

**THE LIFE OF LAZARILLO  
DE TORMES;  
AND HIS FORTUNES  
AND ADVERSITIES**

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The Life of Lazarillo De Tormes; And His Fortunes and Adversities by Louis How

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THE LIFE OF  
LAZARILLO DE TORMES  
AND HIS FORTUNES AND ADVERSITIES

DONE OUT OF THE CASTILIAN  
FROM R. FOULCHÉ-DELBOSC'S  
RESTITUTION OF THE EDITIO  
PRINCEPS

By LOUIS HOW  
WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY  
CHARLES PHILIP WAGNER



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1917

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## INTRODUCTION

When it becomes possible to write the definitive history of the origins of the modern novel, there will be much mention of Spain, whose original literature is being ever more closely studied and better understood. In particular, the results of comparative method and the interpretation of bibliographical data are making it increasingly clear that the latest great literary form, the peculiar contribution of the nineteenth century, rests upon a foundation of sixteenth century Spanish models. The earliest recognizable examples of the novel of adventure, the sentimental novel and the novel of manners, are Spanish, and each is a masterpiece of its kind.

The first two of these must be considered a heritage of the romantic or idealizing tend-



ency which prevailed in mediæval fiction in verse. Just as in France the first prose romances were prose translations, if we may call them so, of the earlier metrical ones, so in Spain the national épics, with their verse structure very ill disguised, found their way into the chronicles, and certain French poems of the Carolingian cycle were worked over into the thirteenth century Castilian of the *Gran Conquista de Ultramar*. The first Spanish novel worthy of the name, the *Libro del Caballero Cifar*, written about 1300, makes use of the *matière de Bretagne* and is preponderatingly romantic in tone. It points plainly to the sentimentality and extravagance of the romances of chivalry, of which the most famous, the *Amadis of Gaul*, existed at least as early as 1350, in a form more primitive than the one preserved to us.

The *Amadis* and its like, tiresome as they now seem for the most part, even to the professional explorers of this field, were the favorite form of fiction in Spain until well

past, the first half of the sixteenth century, when they gave way to the pastoral novel, a more specialized form of the same impulse. It is the popularity of idealizing fiction at this time that lends such significance to the appearance, about the middle of the century, of a work of entirely different character.

The *Lazarillo de Tormes* is a work of the most uncompromising realism, direct in style where its predecessors were elaborate, and as brief in form as they were voluminous. It is the first novel to dare to choose its hero from the dregs of society, and above all the first to create the impression of absolute and eternal actuality which makes it live while its contemporaries are forgotten. Whether we choose to regard the *Lazarillo* as an unaccountable but timely flash of genius, or as a conscious protest of the anti-hero against the ubiquitous hero, or as merely an inevitable and logical step in the development of the novel of manners, in any case its position as the first rogue novel is unassailable.

This is to say merely that the claims of the *Lazarillo* to priority are beyond dispute, not that the forces which produced it had not long been at work and given results, both outside and inside Spain. In mediæval France, the ribaud of servant's hall or market-place, ancestor of the picaro, amused his low-born audience with the versified anecdotes we know as *fabliaux*, or with more reformatory intent elaborated beast satire as we have it in *Renart*. One of his careless crew, by the apparently simple device of grouping a number of roguish episodes about a single figure and giving artistic unity to the whole, created the thirteenth century *Trubert*, which but for the technicality of its being in verse, we must consider the first picaresque romance instead of *Lazarillo*. About the same time the German Stricker composed his *Pfaffe Amis* by a similar grouping of episodes. The *Til Eulenspiegel*, later by a couple of centuries, represents an experiment of the same kind in prose, and is significant for the