

READING TIME FOR YOUNG FOLKS

✓ THE CAÑAO

By FILOMENO BISCOCHO *

AMONG the Igorotes of Mountain Province it has long been the custom to have a *cañao* from time to time. *Cañao* is an Igorot word among the mountain people for a meeting with singing, dancing, and eating. The following is a true story and gives one of the reasons for holding an Igorot *cañao*:

It seems that an Igorot girl was sick. This girl had attended school, and so knew the better way of recovering from some kind of sickness. But these better ways learned at the school were not accepted by the older generation. So the medicine man was called to cure the sick fourteen-year old Igorot girl.

"The spirits are very angry," said the medicine man. "There is nothing we can do except to have a *cañao* to appease the spirits."

The sick girl heard the word *cañao*. Turning to the medicine man, she said, "Our teacher told us that *cañaos* do no good—they just waste our pigs and carabaos. They are useless. It is time that we should stop this superstitious native custom."

But the medicine man only said to the girl's mother, "Let us have the *cañao*." The girl saw her mother, who was squatting in the room, nod assent.

Accordingly, preparations were made for the *cañao*. The girl's father decided to sacrifice three pigs and a carabao. So he brought home three pigs and the very carabao which the girl used to feed and ride on the hillside to a nearby stream.

A platform was made of pine saplings. The pigs and the carabao were to be butchered there. All the neighbors, and of course the medicine man, too, were invited to the *cañao*. Dishes were borrowed. Pine torches were secured, for the feasting would be carried on even after it was no longer light.

The sick girl remained in the house. She remembered what her teacher had said: "You should open the windows to admit fresh air." So she said to her sister, "It is very warm. My eyes are burning. Please open the windows." Then she remembered that her parents' house was window-less, dark, and smoke-stained.

"Never mind," the sick girl's sister said. "You will soon get well. All the signs show that you will get well. There were many bubbles in the rice wine when Yotokan and I were dancing around it."

Yotokan was a boy, and he was a classmate of the sick girl. They were of the same age. Her parents liked her to marry Yotokan, but she wanted to study to become a teacher.

She heard the beating of the *ganzas* and the *agongs* outside, the laughing and the occasional yells and the other noises incidental to the *cañao*. Then she sank into a deep slumber.

The next morning she was better, and in a few days returned to school.

Of course, everybody except the girl believed that she recovered because of the sacrifices. She knew they had nothing to do with it.

"Alas!" thought the girl. "The old customs are still with us!"

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