

DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU EAT?

By EFIGENIA UICHANCO*

HAVE you ever heard your mother make complaints?

No, but . . . wait and listen to everything that she says! She has only one common complaint. This is what she usually says to her child, "You have not eaten, as you should, at meal time. I think you'd better take purgative." (Many times children make so much fuss at the tables that they hardly eat anything. They won't drink even milk, nor eat green leafy vegetables or beans that mothers offer them.)

"Oh, no! Mother," a child would ordinarily respond. "I have eaten plenty of biscuits (or sometimes candy, chocolate, cakes,

Manila.

Maximo, Boroñgan, Florencio Garena, and Rodrigo Buna are school children who live in the same neighborhood. Of course, there are other children who live around their vicinity. They usually play together.

One afternoon while they were playing, Maximo, an adventurous boy in the group, felt hungry. He looked for something to eat. He found the fruit growing in clusters. They resembled the young coconut fruit (only that they are very much smaller). He looked a cluster of fruit. He opened one and discovered some seeds in it. He tasted a seed, and it tasted like a pea-

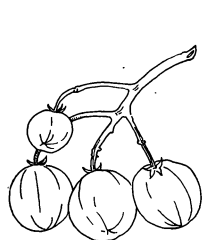


FIG. 1
Fruit in cluster (x 1)



FIG. 2
A fruit cut lengthwise (x 1)



FIG. 2
A fruit cut crosswise (x 1)

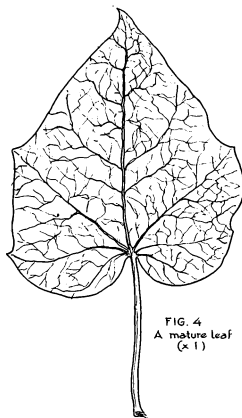


FIG. 4
A mature leaf (x 1)

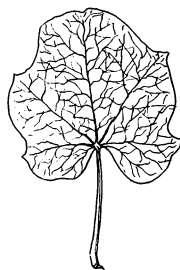


FIG. 5
A young leaf (x 1)

etc.) on my way from school." This practice seems to be a general one among all children.

Watch yourself as you go out together from school, or as you go out of your house in company with other children in your neighborhood. Don't you eat, or want to eat, almost anything that comes along your way?

Now let me tell you an incident that actually happened in one of the districts in

nut. He was very much delighted at his discovery.

"Boys and girls, come. Something nice to eat! Come and have some!" shouted Maximo.

The children gathered around Maximo. They were all anxious to find out what Maximo had discovered for them to eat.

Upon seeing the fruit, Rodrigo, the eldest in the company, exclaimed, "Stop! Don't eat the fruit! My mother told me

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that that fruit is poisonous. She said that the leaves or the green barks are used for plasters. They can cure stomach-aches or sprains. No, don't eat the fruit."

"But the seeds taste like peanuts, and peanuts are not poisonous," insisted Maximo.

"And I can feel the oil on my fingers. See! (holding up her hand)," remarked Lolita, the little girl in the group.

"Leave Rodrigo alone! Let the rest of us feast on the fruit," threatened Florencio.

All the children present, except Rodrigo, began to eat the *tuba* fruit. Rodrigo could no longer resist the temptation of the voracious spirit of his companions. Disregarding what his mother told him about the fruit, he joined the party and ate a few seeds.

After a certain length of time when the children had resumed their game of kicking empty cans, some began to complain of head-aches and dizziness. They all went home.

Not long afterwards, news in the neighborhood was passed from house to house. This was the news, "The children who were playing together a while ago are suffering from nausea (dizziness and vomiting)."

Some of the children confessed to their mothers that they ate the fruit claimed by Rodrigo's mother to be poisonous. The parents knew that it must be the fruit of the *tuba* growing in their neighborhood.

An ambulance was sent for, and the suffering children were taken to the hospital.

Now, the children are well, are back in school, and are more careful than ever not to eat what they do not know without their elders' permission.

Other children may profit from the experience of those children who ate the *tuba* fruit by examining the sketches on page 201.

Note: *Tuba* is sometimes called "talang-tangan" or "tangan-tangan tuba." The tree grows from one and one half to about three meters high.

WHAT PRICE IGNORANCE

(Continued from page 199)

wonderful. Without any petroleum or oil, without the aid of a match, without even touching it, light will appear inside that round thing immediately after the sun sets this evening."

"Wonderful!" they all exclaimed.

Soon the sun set. It was getting dark inside the house. All was still. With beating hearts, they waited for the wonderful event. Five minutes passed. No light. Ten minutes, twenty, half an hour, one hour—still there was no light. It was dark, very dark for the lamps in the house were thrown away that morning. They would not be needed. Andres relied upon the wonderful light of the bulb.

Then one by one the guests slipped out of the house each carrying a portion of the food on the table. At about eight o'clock, Andres noticed that his friends were all gone. Still he hoped to see the light coming forth.

A man passed by carrying a torch of dry coconut leaves. Its light reflected on the side of the bulb. As Andres's attention was wholly on the dim outline of the bulb, he did not notice the light from the torch outside. Up he jumped when he saw the reflected light on the side of the bulb and exclaimed, "It's coming! It's coming! Call the neighbors, Maria. Call them all."

But when the man with the torch disappeared, the reflected light on the bulb also vanished. He sat down again shaking his head. He was downhearted and went to bed that night without any supper.

In the morning, he went to the town with the bulb.

"This is not good and I'm through with it," he said to the secretary. "I had a big company at home last night and the stupid thing didn't give any light at all. Take it back. I have no need for it. The worst part of the game is that I have thrown away all my lamps and now I have to buy new ones."

The secretary laughed and told him why it did not give any light. Then he pointed to the wire which extended from

(Please turn to page 205)