

HIS HANDS WOULDN'T GO AROUND

by Archa O. Dart

Pedro looked like a giant toadstool that morning as he sat on a small stump with his poncho, or loose coat, thrown around his shoulders and his large sombrero, or hat, covering him completely. From his lofty seat on that high mountainside he could look for miles in every direction and watch the clouds as they constantly formed faces and images of man and beast. Pedro sat motionless, gazing into the quiet valley far below, while his goats nibbled at the short tough grass about him.

All at once he became aware that someone was coming up behind him. Before he had time to become frightened and run away, the stranger had smiled and spoken kindly to him. After talking for a little while, the man asked, "Sonny, how would you like to go to school?"

Now Pedro did not know whether going to school was like going to Lima, the big city on the other side of the mountains, or like going hunting. He had never heard of school before.

But the kind man told him so many interesting things about school that he decided that he would like to see what it was all about. So when the day came for the mission school to open, Pedro was right there. He saw a number of things that interested him in that little schoolroom, but there was one thing that was a great curiosity indeed. It was a odd looking little object on the teacher's desk. After a time, Pedro decided to ask the teacher what that odd looking little thing was.

"Teacher, what is this?"

"That, Pedro, is a clock," she answered.

Pedro didn't know any more now than he did before. "What is it for?" he asked.

"That tells me the time of the day," she replied. "I can sit right here in this room and tell where the sun is all day long by that little clock. I can tell when it is time to eat dinner and when it is time to dismiss school, so you boys and girls can reach your homes before dark."

This was almost more than Pedro could believe.

The teacher explained further, "When the two hands of this clock point straight up, the sun will be right overhead. Your shadow will be the shortest at that time of day. And when the hands are right here at three o'clock, the sun will be about there," she said pointing to a spot in the west.

This all seemed very strange indeed to Pedro. But sure enough, when the teacher announced that it was time for their noonday lunch, Pedro saw that the hands of the clock were right straight up and the sun was directly overhead. He scarcely had any shadow at all. He wondered and wondered how that little clock could tell where the sun was all day long.

Day after day Pedro watched that clock. It seemed to know just where the sun was all the time.

One day the teacher said, "Pedro how would you like to have a clock of your own?"

"What? You mean one that I could take home with me to keep?"

"Yes, Pedro," she answered. "If you bring me your centavos-that is, pennies and nickels- I shall keep them for you until you have enough to buy a clock for your own."

Pedro was very happy. Every time he sold some of his goat cheese, he would give the money to his teacher, until finally he had quite a little sum.

One morning the teacher had a large package on her desk. "Pedro, come here," she greeted him when he arrived. "I have something for you."

No boy or girl has ever been any happier on a birthday than Pedro was that morning when the teacher handed him his clock. He danced about for joy. The teacher showed him how to wind it up with the key and start it by swinging the pendulum, or loose arm, as he called it. Pedro took the clock home and put it right by his little bed. It was the last thing he looked at each night and the first thing he saw in the morning.

But one morning when he looked at his clock, he found that the hands were not going around. The loose arm was not swinging. It was not making that odd little sound. He was afraid his clock was dead, but he took it to his teacher, as he had learned to do with all his troubles, and asked her to fix his clock. She took the clock, gave it a shake or two, and it began ticking again, and the hands began going around. Every time after that when his clock would stop, he would give it a shake, and it would begin ticking again.

One morning Pedro woke up and found that his clock has stopped during the night. He gave it a shake, but nothing happened. Another big shake, and another, and another. All the shaking that Pedro could give it did not start it ticking. He thought it was dead for sure this time. Again he brought the clock to his teacher for her to repair.

The teacher tried the same remedy, but nothing happened. The teacher handed it back to Pedro, saying, "Pedro, I cannot repair your clock. I do not know what is wrong with it, but there is a man in Lima who makes and repairs clocks. He can make it work again. You take it to him, and he will make the hands go around again."

This brought some hope to Pedro. He was relieved to know that there was someone who could repair his clock. He took his clock back home and waited for the day to come when he and his father would make another trip to Lima. All this time Pedro was getting along very well in the new mission school. He was learning many things. But one day he found himself standing by the teacher's desk, twisting his thumbs. He felt that everything was not just right with him. The look on the teacher's face told him plainly that he was in trouble.

The teacher began in a very solemn manner, "Pedro, you are not acting right out on the playground. When the other boys do not do as you say, and you do not have your own way, you begin to hit them with your fist. I thought you wanted to become a man, to be a real hero, to be a Christian gentleman. No Christian gentleman uses his fist to gain his point. Only cowards do that."

"Yes, teacher, I do want to be a real man, a Christian gentleman," Pedro answered quietly, "but there is something wrong with my hand. When a boy does something that I do not like, before I know it, my hand has hit him. I am sorry for it, but you see there's something wrong with my hand. I can't control it."

"Oh, no," answered the teacher, "there is nothing wrong with your hand, Pedro. Your hand is all right, but there is something wrong inside you."

Pedro felt his chest. What could the teacher mean? "Oh, no teacher, there is nothing wrong inside. I feel all right in there."

"Yes, Pedro, you have something wrong inside that makes your hand hit boys the way it does."

Pedro was puzzled. He thought a great deal about what the teacher had said. Everything went along as usual for a few days. Then Pedro found himself back by the teacher's desk again. He was twisting his thumbs as before, for he was afraid that something bad was certainly coming this time. The teacher had that same expression on her face.

"Pedro," the teacher began in a solemn tone, "I thought you wanted to become a brave, good soldier for the Lord, but sometimes I hear you call some of the children names. You say things that are not good. Why do you do that?"

"Oh, teacher, I do want to be a good boy and become a real brave soldier for the Lord, but there is something wrong with my tongue. When the boys and girls do things that I do not like, this tongue of mine says things that I do not want to say. I am sorry, but I cannot control it."

"No, Pedro," answered his teacher, "there is nothing wrong with that tongue of yours. It is all right, but there is something wrong inside of you."

Pedro thought she must be mistaken. He felt his chest. He felt all around. He was not sore anywhere. "No, teacher, there is nothing wrong inside. I do not hurt there at all."

"Yes, Pedro, there is something wrong inside of you, and until you get right inside, your tongue will continue to speak bad words."

Pedro went home thinking of what the teacher had told him. But still he could not make out just what was wrong inside of him. Several days went by, and he tried to be just as good a boy as he could.

By and by Pedro's father said, "Son, get your cheeses ready. We are going to Lima tomorrow to sell them." That was delightful news to him. Right away he thought of his clock.

The next morning when they had everything ready and were about to start, Pedro went into his room to get his clock. He stopped a moment to look at it. It was a large clock. It would get rather heavy with the other things he was planning to carry with him over the mountain. You see, he had no automobile or streetcar to ride in. He had to walk all the way.

Then, too, not all of the clock needed repairing. The wood part was as good as ever, the numbers on the face were still all right, the back had not changed. In fact, the only thing that was wrong, so Pedro thought, was that the hands wouldn't go around. A bright idea came into his mind. Pedro opened the glass door of the clock and very carefully removed the two hands from the face of the clock, wrapped them up in a piece of paper, and put them into his pocket.

At last they arrived in the city of Lima, Pedro went directly to the watchmaker and unwrapped the two hands before the man. "Here, Mister, these hands will not go around, I want you to fix them so they will go around."

The man smiled and said, "Sonny, I cannot fix those hands."

"Oh, yes, you can," Pedro pleaded. "My teacher says you can. I must have them fixed. They will not go around."

Seeing how anxious the little fellow was to have his clock repaired the good man explained, "Now see here, young man, there is nothing wrong with those hands. They are alright, but there is something wrong with the inside of your clock. Inside of your clock there are a number of little screws and wheels, and when dust or dirt or water or rust gets into them, they stop, and that stops the hands from going around. The next time you come to Lima, you bring me the inside of your clock, and I shall be happy to clean it and fix it so the hands will go around alright on the outside."

Pedro wrapped the hands up again and put them back into his pocket. On the way home he began thinking of what the watchmaker had said. It seemed very strange indeed that dirt and dust on the inside would keep the hands from going around on the outside. Then he thought of something. He would find out as soon as he got back to school.

He went to his teacher and told her what had happened in Lima about his clock. Then he added, "Teacher, what kind of screws and wheels are inside of me that need fixing?"

The teacher said, "Pedro, I have been waiting for you to ask that question for a long, long time. You see, Jesus, who made you, put something inside of you that can think. When you allow bad thoughts to come into your mind, you do bad things. It's just like getting dirt or rust into your clock. Every time you think about taking something that does not belong to you, or telling something that is not true, it is allowing dirt to come into your mind. But it is not easy to get into our minds to clean out all that dirt."

"How can I have my mind cleaned up?" asked Pedro.

"You do not need to go to Lima, Pedro, but you can begin by kneeling down right here at my desk and asking Jesus to clean you up inside. Then your hands will do kind, loving acts, and your tongue will speak sweet, pleasant words."