



Faigao in New York

In Memoriam

not good enough. And I still remember how so determined I was to get a better grade that, the night before another themewriting day (he used to give us the topics to mull over for a day or so), I sat up half of the night thinking about how I would write my theme. No other teacher had made me do that.

sentiment in his works, I asked him, "Are you really as nationalistic as your works sound?"

"Definitely," he answered readily. "You can see that even in my complexion."

Leonor Borrromeo

THERE was a short program before the traditional dinner given by San Carlos for the Faculty to celebrate THREE KINGS. We had group singing among the faculty and even the Fathers contributed a chorus on the significance of Christmas. Most of the songs were sung in English and the Fathers sang some songs in German. While the Fathers were still singing the late Faigao ambled from one group to another among the Faculty. "What, no Christmas song in the dialect or in the Filipino language? We ought to put up a number in the vernacular."

In one of his classes in Philippine literature he showed his dislike of the practice of Filipino parents in giving their children American names. "Why should we name our boys Bobby, or John, or Bill? Why not call them Lapu-Lapu, Bataan, or Sikatuna? They are just as stylish as American names, and shall I say more meaningful?"

He really meant what he told the class. In fact two of his children are named Bataan and Mabuhay.

d. Floreto

Once I Had A Teacher

by **LOURDES VARELA**

HIS NAME was Cornelio F. Faigao.

I first saw him on a July morning some ten years ago. I was one of the forty or so students in his English I class at the old college building which now houses the Girls' High School.

He came into the room, his felt hat in his hand and a Woolley and Scott English handbook under his arm. He walked without hurrying until he reached the teacher's platform. Then he gently laid his hat on a corner of the table, opened his book, and quietly began to explain nouns.

That was the beginning of a long and rewarding association with a teacher who turned out to be one of the finest I have ever had.

He was not exactly a slave-driver, but he unfailingly taught us to do our best. I still remember how he found fault with my first themes. I had thought they were carefully written but to him, they simply were

But if he was relentless in ferreting out our mistakes, he was most assiduous in praising us for work well done. He would, after correcting them, set aside the best themes and ask their writers to read them to the class. Very often, the reading would be punctuated by "There! that's what I call a striking adjective!" or "I like that very much" or "Don't you think of the writer as a vibrant, fully alive person?" How the writers' faces glowed!

He was a real educator. He brought out the best in his students by using a special brand of magic common to all great teachers—he believed in their worth. To the point of almost embarrassing his students, he would sing their praises whenever he had a chance. He saw in his young boys and girls potential short story writers, essayists, and poets. If faith can move mountains, then he certainly did. A classmate, after getting a few dreary 3's for her themes, began to work in earnest (after gentle prodding from Mr. Faigao) and finally received a 1. Another wrote her first short-short story (an almost flawless one, too) because Mr. Faigao had talked her into believing that she could. There was an essay writing contest he asked me to participate in. Before the contest began, I lost my nerve and wanted to back out. In walked Mr. Faigao, looking stern. "Young lady," he said, "I know you can do it. Now go out there and do your best." Because he refused to believe that his students were mediocre, they gratefully set out to prove him right. If that is not the sound educational psychology, I don't know what is.

Above all, I shall be always grateful to Mr. Faigao for opening our
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CHRONOLOGY OF FAIGAO'S LIFE

- 1908. Mar. 31. Born at Jones, Romblon
- 1922. Graduated valedictorian from Banton Elementary School
- 1925. Graduated salutatorian from Romblon High School
- 1929. Graduated from the University of the Philippines, Bachelor of Science in Education
- 1930. Recognized as a short-story writer with the publication of his "Violins with Broken Strings"
- 1940. Passed the bar examinations
- 1949. Appointed Head of the English Department, University of San Carlos
- 1951. Awarded First Prize in the Literary Contests in connection with the Golden Jubilee of the Educational System in the Philippines for his poem "The Brown Child"
- 1952. Mar. 13. Founded the "Daily News"
- 1954. Awarded a Foreign Leadership Grant to observe rural newspapering and teaching college English
- 1959. May 8. Died of liver ailment at the Cebu Velez General Hospital

NEVER SAY GOODBYE

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fine." He was funny when he wasn't being funny and serious when he meant to be funny. Once, while we were writing a news report on the visit of a director of a mental institution, he pointed out the irony of launching a drive to help those unfortunates, when all the "mental cases" were right in the audience. Funny or not, we got the message all right. He was an exponent of the personal touch. He knew that no preaching can penetrate the proud shell of the blasé eighteen-year-old who can never be approached effectively except from his own level and by someone near to him. They say "in its innermost depths, youth is lonelier than old age." Perhaps that is why he succeeded where the others failed, because they have little sympathy for the twisting roads, the searching journey of many a pilgrim youth.

Whenever I met any of my classmates who knew him, we still talk about him as though he never really went away. If people really understand each other, they never say "goodbye" but that is hard to explain. We remember the things he said, the subtle humor uniquely his

own and our writings which he'd estimate for their mediocrity or hypocrisy. Good writing always stirred him yet stumbling undisciplined writing still interested him like nothing else could, for he was optimistic about the latent promise and inherent beauty in a piece of writing, in a confusion of seemingly sensible words strung together illogically but poignantly. The world of writing was his great passion, and it was in us, the young, that he hoped to fulfill many of his hopes.

We are still young and alive... still unsettled in our shaky ideals... with the years stretching out before us, awaiting the harvest of our gleanings, our contributions to life that will stamp us with our truest identity. He is gone, Connie, our friend, our confidante, our teacher. We are left... the promises still left to be seen... the seeds groping for life and purpose and their own souls. We are still here, we are not dead and we are the promises, the seeds. He left us a very big order to finish... and it staggers our minds knowing how important it must be to him that we must carry on... #

ONCE I HAD A TEACHER

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eyes to beauty. He had special talent for uncovering to us the beauty of nature and the beauty of the printed word. He rhapsodized over the incomparable colors of the sunset, the matchless brilliance of the moonlight. We learned that beauty was everywhere but that it was the reward of the man who painstakingly searched for it. He recounted to us how once he woke up at dawn to steep himself in the beauty of a sleeping city as he walked through the empty streets. The poet in him occasionally had to burst out in exclamations of undisguised admiration of some new beauty or some rediscovered old one. He read poems in our literature class without the afflicted pose of the reader aware of the effect he is producing on his

audience, but with the easy naturalness of a true lover of poetry. He encourage us to commit beautiful lines to memory by quoting them himself. "Ah," he would say, "I know not what soft incense hangs upon the boughs" when some delightful fragrance filled the air.

Such was the teacher Faigao.

With his characteristic humility, he told me, two months before he died, "I'm afraid, when I have to go, my hands will be empty."

What I would have given just to have seen the look on his face when another Teacher bade him welcome with the words, "For he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." #

VILLA'S FOOTNOTE . . .

(Continued from page 3)

as an impersonal force, relentless and powerful to which men are but as pawns? Must one feel extremely sad and sorry for him who wants to be young, who wants to love and to live? Life is ceaseless suffering, Villa wails. Or else a terribly grim joke. In the story *The Fence*, the notes of the girl's guitar floated in the moonlight... too late. And when Aling Biang announced "The Lord is born" on Christmas midnight to her son Iking, Iking died.

While Villa glories in the songs of the wind, the songs of the young lush moon, the songs of the tall strong trees, he nevertheless opens his story *Malakas* with a sigh "Hai!". And in the same breath he says: "What is alive, hurts."

Kamya, for all its sensuous beauty, *Given Woman*, *Resurrection* harp on the same theme of futility. The symbols are empty. The characters are either draped in black or wrapped in mists — but still one can see right through them. They are all sick with neurosis.

Reading the volume is no doubt an experience, though hardly enriching. The experience palls, almost harrows. One seems to live in a vague misty world where reality though as hazy as a dream is nevertheless as overpowering as the heavy smell of faded or fading flowers, a chill comfortless world pervaded with a withering sense of solitariness where one meets lonely people of only two dimensions, disillusioned searchers, desolate figures wrapped in uncertain light like faces in some impressionistic painting.

As one closes the book it is inevitably with a sigh and with regret. Villa is not what he ought to be or what he might be, so we think. His rebellion is too obvious, his anger too made up, and one immediately thinks of a poseur. His pride is arrogance. His obsession with impotence and frustration chorused by heavenly mockery and keyed by human loneliness indubitably harrows his art. If he could but bend his will... now. If he could but grasp the essence of the Christian spirit... now. And not just the veneer. But he glories in his loneliness. So he writes in *Walk at Midnight*, "I had no playmates. I swam no river. I climbed no trees. I was alone."

Where are the playmates of him who is alive only to himself? Deserts have no rivers and trees.

Villa is indeed alone. #