

Mariang Makiling,

por

Jose Rizal.

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"La Solidaridad"

MARIANG MAKILING

by
Jose Rizal

In my town there is preserved a legend, the legend of Mariang Makiling.

She was a maiden who inhabited the beautiful mountain which separates the provinces of Laguna and Tayabas. It is supposed that her residence was never at a fixed location. Those who, lost in the forest, had the fortune to encounter her after wandering for much time have not been able to return, have not been able to find the road, are not in agreement as to the location or in its description. While some give it as a beautiful palace, brilliant as a reliquary of gold, surrounded by gardens and beautiful parks, others declare that they saw only a miserable hut with patched roof and walls of sawali (woven with flat strips of bamboo). Similar contradiction may give place to the belief that they mention gracefully the one as much as the other, it is true. But it may also be that Mariang Makiling had two dwellings like many wealthy persons.

According to eyewitnesses, she was a young girl, tall, well-shaped, with large black eyes, long and abundant hair. Her color was a clear and light brown, the "Kayumanging-Kaligatan" as the Tagalogs say; her hands and feet, small and exquisite; and the expression of her face, always grave and serious. She was a fantastic creature, half nymph, half sylph, born of the rays of the moon of the Philippines, in the mystery of its august forests and to the lullaby of the murmurs of the neighboring lake. According to general belief, and contrary to the reputation attributed to the nymphs and goddesses, Mariang Makiling is preserved always a virgin, slender and mysterious as the spirit of the mountain. An ancient servant whom we have - an amazon who defended her home against the "tulisanes" (bandits) and killed one of them with a thrust of a lance - assured me that in her childhood she had seen her at a great distance passing above the "kagonales" (grass lands) so nimble and

airy that not even the flexible blades of grass were bent. They say that on the night of Holy Friday, when the hunters light bonfires to attract the deer with the odor of the ashes to which they are so addicted, they discerned her at a distance, immobile at the brink of the most dangerous abysses, leaving her hair to float in the wind, all inundated by the light of the moon. They say also that at times she has deigned to approach them; then she saluted ceremoniously, passed, and disappeared in the shadow of the adjacent trees. For the rest, all liked and revered her, and no one dared at any time to question her, follow her or spy on her. She has been seen also seated for long hours on a rock at the bank of a river, as though contemplating the slow course of the waters. There is not lacking an old hunter who asserts that he has seen her bathing in some hidden spring at midnight, when the crickets sleep, when the moon reigns in the midst of silence, and nothing disturbs the spell of the solitude. In these same hours, and in the midst of the same circumstances, is when also the sound of her harp can be heard, mysterious and melancholy. Those who hear it are stopped because it is removed to a distance and is extinguished when an attempt is made to hunt for it.

Her favorite walk was, as they say, after the storm; at that time she went surveying the fields, and wherever she passed she restored life, order, calm; the trees straightened their bent trunks; the rivers were locked in their channels and the tracks of the unchained elements were obliterated.

When the poor rustics of the slopes of Makiling needed clothing or jewels for the solemnities of life, she loaned them upon condition of returning them and of giving in addition a white hen that had not hitherto laid eggs, a pullet, as they say. Mariang Makiling was very charitable and had a kind heart. How many times has she not, in the form of a simple rustic, aided the poor old people who went to the forest for firewood, or to gather

wild fruits, giving to them grains of gold, money, reliquaries and jewels. A hunter who one day pursued a wild bear across the grass lands and through the thorny bushes of the thicket, discovered unexpectedly a hut where the animal was hidden. From the hut emerged after a short time a beautiful maiden who said to him calmly: "The wild bear belongs to me and you have done harm in pursuing it; but I see that you are very fatigued, that your arms and legs drip blood; enter, therefore, eat and later pursue your way."

The man, confused and surprised and, in addition, fascinated by the beauty of the maiden, entered, ate mechanically all that she offered him, without being able to speak a single word. Before his departure the maiden gave him some pieces of ginger, recommending that he give them to his mother for her sauces. The hunter put them in the *beat* (CROWN) of his *salaket* (hat), and, after giving thanks, he withdrew, resigned to his loss of the wild bear. At the half of the journey, feeling that the "salaket" (hat) burdened him, he removed many of the pieces of ginger and threw them away. But what was his surprise and grief when on the following day his mother found that what they believed to be ginger was solid gold, relucant as a coagulated ray of the sun.

But Mariang Makiling was not always bountiful and agreeable with the hunters; she was also revengeful, although her vengances never were cruel. The maiden always preserved the tender heart of a woman.

Two famous hunters one afternoon descended the mountain, carrying some wild bear and deer which they had hunted during the day. They met an old woman who asked them to each give her a piece of the meat, and they, considering the demand exhorbitant, refused. The old woman departed, saying that she would go to give part to the woman who owned these animals, at which the hunters scoffed.

The night having already begun, and when the two were near the plain, they heard a cry, distant, very distant, as if it had burst from the summit

of the mountain.

The cry was strange and said: "Huyaa.....Huyo!"

And another cry, still more distant, answered: "Huyaa....Huyo!"

That cry surprised both hunters; they did not know to what to attribute it; their dogs, upon hearing it, raised their ears, growled a little and approached the hunters.

After some minutes had passed, the same cry resounded again, but this time in the skirt of the mountain. Upon hearing it the dogs put tail between legs and drew close to their masters as though seeking protection. These, for their part, looked astonished ~~and~~ without saying a word, questioning with their gaze; they were surprised that those who launched that cry had traveled so far in so short a time.

Now in the plain the sinister cry resounded again, but this time so clear and so distinct that both instinctively turned the head. Then by the light of the moon they discerned at a distance two colossal forms, strange, descending the mountain with all rapidity. One of the hunters, the most intrepid, sought to stop them and to load his firearm; but arrested by the other, also sought to run with the celerity which the weight which he carried would permit. But the strangers were approaching, their footsteps announced. So that, having reached a spring which is called Bukal, the hunters removed their burdens, climbed a tree, and from there awaited the arrival of the monsters, the triggers of their firearms raised. Their dogs, in the meantime, upon seeing that they were deserted, full of a panic terror, turned to flee in the direction of the town without uttering a single bark.

The monsters arrived and their appearance froze the blood in the veins of the hunters. He who related to me this adventure, a nephew of one of the hunters, did not describe the form of the strangers. The only detail which he gave me were the fangs which glistened in the light of the moon. It is

all that he heard from his uncle. In a few seconds the monsters ate the wild bear and deer which they found on the ground, conducting themselves afterward to the mountain. Only then did the hunters recover themselves, and the braver aimed, but the shot did not go out and the monsters disappeared.

It is not known that Mariang Makiling had parents, brothers or relatives; similar personages^{appear}/in nature, like the stones which the Tagalogs call pearl. Nor is her true name known; she is called Maria in order to give her a name. She never was seen to enter the town, nor to take part in any religious ceremony. She remained always the same, and the five or six generations who knew her saw her always young, gay, slender and chaste.

But it is now many years that her presence has not been noted on Makiling; Her vaporous silhouette now does not go through the deep valleys, nor crosses the waterfalls in the serene moonlight nights; now one is not permitted to hear the melancholy accent of her mysterious harp; and now lovers are married without receiving from her either jewels or gifts; Mariang Makiling has disappeared, or at least avoids friendly contact with men.

Some put the blame for this on the natives of a certain village, who not only refused to give the customary white hen but also did not return the gifts loaned to them; clear it is that they reject such accusation and say that Mariang Makiling is offended because the Dominican friars seek to despoil them of their property by appropriating the half of the mountain; but an old woodcutter, who spent sixty five of the seventy years that he lived in the forests of Makiling cutting down the more secular trees, has given me another version that, if it is not well known, has at least greater appearance of probability.

At the waterfall of the mountain lived a youth dedicated to the cultivation of a small field, and he was the support of his old and infirm parents, well found, genteel, robust and a worker; he possessed a noble and

simple heart, although he was somewhat taciturn and uncommunicative. His cornfields became the most beautiful and best cultivated, the locusts never descended upon them, the typhoons seemed to respect them, the drouth did not parch them, nor did the seed rot when the torrential rains inundated the neighboring fields. Never did the plague decimate his cattle, and if one during the day lost its way it would return safely at nightfall, as if an invisible hand conducted it. Such good fortune some attributed to certain pearls and amulets, others to the protection of a saint, and others to the heaven which protects and rewards the good sons. Nevertheless the conduct of the youth was mysterious enough, his short times of leisure he passed wandering upon the mountain, seated beside some torrent, speaking at times alone or appearing to listen to strange voices.

Meanwhile the time arrived to ^{enter} the drawing of lots for service in the army. God knows how much the youths feared it, and the mothers above all; youth, home, family, good feeling, point of honor, and sometimes reputation, goodbye. The seven or eight years of life of the barracks, brutalizing and vicious, in which the coarse interjections paraphrase the military despotism armed nevertheless with the whip, are presented to the imagination of the youth as a long night which parches the most healthy and beautiful part of his life, in which one sleeps with tears in his eyes, and dreams horrible nightmares in order to awaken old, useless, corrupted, bloody and cruel. Thus it has been seen that many cut off two fingers to exempt themselves from military service; others have pulled out their teeth in the times in which it was necessary to bite the ^a cartridge; others have fled to the mountain, becoming highwaymen; and not a few have committed suicide. Nevertheless the best precaution against this misfortune has been marriage, and the parents of our youth determined to marry him to a maiden, handsome and industrious,

who lived not very distant on the same mountain. The youth, although he did not appear very enthusiastic with such a proposal, accepted it, nevertheless, first, in order to free himself from the military draft, and in order not to abandon his old parents. Since there was no obstacle to the marriage, it was quickly arranged and the day for the wedding was fixed.

Nevertheless, in proportion as the said day approached, the groom became more taciturn and less communicative; he disappeared for many hours, and when he returned they saw him to be out of breath and many times he did not reply when they questioned him. The evening before the wedding, at night when he was returning to the house of his betrothed, there appeared to him a maiden of extraordinary beauty.

"I presently do not wish to cease to see you," she said to him in sweet tones mingled with regret and compassion; ---"but I come to bring you my gift, the clothes and the jewels for your bride. I have protected you and have loved you because I saw that you were strong and a worker and I desired to have you consecrated to me. Go! Although an earthly love is necessary for you, although you have not had the valor either to confront your hard fate or to defend your liberty and to make yourself independent in the security of these mountains, although you have not had confidence in me, I who have protected you and your parents, Go! I deliver you to your fate; live and struggle alone; live as you can."

And this said, the maiden was removed to a distance and was lost among the shadows. He was left immobile and as if petrified; later he took two or three steps to follow her, but she had disappeared. He silently picked up the bundle which the maiden had deposited at his feet and entered his house. The bride neither put on the clothes nor used the jewels. And since then, Mariang Makiling has appeared no more to the rustics.

The woodcutter who recounted this history to me did not wish me to hear

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what her hero was called.

Whether this is true or not, I do not know. Various times I have wandered to the skirts of Makiling and, instead of dedicating myself to killing the poor pigeons who count their friendships in the high branches of the trees, reminding myself of what Mariang Makiling has invoked, I have listened, attentive in the silence of the forest, to perceive the harmonies of her melancholy instrument; and to see if I can discern her ideal figure floating in the air, half illumined by a ray of the moon which filtered through the thick foliage, I have left to surprise me at night. Nothing have I seen. Nothing have I heard.

Later I climbed to the same summit of the mountain (in that famous ascension which the friars attested to be that of a freebooter, notwithstanding the coming with us of an official and a soldier of the civil guard in the capacity of tourists) and we saw delightful places, charming places, worthy to be inhabited by gods and goddesses. Tall trees with straight and mossy trunks, among whose branches the vines weave most beautiful laces embroidered with flowers, most rare and varied parasitic plants from the threadlike form to the toothed broad leaf, the split or circular gigantic ferns, palms of all kinds, tall and graceful, which distribute their symmetrical leaves in space as a splendid plumage; all this and more we have seen and admired, suspending our march at various times in order to tarry ecstatic; but neither the enchanted place nor the humble hut of Mariang Makiling were left to be seen.

(Translated into English by Arnold H. Warren from a manuscript typewritten in Spanish. The manuscript was typewritten on white paper, 8" x 13", watermarked WORONOCO BOND 1911. bound with a ribbon between two sheets of brown paper. The title is written with pen and ink on the brown paper as follows: MARIANG MAKILING por Jose Rizal. The brown paper is brittle, may be much older than the typewritten sheets.)