



ILLUSTRATED BY JAMES HILL

A Time for Giving

THE LETTERS he had prayed for would be at the post office, the Rev. Peter Morgan assured himself, as he pulled on the muddy boots he had worn since coming to Curachos. His pleas for contributions had been sent two weeks ago, but he had not received one reply. Now it was Christmas Eve, time to pick up the last mail from the store in the valley.

From his room behind the little mission on the mountainside, Peter Morgan looked out on the scattered shacks that housed the 36 families of his congregation. The rain that had been falling

steadily for four months had washed away all other signs of life. The fields were abandoned, and the roads had turned to rivers of mud.

Four months ago, Peter hadn't realized it was possible for anyone to live in such poverty. The rain had destroyed the crops and, with no crops, the natives had to live on roots and bark and crawling things. Peter knew the little settlement of South American Indians could exist no longer without help. He couldn't understand how they had gone on as long as they had.

As he walked to Diego's store, rivulets

of water found their way through the splits in his raincoat and the mud pulled at his sturdy boots.

There would be many letters today, the young minister told himself for the hundredth time. He had prayed the entire night. God couldn't fail to send the contributions his little congregation needed so badly.

Until now, Peter had felt sure the money would come. His sermon last Sunday was entitled "A Time for Giving." He had labored over it for days and, even with his halting Spanish, he felt it made the desired impression. He