

Americans Find a Certain Languorous Latin Charm in Porto Rican Life

Many Tourists from This Land Settle Down for a Prolonged Stay in the Pretty Little Island.

By Frederick Dean.

WHEN Ponce de Leon landed on the island of Porto Rico his first request was for something to eat "that tasted of the ground." And the story goes on to say that his chef sent out three men—one to seek green herbs and salads, one for fresh meat and a third to fish in the waters of the bay. When the master sat down to his first dinner ashore there were set before him gold fish and bullet browned in the pan, succulent greens for his soup, crisp lettuce for his salad, the fish of kids for his roast and fresh goat's milk to drink. From that day to this epicureanism has flourished on the island, and to-day there can be found everywhere at one's elbow from San Juan to Ponce, in the mountains or down by the sea, dishes fit for the most fastidious of palates. Even back in the interior are faithful followers of Apicius, and in the little towns that dot the shore are chefs that, in their limited sphere, are as famous for their entrees and entrees, their rôtis and their sauces as were the Vatel's, the Bernards and the Carêmes.

The three cities of importance on the island are San Juan, the capital, containing the greatest number of foreigners, of whom Americans form the majority; Ponce, the most typically Spanish and the most artistic; and Mayaguez, the smallest of the three, but the most beautiful. Naturally, it is in San Juan that the living is the most expensive, and it is made more expensive than need be by the Americans, who demand that their home table be reproduced in their West Indian miramar. They buy cold storage meat from the Plaza Provision Company or the American Grocer—two American corporations doing business in San Juan—and consider their menus incomplete without canned vegetables from New York. If they would content themselves with what can be had in the native markets their bills would be materially decreased and they could stock their larders with a far greater variety of far better foodstuffs. Stroll up the hill to the old Plaza del Mercado, or market place, and see what can be had for the buying. If you are early enough you may meet, as you pass through Calle San Francisco, a little two-wheeled cart, the sides of which bear this legend:

M. SUIZ,
ISADEL, 2D. MARINA,
CAFE TOSTADO.

The humblest dweller in the narrow city streets insists that his freshly ground coffee be brought to him in the early morning, and so the proprietor of this tiny establishment pushes his cart from door to door and carefully weighs out for his daily customers portions of café tostado—costing two cents apiece—often adding two cents' worth of sugar, for even in Porto Rico the family provider is apt to be negligent in laying in his store the night before.

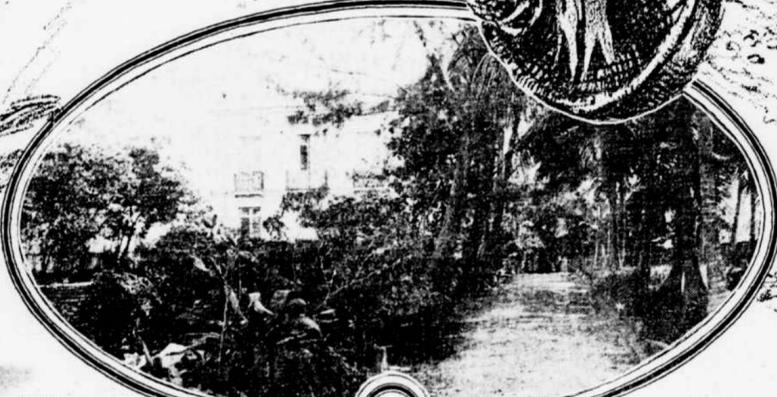
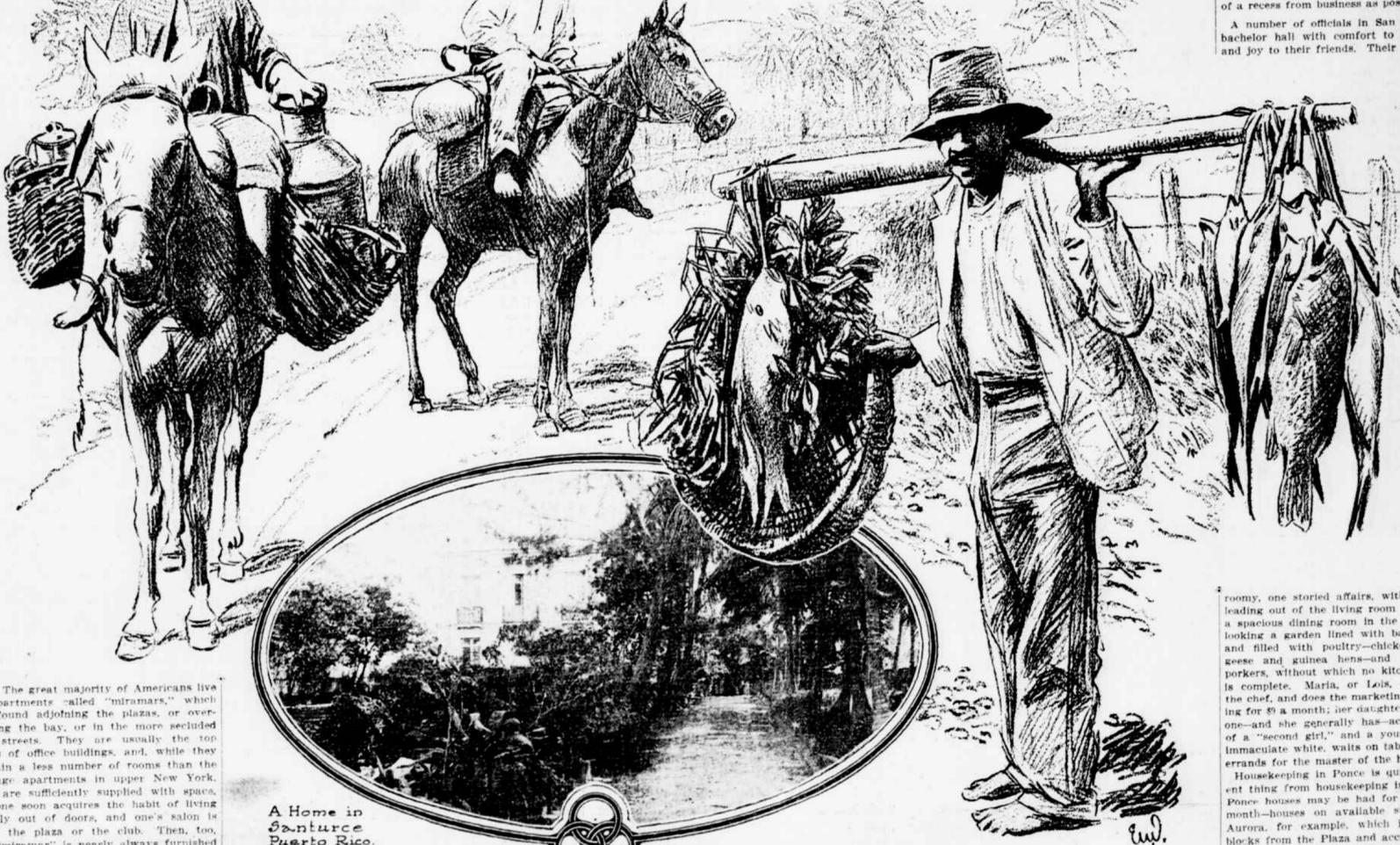
Leaving San Francisco street and turning into the thoroughfare that leads up from the ferry, you almost bump into a little company of hurrying, belated youths, carrying on their heads broad, flat bamboo trays, piled up with pyramids of fresh eggs from the farms out beyond Bayamon—trays balanced with perfect ease and grace, while the bearers chat and smoke and tattle about as if there were no such things as misapprehension and gravitation.

Outside the market are rows of donkeys and ponies with huge pannier baskets strapped to their sides, leaving room for the master to ride astride the beast between loads of produce. From these baskets are taken every vegetable and fruit known to the island—yams, lettuce, cucumbers, eggplant, cassava root, melons, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, vanilla, clove and peppers, figs, papadillas, shaddock, mangoes, avocado pears, plums, tamarinds, acajous, bread fruit, oranges, pineapples, limes and lemons. Cheese and cakes are also brought in by the city purchaser.

In the further end of the market are rows of delicatessen stalls; to the immediate right are chickens and guinea hens (the latter sell at 60 cents a piece), ducks and geese. A little further on are the fish markets, with mullet from Lotia



The Flat Roofs of San Juan.



A Home in Santurce, Puerto Rico.

ner. The great majority of Americans live in apartments called "miramars," which are found adjoining the plazas, or overlooking the bay, or in the more secluded side streets. They are usually the top floors of office buildings, and, while they contain a less number of rooms than the average apartments in upper New York, they are sufficiently supplied with space, for one soon acquires the habit of living largely out of doors, and one's salon is often the plaza or the club. Then, too, the "miramar" is nearly always furnished with an adjoining bit of roof—all roofs in San Juan are flat—out upon which you step from your dining room for your after-dinner smoke and conversation.

There is a "miramar" of this description on the top of one of the state buildings in Allen street that is never without a tenant and always has a long waiting list. To reach it you must pass through a dingy old courtyard and climb a flight and a half of well worn marble steps, but it is worth the climb. The hallway, large enough for a hatrack and settle, opens upon sleeping apartments on the left, with adjoining bath, and on the right upon a living room, out of which three short steps lead up to the dining room, which is on a level with the roof, and back of which are the kitchen and

There They Dwell in a "Miramar" and Enjoy "Aroz con Pollo" and "Cafe de Caracollillo."

anging at from \$5 to \$15 a week. The hotel dining room is on the second or third floor and overlooks the patio, or garden, in the centre of the inclosure. And here, with the thick walls of old medieval Spain shutting out the rays of the noontday sun, and with an hour or more at their disposal—for many of the shops are closed, and others are kept open only out of courtesy and are left in charge of boys, whose business it is to tell the casual caller the hour at which the proprietors will return—the breakfasters take their time and thoroughly enjoy the good things set before them.

This noon breakfast, by the way, is the meal at which the native merchant often joins his clerks. Where the merchant lives over his store, a long table is set in the corridor or veranda adjoining the business office, and the noon hour is made as much of a recess from business as possible.

A number of officials in San Juan keep bachelor hall with comfort to themselves and joy to their friends. Their houses are

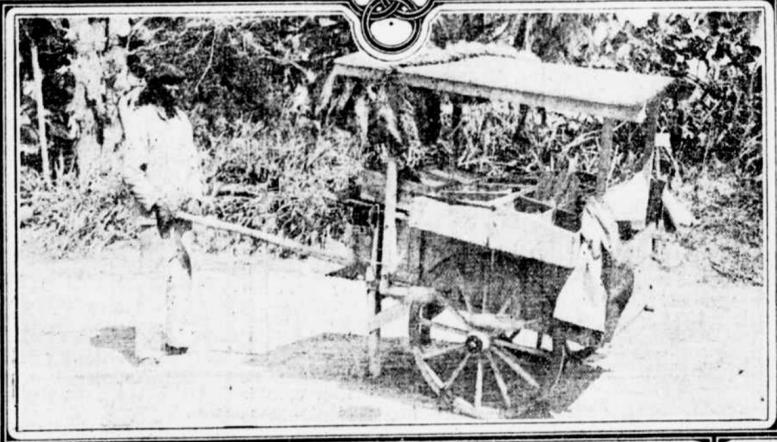
roomy, one storied affairs, with chambers leading out of the living room and having a spacious dining room in the rear, overlooking a garden lined with banana trees and filled with poultry—chickens, ducks, geese and guinea hens—and little black porkers, without which no kitchen garden is complete. Maria, or Lois, or Julia, is the chef, and does the marketing and cooking for \$8 a month; her daughter, if she has one—and she generally has—acts the part of a "second girl" and a young person, in immaculate white, waits on table and runs errands for the master of the house.

Housekeeping in Ponce is quite a different thing from housekeeping in San Juan. Ponce houses may be had for \$25 to \$30 a month—houses on available streets—Calle Aurora, for example, which is only two blocks from the Plaza and accessible from all parts of the city. For this price a comfortable home can be secured, with six or seven sleeping rooms and tiled bath, a large dining room and good sized kitchen and two living rooms, or "salons." Best of all, these houses invariably have large patios, or yards, that extend for fifty feet or more to the back. Each patio has its own fountain in the centre and is lined with tropical shrubbery. The citizens of Ponce are persons of wealth and culture, who disdain to accept the quick ways of the American and prefer to do as their fathers and their fathers' fathers did before them. The extremely wealthy have extensive establishments out of the city, as well as in—both country seat and cot-

On the Road to Market.

sitting room you will find the last numbers of "The Tribune" and "The Century"; you will hear the latest news from Washington and the newest "rag" from Broadway; you will meet the talented Presbyterian minister from the nearby rectory, bright American school teachers from Rio Piedras, and members of the influential Fruit Exchange in Tetuan street—all with hearty welcomes for the stranger within their gates.

Next door to the Country Club, in San-



Every Thing in the Grocery Line.



The First Ice Cart in Puerto Rico.



How the Natives Keep House in the Mountains.



American Miramar at Santurce.

(at 10 cents a pound), crawfish, salmon, shad, bonitos, sardines, Spanish mackerel and snappers. There are over six hundred varieties of fish found in Porto Rican waters. To the left are porkings and sausages, hams and corned beef.

In the beef market you will look in vain for juicy beefsteaks and rib roasts; these must be specially ordered. Instead, piled up in little mounds, a few inches high, are strips of lean meat, one inch wide and from six to eight inches long, from which all the fat and all the bones have been carefully removed. But the practical Porto Rican chef will, with a few bunches of these little strips, make any number of ragouts and entrées—each one more appetizing than its predecessor.

A novelty among the vegetables are tomatoes, no larger than your thumbnail, arranged in little mounds and sold at two cents a portion. They are brilliant in color and are good eating, but look like heaps of small marbles, specially polished to catch the eye of the ten-year-olds. Cucumbers bring two cents apiece, oranges can be had for 10 cents a hundred, a good sized pineapple goes for 10 cents and grapefruit sells at 40 cents a dozen. Yams and sweet potatoes and salads are found in great profusion. Cornmeal, another specialty, is made into enormous cakes, eighteen inches thick, called "bolla," and sold in little wraps at a penny a strip. Tobacco is also sold by the "strip." Wound or braided strands about the size of one's finger, and looking like a tarred rope, it is coiled up in a conical heap and measured off by the foot or yard. A "short" bit goes for a penny; longer strands bring 5 or 10 cents.

In San Juan foreigners either board at the hotels or boarding houses, or keep house, or both, renting rooms, with morning coffee supplied and making excursions into the nearby restaurants or patisseries for their noon breakfast and evening din-



Old Market at San Juan, Puerto Rico.



New Market at Ponce, Puerto Rico.

pantry. The last occupants of this little toy home were a bride and bridegroom, and the bride prided herself on cooking her own dinner, which she did with as little trouble as though supplied with all the modern appliances of the home appointed kitchenette. American families living in San Juan generally occupy their own houses. The most likely place to find them congregated is Parque Borrenquin, which faces and borrows on the sea and is accessible to town by tram and carriage way. The houses are usually one storied, with rooms fifteen feet high, and with generous sized laundries underneath, and grounds at the back filled with tamarind trees and palms. Rents are high, but servants are cheap. Good cooks, who sleep at home, can be had for \$6 or \$8 a month; good laundresses, who find their

own meals and sleep out, demand \$8. Dining with these Americans, you will imagine yourself at home in reality. The steak comes from Chicago, the potatoes from New England, the apples for the pie were picked from trees in Western New York, and the bread is made from the recipe of a Pennsylvania housewife. These good people often go so far as to glory in the fact that they eat nothing that does not come from

the States—preferring to buy imported meats, vegetables and even fruits, although they are growers of luscious "pines" and have extensive fields devoted to oranges and grapefruit. In the kitchen the same order prevails. The ornate native stove is cast aside as useless, and in its place is installed a cooking range from New York. In the laundry are American wringers and dryers of the best description, and in the

mirar, is a handsome miramar, built by American capital and costing \$60,000. Its thirty apartments are for individual occupancy and for couples. Suites of one room and bath cost \$25 and those of two rooms and bath \$1. Month. Single men living in these quarters take their meals at the club, or at the hotels, of which there are a score or more scattered over the city, and where board is charged at a fixed price,

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lage by the sea—while the wall-to-do (there seemingly are no poor in Ponce) enjoy their large roomed houses and their gardens within the city limits. Step into one of these Ponce homes at dinner time and see what is provided for the family and an occasional guest. Invariably you will find a dish called "Aroz con pollo," which, being interpreted, is nothing but "chicken and rice," but, as prepared by the home chef, has a flavor all its own, rivaling the best East Indian curry. The chicken—beautifully broiled—is laid on the rice while steaming hot and covered with peppers, raisins, olives, caprice and sliced Spanish plantains. The roast beef is cooked like roast beef in no other country. The meat is first washed in vinegar. In the sides are cut little round holes, which are stuffed with peppers. A large pot is set over the fire, and when it is as hot as the fire can make it is allowed to cook but five minutes on each side, for if it be too well done for the blood to run when it is cut the roast is spoiled and the chef is in disgrace. Another delight is the patelon de cascava—cake made from the vegetable yuca. The salad is often a mixture of the hearts of lettuce, tomatoes and oranges—just for the favorite color scheme of green, red and yellow. And speaking of oranges, those that are eaten as fruit come from Vega Baja and have skins so thin that the pickers are obliged to wear gloves lest they bruise the delicate covering and the aroma be lost before the fruit reaches the table. The cafe de caracollillo is a coffee never seen in New York on account of its prohibitive price. One enterprising Madison avenue grocer used to keep it, but ad-

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