



PHOTO A. LAMMINEUR

Sayeng and Tchulisai had gone ahead of him carrying his bundle containing all his small belongings. Tomorrow he himself would be on his way to Hinang-Dalang. His father could no longer work and he was going to help him on the rice fields.

Of all this Tibung-Dasi thought the last night before his departure. He sat dreamily by the open window of the camarin, looking at the dark pine-tree-covered slopes around him; at the vegetable and flower gardens below, and at the high walls of the peaceful convent behind these. All was clearly visible in the white moonlight.

How quiet it was on this his last night! Nothing was moving. There was no chirping of crickets in the grass. Not even the Ketopee could be seen flitting in and out the eucalyptus trees. There was a prayerful silence, in which everything seemed listening to, Someone present but invisible; speaking in a language feeble man could not understand.

T H E L A S T

ROSES

by Rev. Alfonso Claerhoudt

On the morrow he would already be in Hinang-Dalang. His father would be waiting at the door of their hut, and he would say, "Salamat, I am happy that now you are home, Tibung Dasi." A few days later the village elders would gather there and decide on his marriage to Suganay, the daughter of Bilodo. His consent would be asked and he, of course, would approve of their choice. He knows her to be a good and virtuous girl.

Tibung gave himself up to the captivating quietness of the night, and the years he had spent in the service of this peaceful convent came back to him. A voice seemed to ask:

"Tibung, Dasi, do you still remember how you came here?" O Yes, he did.

"Tibung Dasi, do you still recall how the Sisters promised your father they would care for you and instruct

you in Christian Doctrine?" Yes, he remembered all this so well; how had learned to serve at Mass; how, as gardener, he had learned the names of the flowers and the plants.

Dory and Dulong, two boys from *Hinang-Dalang*, visited him one day, and then related to their home people all about Tibung Dasi. Later they returned to Tibung and lived with him in the *camarin*, helping him with the garden work.

PHOTO C. AERTS



About a month ago, Tibung's father had also come to visit him. He seemed to have grown so old. Other people from Hinang-Dalang had come with him—among them Suganay. He had shown them the convent gardens and before they left, he filled their basket with cabbages, petchay, tchangko and onions. And because Suganay was very fond of the flowers, he had made her a bouquet and said: "Yama Suganay, this is for you." He saw his father smile and that made him blush. All that day he had been distracted, his work done only half-well, just because of those flowers and his father's smile.

Soon all his father's smile suggested would be realized. Sayeng and Tchulisai had already gone ahead with his belongings and tomorrow, he himself would be going home to Hinang-Dalang to stay.

But he would never forget the kind "Apo Madres"—nor the beautiful convent-gardens. He would remain virtuous, and pray the rosary daily with his father and with Suganay. Our Lord will be with him there too, in his heart, in his hut, in the fields. He would start a vegetable garden like the one he was leaving—with cabbages, dourias, tarong and calumbas. And Suganay will have her marigolds, red latanas, petunias



PHOTO C. AERTS

and blue asters.

As Tibung thought of all these things, he fell asleep. Early the next morning he served Mass as usual—his last Mass in the convent. Then he went to the garden, tracing all the footpaths between the flower beds. The blossoms were still heavy with dew. Through the silvery mist that hung between the pine trees, flowed a golden stream of rays from the rising sun. It brought with it the freshness of the morning, and the flowers danced for joy in the cool, crisp, wind.

Tibung Dasi swept his eyes over this peaceful corner of Paradise, as though he would never again see it. How he loved it! He thought of how he had served, planted, transplanted, and cared for each plant in it. How beautiful it all was.

Slowly he closed the garden gate behind him. Close against the con-



PHOTO R. VERLINDEN

Sacred Heart, Tibung looked up to Jesus, sad and thoughtful. But why was he so tongue tied, now he would no more come back?

After some time, he managed to say: "Dear Lord, You know I am going away. You have always been so good to me. Salamat, salamat! I thank you so much, dear Lord, and for this last time I bring you the best flowers of my garden. They are all for You."

Carefully he laid the roses at the feet of Jesus, and then again looked up. This time he could no longer see the sweet smiling Face that always answered him. Tibung's eyes were clouded with tears. Bowing his head, he could only repeat, "Salamat, salamat. I shall never forget You, Lord, Please help me never to forget You—never to desire anything but You."

vent wall grow the loveliest roses. These he cut, and then made his way to the chapel. Kneeling before the

Tibung Dasi genuflected and then softly left the chapel. He must do home now—home to Hinang-Dalang

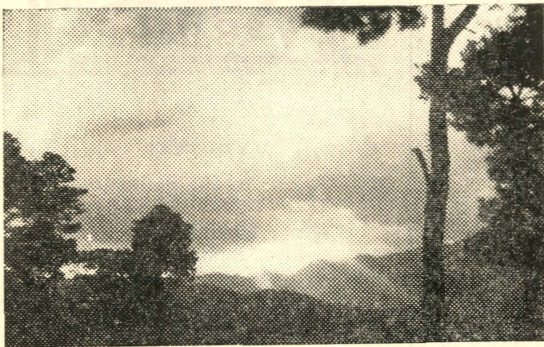


PHOTO O. DESMET

Face the sunshine.
You will find that
the shadows always
fall behind you.