



# *The Ingenious Student*

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Portuguese

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*Advanced*  
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There was once a student in Tuy who was so very poor that, if faith in Providence be not reckoned, he possessed no riches.

But Juan Rivas was endowed with a wonderfully fine gift of ingenuity, and although he was somewhat behind in the payment for the Masses on behalf of his predecessors, and even more so with his mundane creditors, still was he a man who meant well and would do the right thing if he only had the opportunity.

To the man of the world there is no greater pleasure than to pay his debts, for by so doing he increases his credit.

Juan Rivas would willingly have paid every creditor had his pocket been as full of the wherewithal as his heart was of gratitude for small mercies; but there is no difficulty about showing one's self desirous of satisfying one's debts—the only difficulty generally rests in being able to do so.

At college he had proved himself a good scholar and a true companion; but as he could no longer contribute toward the support of his college, his college could not be expected to support him.

His long black cap, his flowing robes, his pantaloons, and his shoes were altered in substance, and so was Juan Rivas.

Finally he became reduced to his last maravedi, and as his friends could no longer assist him, he thought it was high time he should assist himself.

“Providence,” said he, “has never intended me for a poor man, but Fate has almost made me one. I will believe in Providence, and become rich from this day.” Saying which, he went to some of his companions, who were almost as poor as he was, and asked them if they desired to be rich.

“Do you ask us if we want to be rich with so serious a face?” answered they. “Really, friend Juan, you are so strange that you do not seem to belong to this city!”

“No man can be rich,” continued Juan, “by staying at home. We are students, and our studies should meet with some recompense. Will you do as I bid you?”

“Yes!” cried all his poor companions; “so long as you lead us not to the gallows, for we like not such playthings.”

“Well, then, follow me,” said Juan; “and when you see me release a prize that belongs to him who shall be bold enough to seize it, off with it to the market, and dispose of it at the best possible price.”

“Done, and agreed to,” shouted all, “if you will but seize the prize!”

“Leave that to me,” said the poor student, “and I will hand you a prize fully worth twenty dollars without his garments.”

“But, surely, you are not going to hand some man or woman over to us?” inquired they.

“Ask me no questions, as the Archbishop of Compostella said to the pretty widow, and I will be honest with you. The prize I shall hand you will fetch money in the market, and we sell not human beings in this country,” urged Juan.

“That is right,” they exclaimed; “and we will follow you.”

The students followed Juan on to the high-road leading from the city to Ourense; and when they had walked for

about two hours' time Juan told his companions to get behind the hedge and await results.

Soon after, the jingling of bells was heard, and a muleteer seated cross-legged on a mule, which preceded five others, was seen approaching.

As the muleteer had sold all his wares he was indulging in a sleep, and had it not been for the dog-flies that teased the mules they would also have slept.

Juan let the muleteer pass; but as the last mule came up he seized it, and, taking off its trappings, and disencumbering it of its ponderous albarda, or saddle, he freed the animal on the roadside, and replaced the trappings and the saddle on himself.

His companions were not slow in seizing the prize and hurrying away with it, while Juan Rivas continued for some distance along the road, following in the train of mules.

As soon as he considered that his companions would be out of sight, he commenced backing with all his strength, which brought the mules to a sudden halt and caused their bells to tinkle.

The muleteer looked back to see if anything was wrong, but, perceiving nothing, bestowed a hearty blow on his mule, and on he went again.

The student now began to rear and jump about so that the muleteer pulled up, and, having dismounted, proceeded to inquire into the cause of the mule so misbehaving itself; but his astonishment was great when, instead of a mule, he saw a human being bearing the trappings and the saddle.

"What merry freak is this," demanded the muleteer, addressing the student, "that I see you replacing my mule?"

"It is no merry freak, indeed it is not," replied Juan Rivas, "but a sad reality. You see before you, good master, a poor, miserable creature, who for his many offences against Mother Church was transformed into a mule, and sentenced to remain so for a number of years. My term of punishment has just expired, and I am restored to my natural form."

"But where is my mule that cost me one hundred crowns not many years ago?" asked the muleteer.

"You do not understand me, good master," replied the student. "I was the mule, and the mule was I; now I am

I. When you used to kick your mule, you really kicked me; when you fed it, you fed me; and now, when you speak to me, you speak to all that remains of your mule. Now do you understand?"

"I am beginning to perceive," said the muleteer, scratching his head and looking very sorrowful, "that for your sins you were turned into a mule, and that for mine, I had the misfortune to purchase you. I always thought there was something strange about that mule!"

"There is no doubt that we all must put up with the consequences of our evil ways, and, as you very properly say, you have been punished by the loss of your mule; but, then, you can rejoice with me, seeing that the son of the first Grandee in Spain served you in the humble capacity of a beast of burden, and now is restored to rank and wealth."

"And are you a Grandee of Spain?" anxiously inquired the poor man, "Why, then, your excellency will never forgive me for the many kicks I have bestowed on your excellency's sides; and I am a ruined man, for you will have me punished."

"Not so, kind friend; not so," replied the student, in an assuring tone; "for how could you tell that your mule was not a mule?"

"Then your excellency will not be revenged on me?" continued the muleteer. "And if it will be of any consolation to your excellency, I promise never to divulge this mystery!"

"It will, indeed, be a great comfort to me to think that no one will know what became of me for so many years," replied the student. "And now I must bid you good-bye, for I am in a hurry to again embrace my dear parents if they be still living."

"Good-bye," said the muleteer, with emotion; "and may your excellency never again incur the displeasure of Mother Church."

Thus they parted good friends; the muleteer pondering over what he termed the mysteries of life, and Juan Rivas full of delight at the thought of rejoining his companions, and having a good supper with the proceeds of the mule, which pleasure was not denied him and his friends.

In a fortnight's time there was a cattle fair in the neighbourhood of Tuy, and as the muleteer required to

replace the mule he had so mysteriously lost, he attended the fair, and was looking about him for a serviceable mule, when an acquaintance called out to him to know why he had parted with the other one.

“I have my private reasons,” answered the muleteer, “and I am not here to let you know them.”

“Very true,” continued his inquisitive friend; “but the proverb says that ‘the mule you know is better than the mule you don’t know,’ and if you will take my advice, you will buy your old mule back again, for there it is”—pointing to it.

The muleteer looked in the direction mentioned, and was horrified at seeing his late mule again; but, trying to conceal his emotion, he approached the animal and whispered in its ear, “Those who don’t know what sort of a mule your excellency is may buy you, but I know the mule you are;” and, turning away, he sorrowfully exclaimed, “He has again offended. Terrible are the judgments of Providence!”

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