



OH! THAT DREADFUL NIGHT...

PHOTO VERANNEMAN

## THE MESSAGE OF A DYING IGOROTE MOTHER



The first streaks of daylight filtered through the little hole just overhead. It had been one of those sleepless nights during which the poor emaciated body of my consumptive mother had been racked with pain. And now that Dame Compassion had granted her a little respite, she was lost in wonderings and reminiscences.

Suddenly she caught sight of me and said, "Madre, how vividly I remember that dreadful night.....when a man had staggered into the hut and

had dragged my mother outside. A volley of curses had rent the very surrounding air. There and then a cool-blooded murder had been committed.

Why had he chosen my mother for his victim?—Oh! she was lovely, and gentle, and kind, and she was such a very dutiful wife and mother.

Stealthily I slipped outside into the dark. Where was my beloved mother? Where, the maniac who had dragged her along? Who was he?



.....He had fled, fled with the blood of his wife still cleaving to the blade of his bolo.

Suddenly the moon stole out from behind an inky-black cloud and shed her pale silvery light upon earth. And behold! There upon the grass I recognized the distorted and bloody face of my beloved mother. Red warm blood oozed steadily from a deep gaping wound, just above her left eye. Life was slowly ebbing away. Oh! that I could have stayed the

hand of the grim specter of death who hovered above my dear mother!

I wanted to scream, but found no voice. Suddenly the ground gave way beneath my feet. I reeled and fell into a dead faint. Oblivion had drawn a veil of mercy before my eyes.

When I regained my senses, I lay on a little improvised mattress of grass. Near me sat an old and shriveled woman trying to soothe my painful brow.

**IFUGAO WOMAN  
WITH CAMOTE**

**HAPPY TO HAVE HER  
NOONDAY MEAL**

PHOTO CASTEL



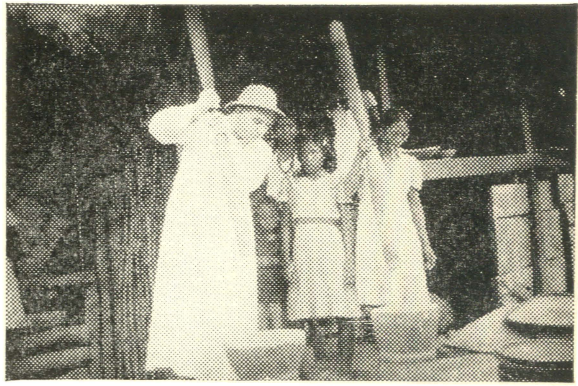
For a long time I lay there as in a daze, not knowing what had passed, not being aware of the great loss I had sustained. But little by little the appalling scene came back to my memory. Luckily I could cry. It eased somewhat my aching heart. But oh! to have no mother more and to see no father around.

I looked at the kind old woman, but I closed my eyes again and slept the sleep of the innocent. I had just reached my sixth birthday.

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Twenty and two years have passed since I beheld for the last time the face of my beloved mother and that of my treacherous father. The latter never came back, but rumours had whispered the painful truth into my ears. I never got strong. Lack of the bare necessities of life caused my body to waste away day after day.

Kind neighbors had taken me in and had treated me like one of their own until that fatal day when after a heartrending cough my dress got stained with blood. Fear of contamination decided against my fate. I was given to understand that it would be safer to leave the house and my adopted family. But where was I to go? Destitute and homeless I went from place to place, from house to house, living on charity. I had not the courage to look for food. I had not the strength to work. And one day when the wind was fiercely blowing from the North and the sun refused its healing warmth, a young man with a very sensitive face, and muscular arms and legs stopped his carabao, scanned my face, and with-



#### EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY!

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out much ado took place at my side—and spoke; "You are ailing, aren't you? Why do you sit here shivering with cold?" My eyes filled with tears. One by one they trickled down into my lap. I could not speak, but I looked up into his face, painfully smiling him my thanks.—"Follow me," said he, "come to my hut and rest until you feel well enough to go home again' . . . . Home! Where was my home? I faltered, but somehow I managed through a flood of tears, to say that I had no home. In a gulp of words, some incoherent, others angry, I blurted out the whole painful truth and ended with a curse for him who had caused my bereavement. He was stunned. Some minutes elapsed while neither of us spoke, then in a gesture of compassion he stretched forth his hand, helped me on my feet and said, "Henceforth my hut shall be your home" . . . .

Being naturally very timid and bashful, I would not go with him at first; but his winning smile little by little drew me like a magnet to his





...THE  
YOUNG  
MAN  
STOPPED  
HIS  
CARABAO  
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side. "Your name?" asked he. "People call me Songay, my real name is Mary Lumawig."—"Do you know whether your father is still alive, and if so, where is he now living?" he inquired.—"My beastly father, the murderer of my beloved mother lives not so far away, they say. He has found another woman and other children to kill, if he feels like doing it. I . . . . I curse him, speak not of him anymore."—"Poor girl," was all he said. Slowly we took to his hut, there I stretched my aching body upon a mattress and soon I fell into a deep sleep. I had found a home at last.

In spite of my sickness, Pablo grew fond of me, and asked me to become his wife. Never was there a better and gentler husband. I bore him two children. One a little boy, the very image of his father. He never grew up. Two days after his birth, he winged his flight to a better place.

The other is my little girl. My husband and I were not to be consoled, when our little boy had been ruthlessly snatched away from us. The new sorrow almost broke my heart and caused my husband to pine for many a week thereafter. He lost his appetite, grew weaker and weaker and finally caught my own sickness. Before he died we had become Christians, thanks to a dear Madre that lived over there in the convent.

.....  
Once more this Igorote mother lay wasted and dying with a young girl of eight years old sitting at her feet. I too sat near her waiting for death. Her eyes were closed, her lips did move now and then. She gasped for breath. Still she made a slight movement and wanted to speak but had to wait until another cough had ceased.—Slowly the words came from her parched lips, "Madre, . . . .  
. . . won't . . . you . . . take . . . my  
. . . girl . . . with . . . you . . . and . . .



be ... a... mother...to her?"—  
Readily I acquiesced and tried to  
prevent her from further talking.  
But she went on, more feebly, more  
slowly, more painfully, "Madre, I...  
remember... what ... you ... have  
... told ... me ... so ... often ...  
about Him. He... too... was... dy-  
ing... , but ... his ... was ... a cross  
... to... hang... on. —Open the  
door, ... Madre... , I hear... His...  
voice. He... comes.—'Father, for-  
give them, for they know not what they  
do.' Yes... that's... it. Madre...  
if ever... you see... my father...  
tell ... him ... that I... too... for-  
give... him. Jesus, ... I love... You  
..., Jesus... I forgive....

Her eyes had closed in death. Ana,  
her little girl, lives in the convent with  
the Mothers.

Monsignor Sheen had been  
asked to give a lecture in Phi-  
ladelphia. Not knowing his  
way about the city, he ap-  
proached a group of boys.

"Sonny," he addressed one  
of them, "could you show me  
the way to the Town Hall? I  
will speak there tonight and  
show the people the way to  
heaven."

The boy looked up at him  
skeptically: "Humph, you ...  
show the way to heaven? And  
you don't even know the way  
to the Town Hall."

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