

XV. How Lazaro Became a Hermit

After undergoing a severe beating that left him injured, Lazaro finds himself begging at a church door, reflecting on his difficult life and concluding that success isn't solely the result of hard work but also divine assistance. His fortunes take a dramatic turn when a kind hermit, impressed by Lazaro's tale of suffering, invites him to his well-kept hermitage, offering him a glimpse into a serene, fulfilled life far removed from his tumultuous past. The hermitage, with its little garden and comfortable accommodations, represents a stark contrast to the hardships Lazaro has endured.

The hermit reveals to Lazaro the simple, contemplative life he leads, marked by a balance of solitude and companionship, work and rest, joy and sorrow, a life that deeply appeals to Lazaro. However, this idyllic existence is soon disrupted when the hermit, after a joyful meal, suddenly declares he is dying. Despite his weakened state, Lazaro smartly ensures he is named the hermit's sole heir in the presence of shepherds brought as witnesses, securing his newfound position through a hastily arranged last will and testament confirmed with the hermit's repetitive affirmations until his death.

Following the hermit's peculiar yet timely demise, Lazaro explores the hermitage, discovering a cache of provisions and, eventually, after a divine intuition, unearths a hidden fortune. With this newfound wealth, Lazaro adopts the hermit's role, convincing the local religious community of his suitability despite his youth and lack of a beard, a humorous caveat that underscores the era's emphasis on superficial qualifications.

In noting his inheritance of the hermitage dedicated to Saint Lazarus, Lazaro sees a fortuitous connection to his own life, suggesting a hopeful future. His narrative, punctuated by remarks on societal and religious norms, sarcastically highlights the disparity between one's outward appearance and innate capabilities, further enriching the story's exploration of fortune, fate, and the pursuit of a genuinely fulfilling life.