

INTERESTING PLACES

A CAVE

By JOSE FELICIANO *



IN the mountain fastness of Sibul, a well-known health resort of Bulacan, there is a cave which has ever attracted sight-seers from far and near. "Renacimiento" the people call it. Some day you may chance to find yourself at Sibul, and like many of those who have been there, you too may want to see this cave.

I shall try to picture this cave to you. Once more I see it in my mind's eye. Standing before it, with several companions, I see nothing particularly strik-

ing on the outside. Before us is a huge rock overgrown with plants, mostly vines. At the bottom of this rock is a narrow opening, which, we are told, is the mouth of the cave. Hanging over this opening are small projections of rock, which look very decorative. At the mouth of the cave we find heaps of ashes, evidently the remains of fires built by those who have entered the cave before us. Those fires have lighted their way into the darkness.

In order to get inside the cave, one has to bend low, nay, almost crawl. My companions and I need not build a fire, for we have a powerful flashlight. Slowly and carefully we make our way into the cave. Inside, we see but a faint light, which comes from the entrance. Suddenly we hear the flutter of many wings! What is the meaning of this? We have intruded upon the sleeping inhabitants of this gloomy hollow of the earth. They are the bats.

Aided by our flashlight, we now begin to explore the place. How fearfully fantastic it looks! We move about slowly, for the ground we walk on is cut up with sharp-edged stones, and the top of the cave is most irregular. Near the entrance, the air is damp and cool; but as we descend into the bottom the air becomes drier and warmer. We dare not venture to reach the very bottom, for we know not what awaits us there. Fear begins to fill our hearts. So we hurry back to the sunlight and the open air.

I know it will be long before the picture of this cave fades away from my memory.

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MELINDA

(Continuation)

A Story

By Antonio Muñoz

On the third day she went to visit the place. On the mound stood a beautiful tree. The fruits were of different shapes, sizes, and colors. As the branches swayed to and fro, sweet melodies passed through the leaves.

Melinda was happy, very happy. She picked a fruit and opened it. It contained a pretty dress. She opened another. There was a pair of shoes inside. Every fruit contained something very pretty and very useful. There were a coach, a pair of white horses, and many other useful things. The objects were small while they were inside but when she drew them out, they became large. When she had seen them all she carefully put each one back into its place.

Just before she left the place, she leaped to a stone in the brook. As she looked down to see if

the fish was there, something struck her forehead. She looked at her reflection in the water. A bright star shone on her forehead. Hastily she went home for she was afraid.

Her step-mother looked at her and gazed at the beautiful star on her forehead. She tried to remove it. She even went as far as scraping it with a knife. At last she thrust the pointed end of the knife into the skin and tried to dig the star out. It was vain for it did not move. When she found out that she could not remove it, she got more soot from the stove and smeared Melinda's forehead until the star was completely hidden from view. Not until then was she relieved.

"How did you happen to get that star?" she asked. Melinda told her the truth.

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MELINDA

(Continued from page 312)

Melinda took her half-sister to the place. The tree was there playing a sweet melody but only Melinda saw it and hears its music.

Without a moment's delay, she called her own daughter and told her to go with Melinda to the brook and to look down into the water near the stone.

The girl after hearing the directions given by Melinda, stepped on the stone. Then she looked down into the depths of the water below. A sound thing happened. A groan sounded above her. It echoed and reechoed among the trees. Then something struck her forehead. The frightened girl looked up and touched it. She looked down into the water to see the reflection. What was that on her forehead? Not a star but the grinning face of a serpent.

Hurriedly they went home. The mother raved when she saw the frightful spectacle. She snatched a knife and cut the serpent's head but no sooner was it severed from the forehead than another one more frightful took its place. She tried to cut the growth several times and each time it was cut a more frightful head came out. At last she got a towel and wrapped the girl's head with it.

When the father came, he asked his wife why their daughter had a towel around her head.

"She has a headache," was all that the wife said.

The next day was Sunday. Immediately after breakfast, Melinda ran to the brook and took a bath there. Then she opened the fruits and put on the clothes and jewels that were hidden within. A carriage drawn by two white horses was there, too. After she had dressed up, she stepped on the carriage and drove to the church. The birds sang to her as she passed by. The trees bent down their branches when she was near.

The carriage entered the church and stopped near the altar. Melinda did not get off. The people in the

church were greatly surprised. It was the first time they saw a girl with a star on her forehead. Her beauty dazzled those who looked at her. At the first part of the ceremony, she knelt down on the carriage seat and immediately after the last part, she drove back to the brook and put the things back to where she got them. Then she put on her apron and ran home. When her step-mother saw that the soot was washed off her body, she immediately applied another coating of it.

Sunday came again. Melinda went to the brook, took a bath, and dressed up. Then she went to church. At this time, a prince was waiting at the door. After the last part of the ceremony, Melinda turned the horses around and started for the brook. At the door, the prince seized her hand to detain her but the horses could not be controlled and the carriage sped by unchecked. However, her ring was left in the hand of the prince. The latter ran to catch up with the speeding carriage but the distance between them widened and widened until at last the carriage disappeared among the trees.

Melinda returned to the brook. After she had put the things back into their places, she went home.

As soon as the prince reached the palace, he disguised himself as a peddler. Then he set out to look for the owner of the ring. He went from house to house in the hope of seeing again the girl with the star on her forehead but all was vain. He tried to slip the ring on every finger of every maiden that he met but the ring was either too loose or too tight.

At last he came to the house of Melinda's father. He displayed his wares. The father bought some of them. Just before he went away, he said, "I'm looking for the girl whose finger this ring fits. If I find her, I'll give her all my jewels and everything that I have. She will be happy and I, too, will be happy."

Then he asked the father to call all the girls in the house. The re-

quest was granted. Melinda's half-sister came. The prince tried the ring on all her fingers but it would not fit.

"Don't you have any other girl in the house?" asked the disguised prince.

"No other except our black servant," replied the father.

"Please tell her to come," requested the prince. "The ring may fit one of her fingers."

Melinda came. The prince slipped the ring on her finger. It fitted. Everyone present was thunder-struck. The prince looked at the black servant in astonishment. The father was puzzled and shook his head. The daughter or Melinda's half-sister stared at the ring on the black finger. The mother was pale. "Who are you?" gasped the prince.

"I don't know who I am. I was taken out of that room by the mistress of this house," replied Melinda.

Upon hearing these words, the father ran to get the key and opened the door of the room. He opened the trunk. It was empty. At once he ran back to the little group.

"My daughter!" he sobbed as he embraced Melinda.

Then in a stern voice, he said to his wife, "How dare you! Oh, I never thought even for a moment that you would be so cruel! You are not fit to live!"

Melinda asked to be allowed to bathe in the brook. There she put on her magic dresses and returned to her home in the magic carriage.

The three went to the church and the priest married the two young people.

After the wedding ceremonies, the prince took Melinda and her father to the palace. The old king gladly received Melinda as his daughter-in-law.

Not long after that, the old king died and the prince ascended to the throne. Melinda became the queen just as she felt she was in the presence of the fish at the river.

They ruled the kingdom wisely and they lived happily for many years.