more than I deserve. So I'll swear to God that she's as good a woman as any here in Toledo, and if anyone tells me otherwise, I'm his enemy until I die."

So no one ever says anything to me, and I keep peace in my house.

That was the same year that our victorious emperor came to this illustrious city of Toledo and held his court here, and there were all sorts of celebrations and festivities, as you must have heard.

Well, at this time I was prosperous and at the height of all good fortune.