

# WHEN THE BOY PRODIGY WAS

## MISSED

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by  
Alvaro L. Martinez  
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THE wild applause of the enthusiastic audience which filled the Grand Opera House made the curtain rise three times, each time causing the Boy Prodigy to appear and make his solemn bow. Every one wondered how one so young could play the violin so sweetly with his little fingers. Every mother in that big audience wished that she, too, had a son like him, a son who could receive the praises of the public.

Boys, much older than he, who were there to listen and watch him play, envied him at the bottom of their hearts. One said to another, "He must be very happy and very proud too." To which the other made reply, "He must be. I wish I can be like him too, then perhaps my mother would be glad to buy me the things I most want."

But the little Boy Prodigy was not at all happy. He was tired, tired of playing the violin, and tired of hearing the applause of the public and the praises of his friends.

"What a wonderful child you have, Mrs. Roces. You must be very proud of him," he heard every one tell his mother, at the same time patting him on the head. At first he liked these remarks, feeling the thrill of being always mentioned. But when he began to lose the opportunity of mingling with the other boys in the street,



playing with them the games they all enjoyed, he found that, after all, being a prodigy was not a pleasure. At times he would go out of the house quietly like a guilty prisoner, in order to be able to mix with his former playmates, only to be called back at once and to be scolded.

So that night, as he listened to the applause of his admiring public, he felt very sad, for somehow it made him feel that he was not free. His parents were waiting for him at the stage door; and together with them were many friends, who were eager to be the first ones to congratulate him. He thought of escaping from them, and so he left the theater through the back door. Let them miss him if they would, but at least he would not be petted again as in the last two performances.

It was raining outside, and the place was cold and dark; but he decided that he would rather get wet going around the place to where their car was parked than to smile to every one even though his heart was heavy within him.

*Gift. Dr. Panlanguin of*



He wanted to be alone . . . alone! At the door, however, he suddenly stopped, for he heard a low sobbing as of one who was in trouble.

In a dark corner he saw an old woman seated at the foot of the stairs, crying softly and trying to suppress the sobs which would not be appeased. He went down and stopped before her. She looked up in surprise and rose quickly, wiping her eyes with her crumpled handkerchief.

"Why are you crying, Inang?" he asked very kindly, for his heart was touched with pity.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, laying her withered hands affectionately on his shoulders. "You are the Boy Prodigy!"

At first he felt a repulsion towards this show of admiration, for it was to avoid this thing that he had left the theatre through the back door; but when by the dim light of the lamps he saw her face, he felt that he should be kind to her.

"Yes," he answered meekly, "I am the Boy Prodigy. What can I do for you, Inang?" he added, motioning her to sit down again. As the old woman sat down, he sat beside her.

"I wanted very much to hear you play," she said after a while of silence, "but I could not afford to buy a ticket to get in. You see, I

am very poor."

"You could have come to me," he replied, "and I would willingly have given you one."

"Thank you, thank you, my son; but, you see, I do not know you personally, neither do you know me," she answered, coming closer to him and hesitatingly caressing him by the arm. "I could not afford to buy a ticket to get in, so I begged the porter to let me stay here and listen."

She heaved a deep sigh and tears came once more unbidden into her eyes. "What makes you unhappy, Inang?" he inquired, seeing her sad and in tears.

"I had a son," she told him, "who used to play the violin like you. Of course, he was not as good as you. But he loved to play the same piece which you played to-night. He often played it to me."

"Where is your son now?" he asked her.

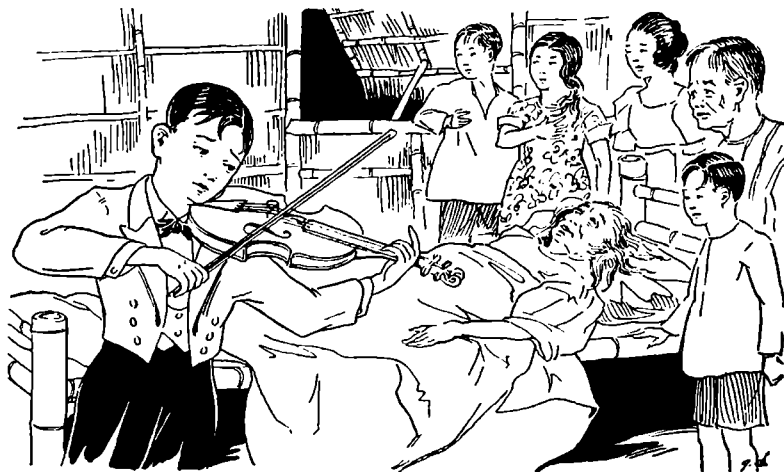
She was silent for a while and, then, between sobs and tears she said, "He is dead."

It was his turn to be silent and unconsciously he found that he, too, had tears in his eyes. A sudden inspiration came to him, an inspiration born of the brain of a genius.

He whispered something into her ears and before she could thank him, he was gone. The old woman stood up and, with tears mingling with her smile, left the place.

The Boy Prodigy had been practicing with enthusiasm, much to the surprise of

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## WHEN THE BOY PRODIGY WAS MISSED *(Continued from page 30)*

his parents and his tutor. But he insisted in playing over and over again one single piece—"The Angel's Serenade."

"That is not the piece you're going to play in your next concert, my son," his mother protested one day. "But you spend more time in it than in that which you are going to render on the night of your performance. Why?" He would not give them any answer, but would merely smile and go on. Meanwhile, the day for the fourth great performance drew near, and people who knew the Boy Prodigy began to talk of him again, anticipating the glorious night when he would thrill them with his music.

But that night when he was to appear before them, the Boy Prodigy was nowhere to be found. Had he been kidnapped for a ransom? Had he developed stage

fright and refused to play that night? Or were his parents trying to hide him somewhere to make the management raise his share of that night's proceeds from the sale of tickets?

A search for him was started, a search frantic and determined. The search ended in a little nipa hut, dimly lighted by a flickering *tinghoy*.

The house was surrounded by a crowd of poor people, all listening intently but in reverent silence. "The Angel's Serenade" was being played from a violin which was almost human in its pleading. And it was the hand of the Boy Prodigy that was drawing out from its strings the inspired melody.

His face was bathed in tears as he played it—played it to an old woman who was lying down on a broken bed, with her face toward him, and her eyes bathed in tears. At the foot of the bed sat a young

girl, suppressing her sobs but giving her tears free rein.

Soon the piece was ended but silence remained unbroken.

The Boy Prodigy wiped out the perspiration from his young forehead and looked down at the old woman on the bed. The sight startled him. The young girl rushed to the bedside of her mother, for it was her mother who was lying there listening to the "Angel's Serenade."

She was dead, but she had a beautiful smile of contentment and joy on her aged face.

She died happy, made happy by a little boy who did not think himself too great to play for an old poor woman like herself, by a little boy whose skill in playing the violin made people spend money to hear. Suffice it to say that that night's concert was greater and more acclaimed than ever.

## OUR MOST FAITHFUL FISH FRIEND *(Continued from page 36)*

If milkfish lays eggs and produces baby milkfish in the sea, how, you will ask, it is raised in fish ponds? The millions of "kawag-kawag" that are hatched in April, May, and June in the open sea swim to the shore. Men catch them along the shores of the Ilocos provinces, La Union, Pangasinan, and Batangas. They supply the fish ponds in Luzon. Fish ponds in the Visayan Islands are supplied from Cebu, Oriental Negros, Iloilo, and Antique.

If your home is not far from the sea or from mouths of rivers, you must be familiar with fish ponds. After the "kawag-kawag" are collected, they are placed in a fish pond which is divided into compartments or rooms. Their first home is the "pabiayan." Here they feed upon tiny green plants that form a mat on the floor of the "pabiayan." After two or three months in this compartment, the fish are about the size of a man's finger. Of the number placed in the "pabiayan," only two thirds or six-

ty out of every hundred grow into the fingerling. The tiny fry are eaten by other fish or they die because the water becomes too salty or too fresh.

The fingerling are transferred to the next compartment called the "impitan." Their food here is a kind of water plant called "lumut." Here they stay for about two months with plenty of food. After two months in the "impitan," the fish are transferred to the "kalluañgan," which is the most spacious part in the entire fish pond. Why is it necessary for the fish to have a very large room at this time? Here they remain until they are ready for the market. By the time they are ready to be harvested, only about thirty-six out of every hundred of the original members of "kawag-kawag" are living.

After reading this article you should be able to take the test below. Mark T the statements that are true and F those that are false. Read parts of the story again if necessary.

1. The milkfish is found only in fish ponds.

2. Milkfish may be bought in the market at any time of the year.

3. The milkfish lays millions of eggs.

4. It lays eggs in the fish ponds.

5. The roe is the sack that contains the tiny eggs of a fish.

6. The milkfish thrives well in fresh water.

7. The eggs hatch into fry as big as your finger.

8. There are many rooms in the fish pond.

9. The room in which the "kawag-kawag" are placed is called the "pabiayan."

10. The "kawag-kawag" feed upon "lumut."

11. The big milkfish feed upon the tiny plant that forms a mat on the floor of the pond.

12. About one third of the "kawag-kawag" placed in the fish pond grow into the marketable size.

13. Milkfish can be prepared in many ways.