



# HE DEVIL ROAMS AROUND

*By Rev. F. Juliano Delodder*



"We had better hurry," said the Father to his catechist, who had slackened his pace for some time; "for we must reach the dying man in time." Pedro drew near, silent as a grave. It was pitchdark when they reached the cemetery, the dancing ghostly light of a small mine-lamp was the only light on the narrow path in the stormy night. "Let us say a prayer for the departed who are buried here..." The answer to the Father's prayer could hardly be heard. Suddenly Pedro quickened his pace and in no time was far ahead. "Pedro, you should not walk so fast, you cannot keep it up for three hours." A few minutes later the priest was with him again. "Father, they told me they saw ghosts on the graves last week."

The rain began to pour, soaking

them to the skin. This added new difficulties in climbing the rocky path up the mountain, and going down called for all their attention in order not to fall into the abyss below. The small lamp threw dancing shapes on the sparkling grass and in the mysterious night no noise was heard but the quiet murmuring of the river and the monotonous drip of the raindrops on the bushes.

There behind the curb was the river. "Is the bridge all right, Pedro?"—"No, Father, it is not yet repaired." The Father understood quite well what this meant, for it was risking one's life to cross this bridge even during day-time. "We had

better leave the bridge aside and wade through the river. . . what does it matter, since we are drenched to the skin. The Father thought that the water would not reach far above the knees, but almost in the middle of the river the water rose violently striking the hips. The Father bumped against Pedro but luckily had the time to grasp his arm; otherwise he would have been swept away by the violence of the flood. It was a fierce struggle to reach the bank. For a moment all seemed lost. . . Pedro stumbled and disappeared under the water. The Father had his turn now to save his companion. With extreme difficulty Pedro got up and helping each other in turn they reached the other bank, out of breath. Silently they continued their way in the night, for little time was to be lost if they wanted to reach the dying man in time. Finally they came to the house. "Pedro, you enter first and prepare Amado for the visit of the priest." The priest kept standing in the doorway and stared at the dark figure in the corner of the hut, where the flickering fire on the hearth at times drove away the gloom.

Amado had been baptized thirty years ago, but very soon after had gone back to his old heathen way of life; he lived too far away from the mission to be instructed thoroughly in the christian doctrine, and there was no catechist. Maybe now in his last moments he would like to reconcile himself with God: for this purpose the priest had risked his life in the night. Scarcely however had the dying man heard the voice of the Father, when he rose to his feet and shouted in a hoarse voice: "I do not want any priest here; The priests sell souls to the devil." Exhausted with this effort he fell down again on

his mat; all became quiet, deadly quiet. . . The priest never had experienced that dying men in the very face of death did not come to, their senses. In the meantime Pedro had come nearer. "No more hope, Father."—"Try once more, Pedro." A stubborn shaking of the head was the dying man's only answer to the insistent catechist. The priest came near, knelt down, bent over the shrunken figure. As soon as the sick man heard the voice of the priest he turned his back on him with a final painful movement and did not move again. . . Every effort to bring him to God had been in vain. Priest and catechist prayed in silence near the fire until the dawn broke, in this pagan land among a people far from God. May those privileged ones who live near Him help bring their heathen brethren to their Creator.

*Juliano*

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