



INSPIRACIÓN.—“INSPIRATION.”

## XII

### ARTS AND LETTERS

LITERATURE AND ELOQUENCE—PORTO RICO PRESENT LITERATURE—  
PORTO RICAN MUSICAL ART—ARCHITECTURE AND ARCHITECTS.

#### Literature and Eloquence

By Manuel Fernández Juncos, LL.D.,

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**Delay in Porto Rican Literary Life.** In almost all the Spanish-American countries literary life had developed before such development commenced in Porto Rico, this being due to the greater extension of public education in those countries. When the first steps in this art were taken in Porto Rico there already existed in the Spanish Section of the new continent such poets as Bello and Olmedo; statesmen like Alberdi; philosophers like Varela; educators like Sarmiento and Luz Caballero, and orators such as those who shone at the Cadiz Congress. Universities already famous also existed in many of the most important cities. But notwithstanding such lamentable backwardness, Porto Rico at present possesses

a literary and scientific culture superior to that of some of its sister regions of Spanish tongue and civilization.

In 1840 no trade in books as yet existed in Porto Rico, and persons with a literary taste found great difficulty in satisfying their desire of learning from imperfect copies, and in cases here and there, from books borrowed from young men returning from Spanish Universities, who were the first and most efficacious workers in the field of letters.

**Porto Rican Christmas Carols.** In 1843 the first collection of literary essays was published in Porto Rico, under the title of “Porto Rican Christmas Carols.” The book contained prose and verse productions by Bibiana Benítez,

Father Baez, Pastrana, Guasp, Travieso, Cabrera and a number of others. The majority of these writings were defective, since they were the first attempt in an art without regular precedents in the island; but they constituted the first manifestation of an anticipated flowering, and indicated the growth and development of literary effort.

"Christmas Carols" was well received in the island and reached Spain to the great joy of the Porto Rican student colony there, the greatest nucleus of which was at that time in the University of Barcelona. Young Baez, Alonso, Vasallo, the two Vidarte brothers, and several others pursued their literary and scientific studies there, some of them being enthusiastic cultivators of poetry while all of them were literarily inclined.

**Porto Rican Album.** The following year these students answered the "Christmas Carols" with a collection of compositions in verse called "The Porto Rican Album."

These two books were in truth, if not the first, the most important and best known manifestations of the incipient literature of Porto Rico. The poetic tendency predominated in both volumes, especially the lyric form, which has ever since been the most followed in Porto Rico. In the author's opinion, not only do the ethnical conditions of the majority of the inhabitants of Porto Rico contribute to this preference for lyrics, but also the wonderfully beautiful tropical nature of the region.

## POETRY

**Modes of Popular Poetry.** Just as in almost all human societies, popular poetry preceded academic or learned verse-making in Porto Rico. The lyric spontaneity of the people made of them the first poets of the island as regards time. Maternal sentiment created cradle songs; love enthusiasm in the youths of the masses produced chivalrous ballads, and martial ardor gave origin to heroic romance, the parent of epic poems. All these beginnings, together with the expression of religious sentiment made up a great part of what in English is called folk-lore, and which in Spanish is known as popular wisdom.

Even in the prehistoric times of the island

the Indians possessed a sort of war and religious chant used to render their areytos or public festivities more pleasant.

The first European settlers of Porto Rico, the majority of whom were Andalusians, brought with them the Andalusian couplet and the La Mancha seguidilla, which gave primitive form to the popular poetry of the Island. Andalusian settlers coming to the Island during and after the XVIth Century, imported the décima, a metric combination due to Espinel, a poet of that province. This poetic form took such root in the island that the country people still give it preference in their favorite compositions.

**Efforts Towards Literary Expression.** Poetry of regular literary form was not issued in printed collections till 1843, as stated above. It received a favorable impulse a little later when that sort of literary rebirth which the romantic invasion caused throughout Spain and the near-by example of the triumph of Heredia, the celebrated singer to Niagara were in full sway; Tula Avellaneda Milanés, Plácido and other inspired poets of Cuba, also contributed to strengthen such impulse.

In their desire to manifest their ideas and to study, Porto Rican poets struggled under difficulties on account of the scarce means of publicity. Such newspapers as were now and then founded lived but a short life because of the narrow limits of thought to which they were subjected by censor and the severe printing legislation.

**Pezuela Gives Impulse to Arts and Letters.** Poetical inspiration in the island received a certain impulse from the government of General Marquis de la Pezuela, a man of ultra-conservative ideas, but a true lover of arts and letters. He brought to Porto Rico a professor from Venezuela, who had been a disciple of Bello, to perfect the teaching of Spanish grammar and to promote its study. He also founded the Royal Academy of Belles Lettres of Porto Rico; a sort of conservatory of music and song called "La Filarmónica" and he improved public education somewhat and promoted contests to stimulate poetic production.

At one of these contests a prize was won by don Juan Manuel Echevarria, a priest who

wrote verse with elegance and grace in imitation of the grandiloquent style of Quintana, and a young man by the name of Castro carried off another prize in a later contest, for a poem entitled "Luquillo."

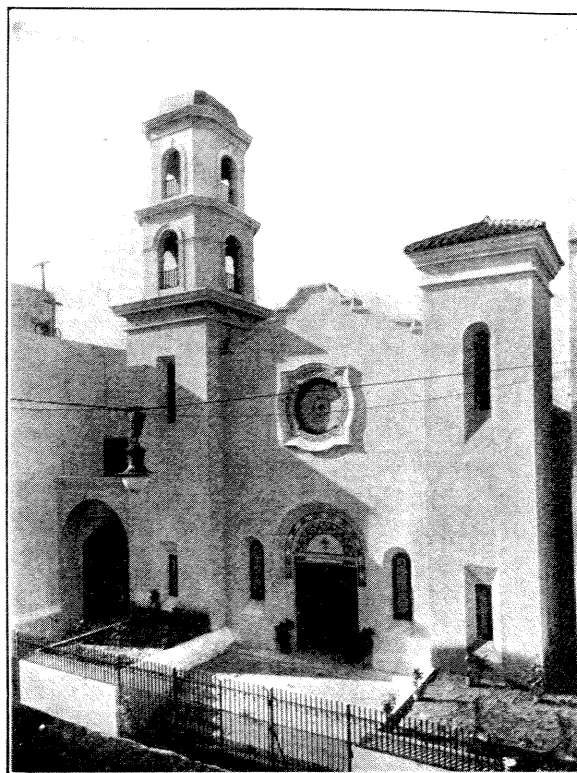
The solemnity wherewith these contests were held at the Academy of Belles Lettres and presided over by the Governor General, constituted a powerful incentive for poetical production.

**The Second Porto Rican Christmas Carols.**

A few "Porto Rican Christmas Carols" was published in 1858, with an introduction by Don Julio de Viscarrondo, and containing prose and verse production by eighteen collaborators. This book, as well as the poems above referred to, represented evident progress in lyric poetry in Porto Rico. It contained compositions by Alejandro Tapia and Francisco J. Amy, which were later notably to influence the developments of this style of literature among their fellow-countrymen.

Although for the greater part these compositions dealt with Porto Rican matters, still they reflected the character of Spanish lyric poetry and even the manners peculiar to such national authors as were most frequently read at that time. Hence, Vidarte modeled after the romantic poets, especially Espronceda; Alonso showed predilection for the comic spirit of Bretón de los Herreros, and the kind, pleasant sagacity of Mesonero Romanos; Echevarría followed Herrera and Quintana; Bibiana Benítez showed great enthusiasm for the lyric majesty and deep thoughts of the Calderonian muse, while Alejandrina Benítez at times reflected the lyric enthusiasm of Tula Avellaneda. Porto Rican lyric poetry, then, was born as the legitimate offspring of the same style of Spanish verse, but the former showed appreciable signs of viability.

**The Christmas Almanac.** The "Porto Rican Christmas Carols" later became a yearly publication under the name of "The Christmas Almanac," and under the direction of Don José Julián Acosta, at that time just returned from study in several European universities. He and his college mate, Don Román Baldorioty de Castro, who possessed a privileged mind, notably contributed to the literary and scientific progress of the island. Letters, poetry



IGLESIA METODISTA, SAN JUAN.  
STANDS FOR PURITY AND BEAUTY.

principally, found a great promoter at the time in Don Alejandro Tapia y Rivera who had been in Madrid where he studied to advantage and obtained experience in various styles of literature. From Spain and Cuba he returned with wide knowledge and enthusiasm which for the long period of thirty years he put into constant and vigorous action. He wrote and published important works in all styles of prose and poetry and also at different times devoted his energy to literary journalism. His works exercised favorable influence on the literary culture of the island, but the greatest influence was exercised personally by him as a mind agitator and advocate of esthetic ideas.

**Brilliant Lyric Group.** Those who took a principal part with Tapia in the noble task of enriching ideas and perfecting literary and poetic forms in Porto Rico, were the young Porto Ricans who returned to their island from Spanish universities. Among these were José G. Padilla, Rafael del Valle and Zeno Gandía, who together with Alejandrina Benítez, Brau and Gautier, composed the most characterized

group of the island's old lyrics. Also the names of Padilla Dávila, Dávila (José Jacinto), Francisco Álvarez, Monge, Sama, Domínguez, Daubón, Ferrer Hernández, Soler, Martorell y Rodríguez, should not be forgotten.

**The Revolution of '68.** The revolutionary movement of 1868 in Spain brought the freedom of the press to Porto Rico, favored the book trade, and facilitated literary studies by creating an Institute of Secondary Education, by means of which poetry and the intellectual culture of the country were greatly furthered. Literary criticism also commenced at about the same time, although in a somewhat burlesque and aggressive form, a fact which lessened its importance and the good will of others towards it.

**The Porto Rican Songster. Literary Progress.** The great progress made by lyric poetry could then be appreciated in a new collection of lyrics entitles "The Porto Rican Songster." Tapia had given the theater his romantic drama, full of passion and overdone lyricism, which was followed by others of greater dramatic intensity,\* and an extensive epic poem of symbolic nature, called "La Sataniada." Among the cultivators of the dramatic form Salvador Brau also figured at the head of the list, he having produced theatrical works of real merit.

Important literary nucleuses were formed in Mayagüez, San Juan and Ponce, and elsewhere in the island which were more or less inspired, and able poets attracted attention through the newspapers which were quite abundant at that time. The Porto Rican Atheneum also exercised powerful influence in the development of poetry, for literature and art always found a warm welcome and stimulus at this center of learning. That epoch was one of rapid and abundant growth for Porto Rican poetry, which has continued to progress with alternative periods down to the present time.

**Amy's Translations.** Amy, the poet, had returned from his long stay in the Anglo-Ameri-

\* The principal heroes of these theatrical works found adequate, vigorous and beautiful personification in Don Eugenio Astol Román, a talented Porto Rican actor, much celebrated in the island and in the principal theatres of Spanish-speaking America.

can countries. He translated valued English poems into Spanish, and by publishing them among his country-men, like Rafael Pombo, in Colombia, and Perez Bonalde, in Venezuela, he widened the poetical horizon, and added, so to say, one more string to the lyre of his island. The course of study for the Bachelor's Degree with its two years of French and English, and some Latin and Greek, notably contributed to the spreading of literature, the establishment of public libraries having also considerably aided.

**New Generation of Poets.** The generation of lyric poets immediately following, headed by Muñoz Rivera, de Diego and Esteves, all of whom recently died, has raised the credit of Porto Rican poetry. Their productions are highly praised in and out of Porto Rico, while a considerable number of their poems are gloriously mingling with those of the best present day poets of Spanish America. Another generation of young poets is now springing up, somewhat influenced by modern literary tendencies and local politics, but their high inspiration, intellectual worth and lyric sentiment, give promise of great achievements in a not distant future.

**Woman in Our Lyrics.** Woman, the natural inspirer of lyric beauty, also plays an important role in poetry, her poetical productions mingling with those of the ablest in all styles. Good proof of this statement being among others, Lola Rodríguez de Rió, Carmela Eulate, Conchita Meléndez and la Hija del Caribe.

## PROSE

**Beginning of Prose Works.** The beginning of prose writing coincides, more or less, with that of poetry in the second quarter of the XIXth century. Official, religious and other forms of prose used in public services, had existed for centuries, but no literary work in prose had been written up to that time. Prose writings were less frequent and numerous than poetry.

**The Daily Press as the Citadel of Prose.** Aside from a very few manifestations in the form of books and pamphlets the daily public press was the citadel from which Porto Rican prose writers made their first sorties.

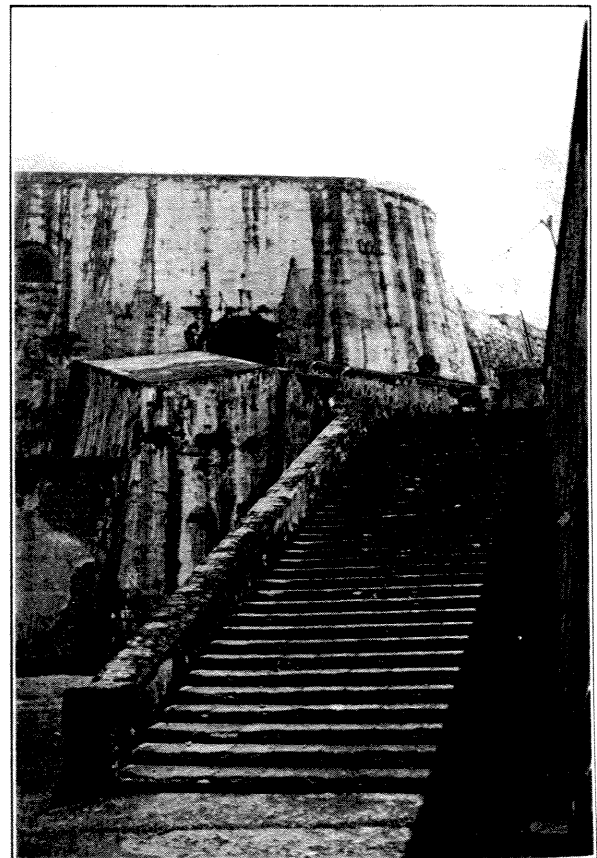
With the greater freedom of the printing law brought about by the Spanish revolution of 1868, political discussion and propaganda were initiated. On the trail of Vizcarrondo, Guasp and Asenjo, there followed the forerunners of militant political journalism, Morales and Padial, in San Juan; Freyre and Monge, in Mayagüez; Marín and Braschi, in Ponce, all of them journalists of deep thought, who were followed by numerous and valuable successors. The influence of the admirable Porto Rican author, de Hostos, was felt at about this time, although from a distance, while that of the sages Acosta and Baldorioty de Castro was more directly felt.

Literary prose, just as poetry, gained life and was nurtured and perfected, under protection of the newspapers which then existed, though with difficulty on account of the small number composing the reading public. It may be said, therefore, that the daily press of the island was if not the mother, for Spanish literature played that role, at least the loving nurse of Porto Rican literature.

**Beneficial Influence of Journalism.** Journalism is frequently accused of being the corruptor of good prose. In Porto Rico journalism has been and still is an element of order and moderation in prose writing. The decorative verbal abundance of the early literary minds made their first essays long and musical which proved a detriment to the precision of thought. Lack of native facilities for the production of books meant that the newspapers were the only medium available, and as political propaganda, news items and advertisements, reduced the available space they had to prune the unmoderate growth of such writings. As a general rule the abundant ideas, and ease and energy of expression of the good prose writers are greatly due to the influence of journalism.

**Leading Figures.** By exaggerating these details of structure now and then, it may be that journalism may somewhat limit the harmonious flight and the elegance of form of brilliant prose, but the benefit is undoubtedly greater than the harm it can have done up to this time. Journalism has formed prose writers here such as Salvador Brau, a man who possessed beautiful academic style, and who

was eloquent, expressive and vigorous; Luis Muñoz Rivera, a writer of flowing, energetic and admirably suggestive style peculiarly his own and difficult of imitation; Luis Rodríguez Cabrero whose fine humorism recalls that of the Spanish writers of the Golden Century; Coll y Toste, spontaneous and strong; Francisco del Valle Atilés, possessing a style as sober in regard to ornamentation as it is solid and rich in teachings; Eugenio Astol y Astol, elegant, pleasing and rich in images; Fernández Vanga, of handsome, courteous and subtle diction, copiously laden with ideas and dialectic recourse; González García, a describer of popular customs in plain, picturesque and festive language; Mariano Abril, who possesses a flexible and easy literary style not lacking ability and logic in discussion and rejoinder; Félix Matos Bernier, of vigorous and brilliant form, as well as rich in ideas, and Miguel Meléndez Muñoz, who displays an analytical and deep



UN DETALLE DE LAS ANTIGUAS FORTALEZAS.  
A DETAIL OF OLD SAN JUAN'S FORTIFICATIONS.

knowledge of the island's sociological problems.

The following journalists also deserve mention: Andrés Ferreris, José Llorens Echevarría, Emeterio Colón, Rodolfo Dávila, Rosendo Rivera Colón, Carlos Casanova, Juan B. Arriolla, Cruz Castro, Salvador Prats, José Contrera Ramos, Pablo Rodríguez Cabrero, Antonio Ruíz Quiñones and Arturo Córdova.

Following the course of these masters of journalism many young men of notable ability who have already gained success in dailies and reviews are making considerable progress, and will in the near future be a glory and honor to the press and to literature. Certain minds born in European Spain who took up journalism and literature in Porto Rico, are Porto Ricans to a certain extent, and they honor and exalt the letters of this region just as some sons of Porto Rico honor and exalt journalism, politics and teaching in their mother country and in Cuba.

Because of the foregoing reasons Porto Rican bibliography has not yet attained full development, but this lack is to a certain extent remedied by a flourishing journalism and the tendency of the University to develop literary taste. The modern school by incessantly multiplying the number of readers is the factor in the final victory of letters in this island.

#### ORATORY

**Influence of Sacred Style.** Sacred or ecclesiastical eloquence as practised by the Catholic missionaries who in the past accompanied the military men of the conquest, served as a stimulus and example to the people and to students from Spanish universities and those in the Seminario Conciliar. Protestant congregations already count on notable orators.

**Cultivators of Oratory.** Forensic oratory did not experience true development until the judiciary was adequately organized. From that time on Porto Ricans have the memory and the deserved fame of Eduardo Jiménez, Valdés Linares, Hernández Alvizu, García Martín, José Severo Quiñones, Salvador Mestre y Mora, Ramón Nadal and others who were

followed by a numerous and brilliant throng of eloquent lawyers who gave Porto Rican bar just fame. Some of whom like Corchado, Matienzo, de Diego, Degetau, Díaz Navarro and José Joaquín Vargas, exercised their talent in social and political assemblies, academic gatherings and literary circles.

To those names must be added those of Hernández López Barcelón, the Coll y Cuchi brothers, Tous Soto, Rafael Cuevas Zequeira, Huyke, Martínez Nadal, Martínez Dávila, Rivera Zayas and B. Fernández García, among others of the present day. Among the dead should be mentioned Rafael del Valle, Barbosa, Tomás Carrión, Pedro Fournier, and again among present day orators Veve Calzada, Sergio Cuevas Zequeira, now resident in Cuba and who has won high position among Cuban orators, Eugenio Astol and Gutiérrez Ortiz.

The island has produced good college lecturers such as Baldorioty, Acosta, Tapia, Elizaburu, López Landrón and Julio Padilla, and now has in this field such men as Font y Guillot, Toro Cuevas, González Martínez, Santoni, Muñoz Morales, Vicenty, Gonzales Ginorio, Gutiérrez Igaravidez, Gandía Córdova, Texidor, Quevedo Baez, Janer, R. Martínez Álvarez and Juan B. Soto, and also pleasant and cultured public lecturers such as Coll y Toste, Canales, Gómez Brioso, José G. Torres and Guerra Mondragón.

At present the most abundant number is that of political orators, among whom there are some already mentioned, men of great fluency and extraordinary merit, although many others perhaps deserve praise. Among the young orators of the present time Arjona Siaca, Jiménez Rivera, Coballes and Yumet, figure with deserved distinction.

To summarize, at present Porto Rico counts on elements of intellectual, social and political culture in no way inferior to those of its related peoples of America; her principal sources and manifestations of prosperity are under evident development, and her present means of literary and verbal expression are worthy of study and of sympathy.

### Porto Rico's Present Literature

By Manuel Martínez Plée,

Journalist and Violinist.

It is not the author's intention to present Porto Rico's modern literature in all its aspects, but to give an idea of the present general literary movement.

The representation of a country in the map of the world can not be as full as that in her own map. In the same way a special form of the activity of a country must be reduced to some features only in the general description of its life.

Notwithstanding that, we shall be a trifle long as we shall give names, in our natural desire to show the relative literary splendor of Porto Rico.

**Present Standing.** Porto Rico shows in the last decade, in regards to literature, the same blossoming as in other branches of her education.

Porto Rican literary men follow three general directions, which are: the classical or traditional of the former period; the Spanish American, as represented by Rubén Darío and Rodó; and those that obey their own impulse. There is also a small group of Bernard Shaw's and Oscar Wilde's admirers.

**The "Traditionalists."** The so-called "traditionalists," who follow largely Núñez de Arce style of poetry or Pereda's prose, are led by Fernández Vanga, whose writings are distinguished for their deep thought and originality of expression.

Dr. Coll y Toste, present historian of Porto Rico, is a literary and scientific writer of well known reputation in all Spanish speaking countries.

Dr. Zeno Gandía also belongs to this group. His name being widely known outside of the Island as a poet, novelist and psychologist who has pictured vivid scenes of the Island's social conditions.

A traditionalist, too, is M. González García, who ranks high as a writer of customs, especially of country-like scenes which he pictures so well in his short stories.

Mariano Abril is a thoughtful writer of easy and correct style—a splendid chronicler.

Félix Matos Bernier, an epic poet and a brilliant prose writer, ranks among the Island's most productive writers.

M. Meléndez Muñoz devotes himself largely to insular sociological problems, having done very creditable work in this line.

**Other Prose Writers.** Jacinto Texidor and Rafael Cuevas Zequeira may also be here mentioned for the refined satire of the former and the subtle sarcasm of the latter who is a keen observer of a pure style.

José Elías Levis has successfully tried the novel and the literary chronicle. Augusto Malaret is a splendid writer, who specializes on the study of the island's regional vocabulary.

Juan Braschi has a well cut pen and a fairly accurate knowledge of Porto Rico's social needs; R. Martínez Nadal is a capable critic.

The following poets follow the old Spanish classics: Clemente Ramírez, notable for his lyrical flights and the coloring of his images; J. Negrón Sanjurjo writes a delicate Castilian verse; R. Negrón Flores, whose poetical productions are so full of human nature; José Gordils, who shows delicately in his verses a profound sensibility; Ferdinand R. Cestero, flowery and youthful in his harmonious stanzas and musical rhymes; José Muñoz Rivera, a sweet and inspired singer of ideal things; Enrique Zorrilla writes gallant poetry the equal of "El Romancero;" Félix Córdova Dávila, of Horatian style; M. Martínez Roselló, whose poems commend themselves for the purity of style and their far-reaching philosophy; Ulises Olivieri follows the classics successfully; V. Rodríguez Rivera, of serene and sweet imagination; Guillermo Atilés García, and Rafael Matos Bernier, the former a composer of descriptive sonnets and the latter a poet of voluptuous verses.

Among the Spaniards who live in Porto Rico

and who devote their time to literature and are also followers of the classic school, are Manuel Fernández Juncos, a noble literary authority of the world of Cervantes; J. Pérez Losada, a brilliant writer, author of highly appreciable novels; Cristóbal Real, a poet and a critic; his brothers Romualdo and Matías, the first a prose writer, and the second a gentle poet; Carlos López de Tord, a cultivated writer with a wide conception of modern esthetics; Joaquín Barreiro, a very clever and humorous journalist; Blanco Fernández, a wide-awake and easy writer; Romualdo Vallés, both witty and congenial in prose and verse; S. Dalmau Canet, an active mind and good pen; and López Merjeliza, a very prolific writer.

**The "Modernists."** The second group is that of the so-called "modernists," the admirers of Rubén Darío or better yet, of Verlaine as interpreted by the former. This group is largely made up of poets and the prose writers following after José Enrique Rodó.

It should be noted that this modernists group is largely made up of young men who though educated in English, do not follow Emerson nor Edgar Allan Poe's models.

It could be said that Evaristo Ribera Chevre-mont is the leader of this school of impressionists rather than of symbolists, if by impressionism is understood the tendency to take from things that which strikes the soul but that the senses do not usually perceive.

Luis Palés Matos is another young writer with an ardent imagination and who is already a master in this difficult technique.

De Diego Padró has excelled in this art with his verses of voluptuous paganism.

Jesús María Lago, a colorist poet, is another brilliant representative of this school.

The representatives of the Sevillian school have a noted pupil in Rafael Martínez Alvarez, with his humorously rich poems.

La Hija del Caribe, like a lyrical sparrow flies over all meadows.

Gustavo Fort earnestly clings to far reaching and abstract writings.

Another group of young poets who also follow these new paths of beauty and art are:

Carlos N. Carreras, whose verses show a

careful study of the new technique and who has an easy going way of writing, like a Greek poet; Arturo Gómez Costa has abandoned the exaggerated sensuality of that art to fly to noble ideals; José J. Rivera, of a melancholy and sweet inspiration; M. Martínez Dávila, a poet who writes sincere and sentimental love poems; Antonio Miranda, fluent, melodious and romantic; Antonio Coll Vidal, the author of a volume of verses prologued by Amado Nervo, is the author of virile stanzas; F. Negróni Mattei, an exquisite subtle poet; Ortiz Stella, deeply emotional; J. Yumet Méndez, of a vehement lyrical mind; Ramírez Brau writes regarding civic matters with sincerity and earnestness; Nicolás Rivas, vehement and sweet; Manuel Benítez Flores, a poet of a vigorous graphic power of mind; F. Amadeo, author of beautiful stanzas; José A. Alegría, a poet of intense vibrations; Fernando Torgrosa, whose verses are easy and melodious.

Among the prose writers of this new school mention should be made of Enrique Lefebre, an easy writer, with special ability for literary criticism; Luis Samalea Iglesias, who expresses artistically deep and beautiful things; Luis Villaronga, a romantic and rhythmic prose writer; Lidio Cruz Monclova, the author of a series of works regarding Porto Rican popular songs; M. Ríos Ocaña, a writer of imaginative tales; Bolívar Pagán devotes himself chiefly to history; Felipe Jiménez Rivera, a noteworthy writer of short tales; J. Valdejulli writes about the psychology of scenes and individuals.

**Followers of No School.** Among those who follow no school rank: Luis Llorens Torres, the most noted Porto Rican poet, undoubtedly, except Gautier and Virgilio Dávila. More, he is the singer of the Antilles, the first to dedicate a poem to them. His "Canción de las Antillas" (Song of the Antilles), praised in Paris by Rubén Darío and his friends, is at present what in the last century was Andrés Bello's song of the tropics, though more intense.

Eugenio Astol, a prose writer of faultless language, his style being delicate and precise; a poet, a philosopher and a mystic of magnificent visions.



Virgilio Dávila belongs to this independent family, a word painter of ideals and of nature, of what he dreams and what he sees, with the mastery of the artists of the Renaissance.

Antonio Pérez Pierret, a vigorous and sentimental poet, a follower of Hegel, though he tries it not; a modern Heraclitus.

Father Rivera, a patriotic poet of admiration, whose verses are harmonious and perfect in language and metrical art.

Nicolás Blanco, a poet who expresses his ideals and feelings in his own personal style.

José Luis Muñoz Marín is a young modern poet.

José Balseiro also belongs to this list as he has a style of his own, both in prose and poetry.

Jorge Adsuar, too, the most original of the Island's chroniclers, always cheerful, witty and interesting.

**The English Group.** Among the admirers of

Bernard Shaw the most conspicuous is Nemesio Canales, who though naturally merry, is a disappointed sentimentalist.

Hearty admirers of Oscar Wilde are the brothers Miguel and Benjamín Guerra, who have been in the United States for a long time and possess a mastery of the English language. Though fond of the old romantic Porto Rican style they yet admire the strength and youth of other literature.

**Another Group of Writers.** A notable group who devote their efforts to philosophy or politics and who deserve mention because of their production is composed of José Coll Vidal, a young and very intelligent debator and an expounder of political problems; Pedro Sierra (Luis Dalta) a non-conformist, always struggling against social unfairness; E. Colón Baerga, a journalist who writes on current events with accuracy; M. Guzmán Rodríguez, a thoughtful writer, an authority on Porto



CASAS ESTILO ULTRAMODERNO.—A GEM OF THE CONDADO DISTRICT.

Rican history; Angel Paniagua, Basilio Vélez, Angel Acosta Quintero and Carmelo Martínez Acosta, deserve due credit for their splendid work regarding the Island's historical annals; José González Ginorio, an authority on education; Juan B. Huyke, who prefers the clear and simple forms of expression; Juan B. Soto, interested mostly in philosophic matters; José G. Torres and Modesto Cordero advocate free thought, and express themselves clearly; Luis Muñoz Morales and Cayetano Coll y Cuchí have produced noteworthy works on jurisprudence, in relation to the status of Porto Rico.

**Conclusion.** The Porto Rican literature of today is in the main brilliant, but it could well be invigorated by the proper touch of the new civilization which tends to influence thought in the Island.

"To renew or to die," said D'Annunzio. Ver-

laine is the weakened link of a literary school whose climax was Victor Hugo and that, before Mme. de Stael and Chateaubriand, was initiated by Voltaire, l'Abbé Prévost, Grimm and others. These latter writers had to emigrate to England for various reasons, there to find new vital elements to stop the decadence of Delille and other writers of the Louis XV period.

The so-called classical traditions in Porto Rico are really those of the Spanish nineteenth century, largely the same as France's in that century. It would be better if we would resort to the genuine Spanish source of the times of the Felipes, as that was an epoch of sound literary health and strength, instead of allowing ourselves to be charmed by literary fads, especially when literature in Porto Rico, rather than a vocation, is largely a pastime.

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## Porto Rican Musical Art

By **Aristides Chavier,**

Musician and Composer.

**The Birth of Porto Rican Musical Art.** Just as in the case of all primitive peoples, the Church was the cradle of Porto Rican musical art. Since the Church is the source of all artistic manifestations, the first stammerings of universal art were heard therein, and this is consequently true of Porto Rican musical art. Judging from information obtained from documents in the archives, Porto Rican musical art dwelt exclusively in the sphere of religious cult from the period of colonization to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Liturgical chant being the first manifestation of genuine art, it is easy to deduce that society in the past, and, consequently, our forefathers, could find the highest expression of their intimate emotions only in sacred song.

Hence, liturgical chant, the basis of profane, popular art, was our ancestors' only artistic musical manifestation. Profane, popular melody was derived from liturgical monody. When in its progressive evolution it experienced the rhythmic and cadent influence of profane dances, which are the expression of the art of

gesture, it came to constitute the basis of modern musical art. The first manifestations of profane musical art, therefore, grew out of primitive dances, the rhythm, structure and characteristics of which are essentially different from the austere form of religious art.

**First Manifestations of Musical Art. Real Artistic Development.** It was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that the first manifestations of an incipient musical art were begun to appear in the island. By introducing the songs of their sections of the home countries, important numbers of immigrants from the southern part of Spain and from neighboring countries of the South American continent exercised decisive influence on the cultural environment of Porto Rico. It may be properly deduced that such songs gradually gained in favor with the people of the island and acquired letters of naturalization here, later on to become fused with the native songs which were still rudimentary and almost without typical character. This is where Porto Rico's musical evolution commenced.

But it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that real artistic progress was observed in Porto Rico, as revealed by different musical contests and by the visits to

of a Fair and Exposition held in the capital city of the island. The most noted artists of the island took part in this contest, the glory of victory having gone to the pianists and com-



CASA RESIDENCIA DE DON GUILLERMO SCHUCK.—A MARKED AIR OF BEAUTY.

the island of renowned foreign artists, among whom were the famous pianist and composer, Louis Moreau Gottschalk, and the celebrated singer, Adeline Patti, who was then in the dawn of her brilliant artistic career.

At that time educational centers existed in the more important towns of Porto Rico, where musical art was more or less efficiently cultivated. The city of Arecibo was the first to establish a school of music from which a number of promising pupils issued. The cities of San Juan, Mayaguez, Ponce, Caguas and Humacao afterwards awakened to the civilizing influence of musical art and proceeded to direct the artistic temperament of Porto Ricans through the channels of study and good taste.

**New Artistic Progress.** An event revealing the artistic culture of the times was the musical contest held in June, 1865, on the occasion

of a Fair and Exposition held in the capital city of the island. The most noted artists of the island took part in this contest, the glory of victory having gone to the pianists and composers, Manuel G. Tavarez and Heraclio Ramos. The former was awarded a gold medal for his composition "Marcha Fúnebre de Campeche," and the latter a gold-filled medal for his concert variations on the English anthem, "God Save the King." Among the judges were Aurelio Dueño and Felipe Gutiérrez y Espinosa.

Gutiérrez was a composer prominent in different styles of composition, chiefly in that of sacred music, which he enriched by a number of works that have given him fame and imperishable prestige. It may be stated that he was one of the glories of Porto Rico, since he contributed efficiently to the development of native musical art, as evidenced by the establishment, due to his initiative, of an academy of music in San Juan. This academy was closed a few years after its organization on account

of the discontinuance of the subvention granted to it, which was indispensable to its existence.

**Outside Influence. New Impulse.** About the year 1875 musical progress in Porto Rico became much more evident. An Italian opera company appeared in the city of Ponce in 1877, it being made up of artists of importance who contributed to the development of a taste for *bal canto*. The visit of these foreign artists was quite beneficial, since it stimulated the organization of theatrical enterprises which sought in European centers, especially in Italy, the cradle of art, such lyric companies as could fully present the old as well as the modern repertoires of the Italian school. Contact of our composers with these artists had a beneficial influence on the development of the art of the country.

Manuel G. Tavarez, pianist and composer, who had returned some years since from the Paris Conservatory of Music, where he pursued his studies with brilliant success, was the leading figure in the field of art at this time. In addition to his exceptional endowments, this artist possessed the gift of adaptation to environment, then pregnant with Italian influences and with the reigning morbidity of the *danza*, the typical dance of the country. Tavarez received unanimous homage of admiration from the Porto Rican public, and on his death left a number of compositions, among which are his great triumphal prize march "Redención," his "Aires del País," and his *danzas* "Margarita" and "Ausencia," all of which brought him renown.

**Musical Contest of 1882.** In 1882 the city of Ponce held a Fair and Exposition which clearly showed the city's progress in the different branches of human activity. As an important part of the celebration a musical contest was organized to which all composers residing in Porto Rico were invited. The success of the undertaking was flattering. At this musical contest honors were conferred on composers Juan Morell Campos for his orchestra overture "La Lira"; Manuel G. Tavarez, for his march "Redención"; Casimiro Duchesne, for a concert overture; Fermín Toledo, for a concert polonaise; José Argulló Prats, for a romance for song and piano, and Eduardo Cue-

vas, for his overture "Loarina." The two most important orchestras of the island took part in the celebration, and both received the recognition due to their merits.

Following immediately upon this artistic event, Juan Morell Campos, perhaps the most notable musical genius Porto Rico has produced, began to reveal his great ability, and on the death of his predecessor, Tavarez, Campos succeeded to the throne of artistic representation in Porto Rico.

Adapting himself to the characteristics of environment, he wrote numberless *danzas* and caused the evolution of this form of musical expression by clothing it in a rhythical and cadent robe undreamed of by those who had preceded him. He cultivated the *danza*, with true love and efficiency. But following the impulse of his artistic conscience and after having partaken of the nutritive sap offered by the classical works of the great masters, he also cultivated the symphonic and sacred styles, and upon his death left a large number of compositions, among which his march "Juegos Florales," his overture "La Lira," and his symphony "Puerto Rico," all meriting honors, stand out prominently.

**Popular Songs.** Among the popular songs of past years are found the "Aguinaldos," "Seis Chorreado" and "Coplas Jíbaras." But "La Borinqueña" is the popular melody which most subjugated the souls of our ancestors and which at the present time still continues to merit special favor because of the power of its symbolic significance. In the minds of the people this simple melody written by the Catalonian artist, Félix Astol, notwithstanding its sad and plaintive nature, embodies Porto Rican patriotic sentiment. This song, which in past times of suspicion and accusation provoked the enmity of power, has imposed itself on the people not because of its mournful and cadent tones, but because of the memories it evokes in Porto Rican souls. A poem of rebellion having been adopted to the music, the song was at one time the object of persecution. On this does the popularity enjoyed by it since then depend, the song being considered by some as the patriotic hymn of the island.

**Porto Rican Singers.** The art of *bel canto*

has also been cultivated by our society. To do this it has been necessary to resort to foreign educational centers, where our leading singers have received instruction.

Among such leading singers we shall mention as the outstanding figure, Antonio Paoli, a dramatic tenor of great renown and a glory of world scenic art. Paoli has been acclaimed by European as well as by American publics. Amalia Paoli has also excelled as a notable mezzo-soprano, and has merited the applause of foreign publics. Mention must also be made of Asela Menchaca, a lyric soprano; Alicia and Palmira Felici, sisters, the first of whom studied at the Paris Conservatory with great success; Margarita Callejo, a soprano who studied in Milán; Teresina Moreno Calderón, who studied in Madrid, and Mrs. Lizzie Graham, who also studied in Europe and who has withdrawn from artistic activities in which she labored efficiently for many years.

**Piano Studies.** Beginning in the latter half of the past century piano studies developed perceptibly within the taste prevailing at the time, which was of absolute Italian tendency. Transcriptions for the piano on operatic themes, aside from the creole dance, were the most powerful incentive of the cultivators of the art. Among others, Prudent, Fumagelli, Thalberg, Gottschalk and Gorla were the favorite authors of these times.

Important personalities figured among the teachers. In the first place should be mentioned the pianist and composer, Manuel G. Tavarez, who graduated an important contingent of notable pupils. In more modest spheres were Ignacio Otero, of Humacao; José Álvarez, of Caguas, and Pedro Gabriel Carreras, José Forns, Oriol Pasarell and Eduardo Cuevas, of Ponce. Also among the teachers was the pianist and composer, Fermín Toledo, honored in Madrid, who gave perceptible impulse to musical art in Porto Rico by having formed an efficient orchestra which attracted attention and was an honor to the city of San Juan, where it was organized.

But it was subsequent to this period that piano studies were established on a stable basis, the prevailing archaic taste having been ban-

ished to make room for instruction based on the classical principles heralded by European conservatories. Among those who took the lead in this evolution were Gonzalo de J. Nuñez, a notable pianist and composer who pursued his musical studies in the Paris Conservatory and devoted many years of his life to teaching in New York; Julio C. de Arteaga, a pianist, composer and organist, and a very learned musician who was honored by the Paris Conservatory of Music, where he studied; Ana Otero, pianist and composer, who also studied in Paris where she obtained brilliant ratings, and Elisa Tavarez de Storer, a pianist and teacher honored by the Conservatory of Music of Madrid, who is one of the glories of Porto Rico, and perhaps the most notable pianist our country has produced.

Among other teachers devoted to giving instruction on the piano should be mentioned José I. Quintón, pianist and composer of unquestionable merit; Arturo Pasarell, an experienced pianist, composer and organist; Federico Ramos, pianist and composer; Mercedes Arias, pianist and composer; Monserrate Ferrer, a pianist and composer who studied in Europe; Sisila Arce de Astol, a favorite pianist; Trinidad Padilla (La Hija del Caribe), a pianist, a musician, writer and poetess of singular prominence; Alicia Sicardó, pianist, and Antonia V. Candamo, a pianist.

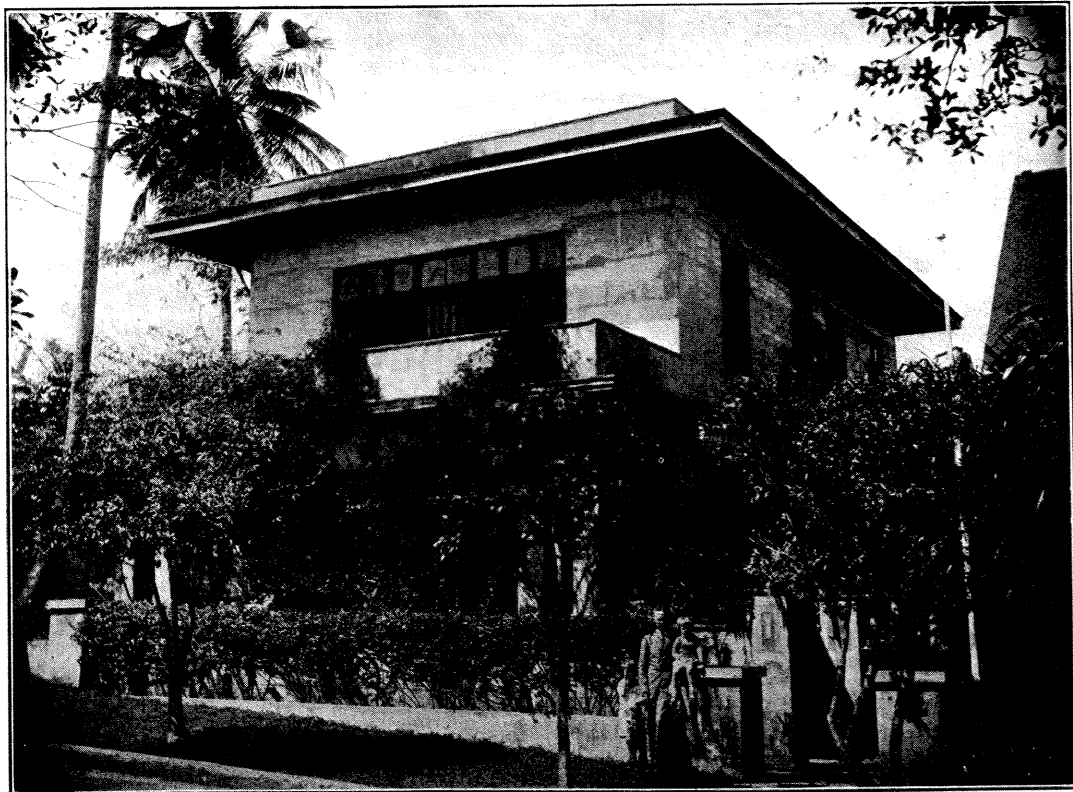
**Deceased Artists. Their Ability.** Besides the loss of Gutiérrez, Tavarez, Campos, Nuñez and Heraclio Ramos, Porto Rican art has suffered that of other prominent figures, among whom may be mentioned Casimiro Duchesne, a composer and efficient instrumentalist; Modesto Rivera and Angel Celestino Morales, two virtuosos on the violin, who studied with high honors in Madrid; Francisco Verar, orchestra leader and bandmaster; Francisco Dulievre, violinist and orchestra leader; Aberano Colón, violinist; Cosme Tizol, clarinetist; Juan Santaella, violoncellist, and Angel Mislán and Damián Caballero, instrumentalists and composers.

**Contemporary Figures.** Below are the names of other artists who at present do honor to Porto Rican art in different activities:

Braulio Dueño Colón, a flutist, composer and writer, who has won prizes in several contests and is a didactic author whose ability has been proclaimed by great foreign masters; Manuel Rodríguez Arresón, a composer, writer and orchestra leader, who has been laboring efficiently in behalf of Antillian art ever since he finished his studies in Europe; Fernando Callejo, a violinist, pianist and composer, from the Conservatory of Madrid, and author of the book entitled "Porto Rican Music and Musicians," the most important work of this kind published in Porto Rico; Pedro Arcélagos, an honored composer residing in Venezuela, where he enjoys deserved fame; Luis A. Miranda, a composer and orchestra leader who for many years led the Porto Rico Regiment Band and the orchestra of the formerly flourishing "Club Armónico" of San Juan; Manuel Tizol, composer and orchestra leader; Juan Ríos Ovalle, clarinetist and composer; Jaime Pericás, violinist, composer and teacher of music in the Ponce schools; Francisco Cortés, a

pianist, composer and orchestra leader from the Paris Conservatory; Manuel Martínez Plée, a violinist, brilliant writer, learned musician and linguist; Rafael Balseiro Dávila, a well known pianist and composer; Julián Andino, a favorite violinist and composer; José Figueroa, a young violinist of great ability who has merited much applause in foreign lands; Enrique Simón, flutist, composer and orchestra leader; Ramón Morla, composer and orchestra leader; Simón Madera, instrumentalist and composer, and Domingo Cruz, violoncellist and leader of the municipal band of Ponce.

**Final Considerations.** Musical contests have succeeded each other on the island at certain intervals. The different social centers have always given them beneficial impulse, especially the Casinos of Ponce, Mayaguez, Manatí and Bayamón, which have usually taken a prominent part in these musical tourneys. But it is undeniable that over and above these social institutions the Porto Rican Atheneum has always stood out singularly as the foyer of the



EN SIMPATÍA CON EL AMBIENTE.—A DELIGHTFUL HOME ENHANCED BY APPROPRIATE PLANTING.



EXPOSICIÓN HISPÁNICA.—"THE MOVING PICTURE ROUTE TO PORTO RICO".

country's culture, and that from the date of its foundation to the present time, it has given loving impulse to all manifestations of the spirit and especially to musical art which it has very ostensibly fostered.

The musical contest initiated and successfully carried out by the former "Liga Progresista de Ponce" in 1913, figures among the artistic events of more recent years. This contest once more brought out the special ability of Portoricans in the cultivation of musical art, without excluding the higher symphonic forms.

Summarizing, it may be said that musical art in Porto Rico has been in gradual evolu-

tion up to the last few years. We must acknowledge, however, that the difference between the taste of past spiritual times and the taste now reigning in our materialistic age is most decided, many factors having contributed to this condition. Enthusiasm and liking for musical art, which as we all know, is the force that gives light and vigor to the spirit and which idealizes our life by bringing it in contact with the noblest and sublimest revelations of the supraearthly world having been weakened here as elsewhere it is clear that our moral environment must become narrower each day, unless healthy reaction sets in

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## Painting

By Jesús María Lago,

Poet and Author. President of the Porto Rican Atheneum.

It is a strange fact that in an island whose inhabitants are so gifted for the fine arts, they should not be intensively cultivated and should be in an almost deplorable state of neglect in Porto Rico.

Poetry, music and a few other manifestations of beauty scattered here and there receive preference, because as a general rule, the natural tendency of those devoted to such studies find in artistic organization itself the vehicle con-

ducting them to a greater or lesser development of their powers, without foreign aid.

But in regard to painting, the everlasting lack of well-paid artists in the island to teach this important branch of the fine arts, is a lamentable truth.

Undoubtedly, painters were unnecessary to the men of arms who enlisted for the great American adventure. At least, we must suppose that they did not come to this island

at the time, nor do we believe that it occurred to the great representatives of the Spanish plastic art of the times to take part in the warring adventure of conquering the New World. The mission of artists is to produce in peace and love. Neither did the different continental nations formed under the banners of the conquerors pay much attention to these exquisite manifestations of cultured peoples, this being due to the process of their own formation. Art was abandoned to its own fate and the world's most beautiful legend failed of record on canvas or in stone, while the eloquent virginity of such fantastic lands and the sublime exaltation of so many deeds of extraordinary valor and heroism were being offered to it for glorious illustration.

Later on, after these countries began to establish their own personality, a desire for beauty rose out of the cinders of combat and the shades of neglect, to create that Hellenic medium to which the peoples of the earth will always be entitled just as soon as they victoriously awake from the gross sleep of usury and hatred.

But this seems to be almost the exclusive privilege of great, strong and free peoples. The arts, delicate virgins as they are, by a curious law of contrast, prefer in their interpreters and lovers a vigorous hand and impetuous spirit. Thus it is explained that only such countries as possess these conditions can produce the overwhelming type of artist, and such countries alone can build a proper temple in which to permanently lodge these favorite deities.

In Porto Rico, the isle of enchantment and the active center of gain and speculation, the trail of art is still quite entangled, while neither the hand of intellect, of money nor of politics has been generously outstretched to aid in clearing the wild flora blocking the way of sterile conventionality.

**Porto Rican Painters.** Notwithstanding existing conditions and in spite of indifference and ingratitude, a goodly number of painters have flourished in this island as roses bursting spontaneously into bloom for our benefit and to our pride. Among these painters there are two who because of the great merit of their

work and given the medium in which they developed their powers, well deserve to be considered and held as true glories of Porto Rico.

**José Campeche.** One of these distinguished artists was José Campeche and the other Francisco Oller. The former lived from 1752 to 1809, and the latter from 1833 to 1917.

In his biography of Campeche, Don Alejandro Tapia, writing in honor of the artist on request of the Board of Development in 1854, states that this great artist showed his ability at a very early age; that he formed an environment appropriate for the free exercise of his inclinations, because he was the son of a man who at that time carried on in San Juan the work of a painter, gilder and decorator, and who, also, did other work in which the colors of his palette took quite an important part. In the paternal home Campeche found, therefore, a spirit not in conflict with his own, and he thus grew, dreamed, worked and enriched the first page of the history of our art.

Because of his education and temperament Campeche was a mystic painter. He handled his brushes with great ease and always used fine, transparent colors. On small boards or sheets of copper prepared by himself he painted sorrowing madonnas and resigned saints of deeply blessed expression, which still ornament the oratories of many distinguished families of this island, Venezuela, Cuba and Santo Domingo.

During the first years of his career, he was without a teacher, and had nothing in his reach that could give him wise counsel, guided only by his own impulse, his paintings formed an epoch. On the arrival in Porto Rico of the celebrated painter Don Luis Paret Alcázar, deported by the Court of Spain, he immediately recognized in Campeche the genius with which the latter had been gifted. He made Campeche his friend, and conveyed to him a knowledge of those secrets of technique which definitely marked out his second most worthy epoch.

Campeche's most noted works are: La Caída del Angel (The Angel's Fall); Sitio de los Ingleses (The British Siege); El Naufragio de Power (Power's Shipwreck); La Virgen de los Angeles (The Madonna of the Angels); La Virgen de Belén (The Madonna of Bethle-





ESCUELA DE PINTURA DEL RENOMBRADO PINTOR DÍAZ MCKENNA. A NOTED PAINTER AND HIS STUDENTS.

hem); San Francisco (St. Francis), and San Estéban (St. Stephen).

**Francisco Oller.** The artistic work of Don Francisco Oller more profusely and significantly fills the era in which Porto Rico acquired sufficient importance to serve as a frame for the work of her favorite artist.

At the age of twelve and under the incomplete direction of his first teacher of drawing, Don Juan Noa, Oller took up painting for the churches, and also of portraits and landscapes. His success in the art was surprising. With the funds obtained from his first works he went to Madrid in 1851, and there entered the School of Fine Arts of San Fernando, where his teacher was Don Federico de Madrazo, the leading Spanish painter of his age. In 1858 Oller went to Paris where he entered the studio of Mr. Thomas Couture, with whom he remained for three years. He then became a disciple of Mr. Gustavo Courbet, under whom he studied four years. In 1865 he offered to

his country the seasoned fruits of his knowledge by preparing several paintings that were in due time admitted in the Salón de París. In 1878 Oller exhibited his pictures at the palace of "La Correspondencia de España," and obtained, in addition to a heralded public victory, the Cross of Charles III, granted by the King. Members of the royal family, the aristocracy and the most intelligent persons of Madrid acquired his pictures. The press in general made such comment and criticism of the exhibition as to do honor to the artist. In 1895 he exhibited his "El Velorio" (The Wake) in Havana and met with great success, and the following year he took the picture to Paris where it was praised by the intellectual élite of that city.

Oller was a realistic painter. His brush was wont to criticize such customs as were in conflict with the civilization of his country. The tints of his palette were always in rivalry with those of its skies, gardens and mountains.

Oller was great, generous and good. He founded drawing and painting schools in San Juan and had notable pupils.

His principal works are: *Las Tinieblas*, *Un Boca Abajo*, *Carga de Treviño*, *Una Chula*, *Interior of the Palace of Alcañices*, *Un Cesante*, *El Almuerzo del Pobre*, *El Almuerzo del Rico*, his auto-portrait, *Un Nido a la Sombra de un Arbol* and *El Velorio*, the last being a picture of large dimensions now in the drawing-room of the University of Porto Rico.

**Mario Brau.** In addition to the two artists above referred to, and as a better response to the cultural development of the country, Mario Brau appears as an impeccable pen and ink artist and water colourist. He comes from a family of ingenious and talented men. His grandfather was a teacher of decorative arts, his father a poet, and an uncle studied with Madrazo achieving great success.

Mario Brau went to Spain where he entered the School of Fine Arts of San Fernando and received instruction from Cecilio Plá and from Pellicor. He worked, observed, copied and in 1892 exhibited a magnificent collection of aquarelles at the biennial exposition of the "Círculo de Bellas Artes," where he won a medal of the third class. He was then obliged to return to Porto Rico, his studies unfinished and his dreams unaccomplished.

**Ramón Frade, a Vigorous Artist.** According to information Frade was the pupil of the Dominican painter Desangles. He is doing good work in Santo Domingo, where he painted the presidential palace and produces delicate and pure images. He is proficient in aquarelles and his drawing is of the most correct style. Through the efforts of Governor Winthrop, Frade went to Italy, but had to return in broken health just as he began to nourish his intelligence from the works of the classical artists. He is a cultured, discreet and modest artist.

Of those we know, his principal works are: *El Pan Nuestro* (Our Daily Bread); *Reverie*, *La Inmaculada* (The Immaculate), and a few others.

**Miguel Pou.** Miguel Pou, of Ponce, excels in his exquisite taste and his delicate execution. He learned from a portrait painter called Glibau, and later from Meana, a Spanish professor. Pou then visited New York and entered the 59th Street School of Art, where he finished his studies. His specialty is portrait painting.

**Adolfo Marín and J. Cuchí.** Adolfo Marín and J. Cuchí are Porto Rican artists, but their entire work has been given to France and Spain. They are splendid painters who honor their country.

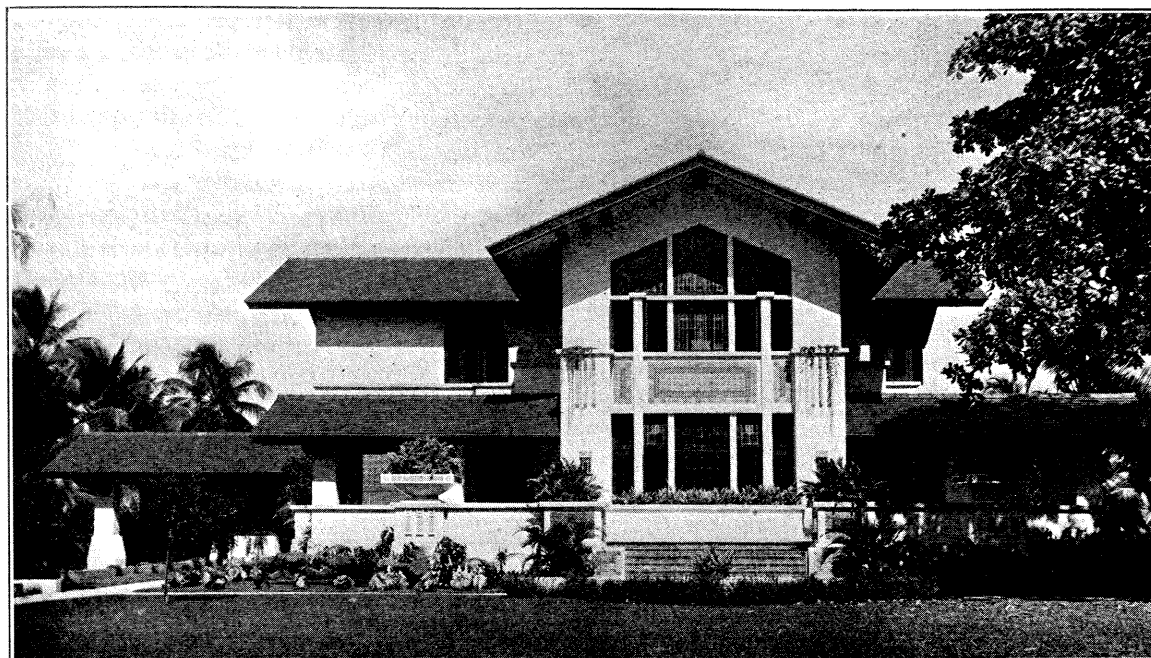
**Juan N. Ríos.** Juan N. Ríos, of Ponce, was a scenographic painter who had no teachers, but who painted with great ability and taste. His sons are at present engaged in the artistic profession. There are two brothers, Félix and Julio Medina, who have also done good work and who are now engaged in architectural and construction work.

**López de Victoria.** López de Victoria does intensive labor in the painting of portraits, the only branch he follows. There are a number of other cultivators of the art whom we have not mentioned, although they are modest contributors to the spiritual welfare of the island.

**Foreign Artists.** A number of foreign artists have visited the island, coming from the United States, Spain and other lands, have copied the beauties of our landscapes and the simplicity of our customs, or have enriched the homes of families of means by the addition of good portraits of ancestors and of present representatives.

Francisco Villaraza, a Spanish painter who in 1885 made a tour of the island with great personal benefit to himself, figures among these artists.

And at present lives on the island the distinguished painter from Madrid, Fernando Díaz Mackenna, who cooperates with great enthusiasm and deep faith in the artistical progress of Porto Rico, by giving lessons to a group of youths and by aiding the Atheneum in the celebration of yearly exhibitions which are leaving a beautiful trail in the island's pictorial field.



ELEGANTE RESIDENCIA DE LA FAMILIA KORBER.—A GOOD TYPE OF ULTRA MODERN ARCHITECTURE.

## Architecture and Architects in Porto Rico

By A. Nechodoma, A.I.A.,

Member American Institute of Architects.

**Prevailing Styles of Architecture.** There are three prevailing styles of architecture in Porto Rico, the ancient Spanish, the Spanish American and the ultramodern style, influenced by Japanese and Rhutanesse feeling.

Unquestionably the most unique of all are the Old Spanish style buildings transplanted to this beautiful island by the ancient Spanish Dons and the Mission Fathers. The steady warmth and brilliant sunshine of this tropical island was exceedingly favorable to such a style and its beautiful forms and vivid coloring are in perfect harmony with its local environment.

All of the Roman Catholic Churches in nearly every town on the Island and nearly all of the public buildings in the city of San Juan, including Casa Blanca and the Governor's Palace were built in this ancient but charming style.

It is a great pity that many of the beauti-

ful churches on the west side of the Island were destroyed during the earthquake in 1918, but the greater part of them however, are in excellent condition.

**Examples of Old Style Spanish Architecture.** Among the best examples of this style see following illustrations: Casa Blanca, City Gate of San Juan, Church at San Germán, Church at Bayamón, La Carmelita Convent, San Juan and Church at Pueblo Viejo.

**Spanish American Style.** The class of house architecture, the Spanish American style evolved from the rather primitive forms of the original quasi-Spanish buildings of this section, show extremely thoughtful and intelligent work and is in a high degree artistic and interesting.

Among these are numbered the following: Presbyterian Hospital, San Juan; Missionary Rest Home, Aibonito; Robinson Orphanage,

San Juan; Blanche Kellogg Institute, San Juan; and many of the school buildings on the Island.

**The Ultra Modern Style.** The ultra modern types of residence architecture however, originated during the last ten years. It being a style which belongs truly to the present concrete age and is an expression both of beauty and utility.

It was really during the building slump about ten years ago, that the architect suddenly realized the necessity to economize and to give the people of Porto Rico the maximum space for every dollar invested.

However, the change from the soft curved lines to the rigid straight lines was at the time considered radical and even dangerous from the popular type of the period. Nevertheless, concrete construction demanded simplicity in lines and ornament and the Porto Rican architects have nobly responded to the additional task placed upon them, namely: to create charm and harmony conceived in straight lines and proportion.

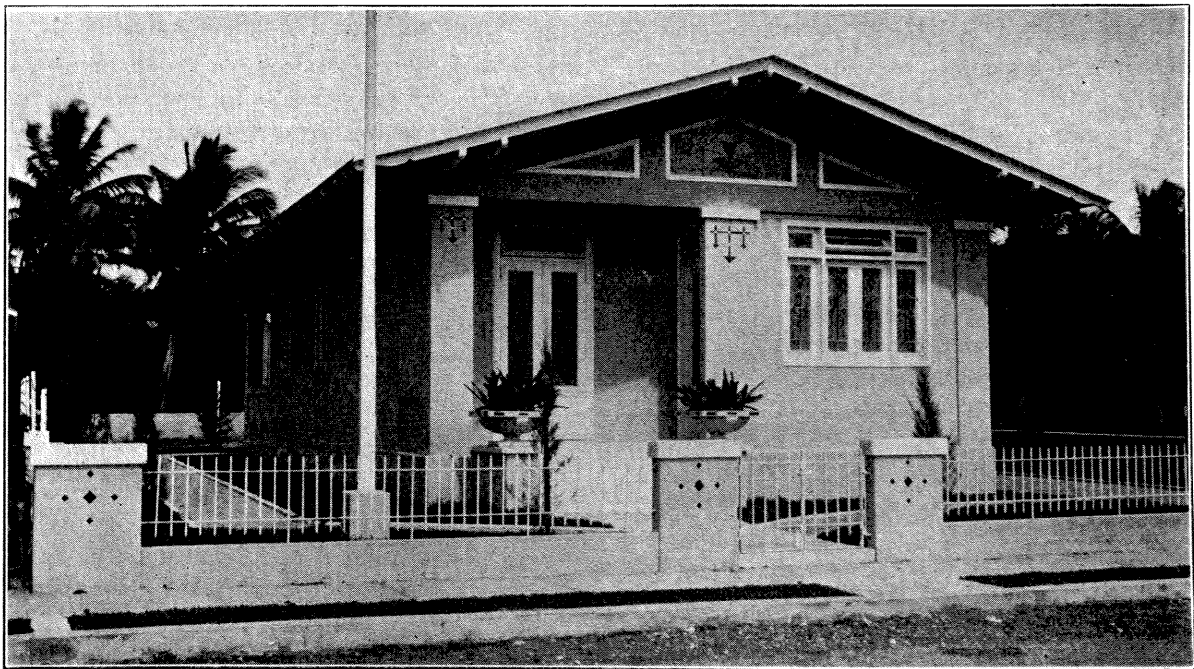
With splendid co-operation of the builders, they have created a "style" nameless as yet,

but beautiful in its simplicity. A style founded upon the urgent needs of the people who have chosen this tropical island for their abode.

Due to the tropical light so injurious to the white races in the tropics, all houses are darkened and the excess of light avoided as much as possible. Instead of glass windows shutters with movable slats are substituted where found practical. Where light is required the glass used is usually colored—light brown or moss green cathedral glass being used.

**Pearl Shell Windows.** On account of the translucent and resilient quality and iridescent lustre of the Philippine pearl shell the same is now being greatly substituted for glass this past year, and the appearance of such windows full of rainbow tones are artistic indeed.

**Details of Construction Features.** The walls of buildings are usually built in re-inforced concrete calculated to withstand the ordinary vibrations of an earthquake. All roofs are low pitched and covered either in tile or asphalt crushed slate covered shingles. Cornices are heavily projected to protect the walls, and all openings from the vertical rays of the sun dur-



"LAS DECORACIONES DE MOSAICO SON DE GRAN EFECTO."  
"COLORED MOSAIC PANELS USED FOR EXTERIOR DECORATIONS."

ing the noon hours, or in the hottest part of the day. The roof, with its cornices and ceilings, is as a rule sealed with V joint boards forming a dead air space between the ceiling and the roof line, further to protect the interior against the heat ray of the sun. Nearly all windows and door openings have movable transoms which reach to the ceiling line thus affording the best of ventilation. The floors of all porches, kitchens, pantries, servants' quarters, etc., are usually ceramic tile. The bathrooms and kitchens are wainscoted to the height of five feet with white glazed tile and equipped with up-to-date sanitary fixtures.

**Decorative Tendency.** Influenced perhaps by the gorgeous and vivid colors of the tropical growth, whose flowers and foliage are most exquisite, the resident of the Island has a tendency towards vivid and bright colors, and the architect of today is using decorative colored mosaic glass panels for exterior decoration—thus relieving the rather cold and monotonous surfaces of the concrete walls. Such mosaic decoration properly designed is certainly most effective and certainly most desirable.

**Some Examples of Standard Modern Construction.** The type of the above described buildings is exemplified in the accompanying illustrations and may be considered standard modern construction of the residential districts in San Juan and Ponce. Among these are: Wm. Korber's Residence, San Juan; Eduardo Giorgetti's Residence, San Juan; Architect's Residence, Monte Flores; Carlos McCormick's Residence, San Juan; Rafael Carrión Residence, Condado; Henri Brown Residence, Condado; Hotel for Girls, Río Piedras; Madam Luchetti Residence, Condado; Henry Molina Residence, Condado, Miss Blanca Gurach Residence, Kings Court; Dr. Mehrhof Residence, Monte Flores; Francisco Soto Gras Residence, Condado.

There are of course many other beautiful residences on the Island, but perhaps these illustrations are the most typical expressions.

It will be understood from these and the description that the architects of Porto Rico are building homes of permanent construction, not a temporary housing, which instill in the human mind a feeling of permanency and security.

