

# Pretty Girls of Porto Rico

(Copyrighted, 1899, by Frank G. Carpenter.)  
**SAN JUAN, Porto Rico, July 5.**—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—I saw a quarter of an acre of pretty girls last night. They were rich girls, well dressed girls, and by and large, as nice girls as I have seen this year. The most of them were whirling about in the mazes of the waltz and I actually envied the Porto Rican dandies and our uniformed military officers who held them in their arms.

It was at a grand ball given by the swell club of San Juan. The theater was hired for the occasion and the San Juan theater is bigger than any in Washington. It is a building of brick and stucco, which belonged to the Spanish government and which is now the property of Uncle Sam. It has a stage as large as a city lot. The orchestra circle was floored over last night, so that with the stage there was more than a quarter of an acre of clear dancing space.

The floor was carpeted and coconut palm leaves were trained upon the walls. The three galleries which run around the

is fanning herself most coquettishly. These girls could teach us a great deal in fan language. They carry beautiful fans. Some are made of sandalwood, some of ivory, and many are covered with fine lace and gauze, beautifully embroidered and painted. The fans here all come from Spain, and they are exceedingly cheap. You can buy for \$5 a fan which in New York would cost \$25, and there are many \$25 fans being used by this crowd in the hall. Over there on the opposite side of the room is one which seems to have been made for the occasion, and which, I venture, never saw Spain. It is a dainty little thing, and is welded by one of the prettiest of the Porto Rican belles. It is of silk in the colors of the American flag, so made that the red, white and blue flashes out at every twist of her ivory wrist. You can see that the better class of Porto Ricans are very patriotic. They are glad they are Americans, and will be good citizens.

### Let Our Summer Girls Beware.

As I looked at these pretty Porto Rican girls I thought of the sensation they would create among our young men when they visit the fashionable watering places of the United States. They will be formidable rivals of the American summer girls. Heretofore many of them have taken their cutings in Europe, but now they are talking of coming to the United States. They are taking lessons in English and already several of them have found husbands among our army officers. I understand that they like Yankee beaux better than Porto Ricans, and that they will prefer American husbands because American wives have more freedom and better times.

Speaking of customs, our young men will have a great advantage over the Spanish beaux. According to the etiquette of Spain which prevails in Porto Rico, a young man cannot engage in conversation with his sweetheart upon the street. He dare not call upon her expecting to find her alone, and in case there is another man paying attention to her he is not supposed to interfere. The Americans will not regard the rules of Spanish etiquette and at present the chances seem to be all in their favor.

I was surprised to see so many women at this ball. I did not think there were so many pretty girls on the island. It is only at such times we see the better classes of Porto Rico women. They seldom go upon the streets. They do not hang out of the windows or over the balconies, as the South American girls do, and in short they are very exclusive. It is only a few of them that go out to walk in the plaza when the military bands play, and you might be for months in Porto Rico and not know that it had a "four hundred."

I believe the better class Porto Ricans are very friendly toward the Americans. This feeling has been materially bettered by the conduct of some of our army officials, and especially by General Fred Grant and his wife. Mrs. Grant is accustomed to entertaining, and during her stay here she gave receptions and dinners every week. To her receptions the Porto Ricans were glad to come, and here they met the wives of the officers of our army and navy and the officers themselves. Other Americans who were in San Juan were invited, and in this way pleasant relations have been established.

### The White House of San Juan.

It might pay Uncle Sam to allow our gov-

the reception room, which is as large as the ordinary parlor, and then pass on into the drawing room, which is about fifty feet long, twenty-five feet wide and twenty feet high. It is floored with white and black marble. Its walls are frescoed in lilac and gilt, and the room is almost covered with large mirrors.

The drawing room, like the rest of the palace, is furnished just as it was when the Spanish left it. Uncle Sam bought the furniture, including the piano, the billiard table and the carriage and horses, which our governor general drives. The palace, in fact, looks more like a Spanish dwelling house than an American one. The chairs are of Austrian bentwood and they are arranged about marble tables in Spanish style. Upon some of the walls are pictures of Spanish scenery painted in oils, and as you go out of the drawing room into the music room you pass bronze statues of Spanish knights in armor on pedestals of black marble.

I particularly examined the piano. It was made in Barcelona, and it is said that it originally cost \$1,000.

Beyond the music room is the billiard room, where the Spanish officials cracked the ivory balls which our officials crack now. This room has windows looking out upon the palace gardens, the bay and Morro castle. From it you can see the Casa Blanca, another government building, which stands upon the foundations of a house in which Ponce de Leon lived several hundred years ago. The palace itself was begun in the sixteenth century, although it was not finished until 1848.

### How the Porto Ricans Live.

It seems strange to Americans to have the parlors and reception rooms on the second floor. This is the custom in most of the towns of Porto Rico. The rich people of San Juan all live in the second stories of their houses, the lower floors being given up to the poor. Out in the country the houses of the richest farmers have storehouses, granaries or stables beneath them, and you have to go up long steps to get to the front door.

The average country house has no glass in its windows, but only shutters, which open and close. It is built with a large living room in the center and bed rooms opening into this on each side. There is often a wing containing a kitchen, with a water closet adjoining it. Bath rooms are almost unknown and the sanitary conditions of even the best houses are bad.

The furniture is commonly of bentwood, the chairs being arranged stiffly about a table. There is often a wicker sofa and some rocking chairs, but no attempts are made at ornamentation in the way of cozy nooks or of wall decoration.

The bedrooms are fitted out with iron beds covered either with canvas or with wire springs, upon which thin comforts are spread for mattresses. The mattresses are usually not long enough to allow your whole body to lie on them without touching the wires. In my hotel here in San Juan the springs either scratch the flesh of my heels, or, if I protect my heels, my shoulders have to suffer by the sharp wires between the mattress and the pillow.

### The Ladies' Aid Society of San Juan.

The Porto Rican women are now co-operating with the wives of the army and navy officers to improve the condition of the poor women of Porto Rico. A ladies' aid society has been organized. This society is non-sectarian and it is supported by voluntary contributions. One of its chief



A BELLE OF SAN JUAN.

theater were draped with red, white and blue stripes, spangled with stars, and American flags were everywhere. The boxes were filled with rich Porto Ricans and the girls upon the floor were the daughters of the swell people of the island. No one was admitted without an invitation and the thousand odd maidens present represented the very top of the upper crust of Porto Rican society.

The men were of the same class and the whole gave me a new idea of the best of the subjects whom Uncle Sam has annexed.

### Among the Belles of San Juan.

I wish the correspondents who have been writing letters home to the effect that there is colored blood in all Porto Ricans could have attended this ball. I have never seen better types of the pure Latins or Spanish. The complexions were all darker than ours, but I could see no traits of the negro, and I doubt if there was a woman in the room who had such blood in her veins. It was a Caucasian crowd, and a remarkably good-looking one. Hundreds of the women were as well dressed, and on the whole far more recently dressed, than the women you see at a White House reception. There were many short sleeves, showing plump, dimpled white arms and beautiful necks. The gowns were not cut so low as to show the swelling of the bosom, and such as were décolleté were filled in with embroidery. The colors, with the exception of perhaps half a dozen gowns of black lace, were salmon pink, sky blue and white. All were of dancing length and nearly all were well-fitting.

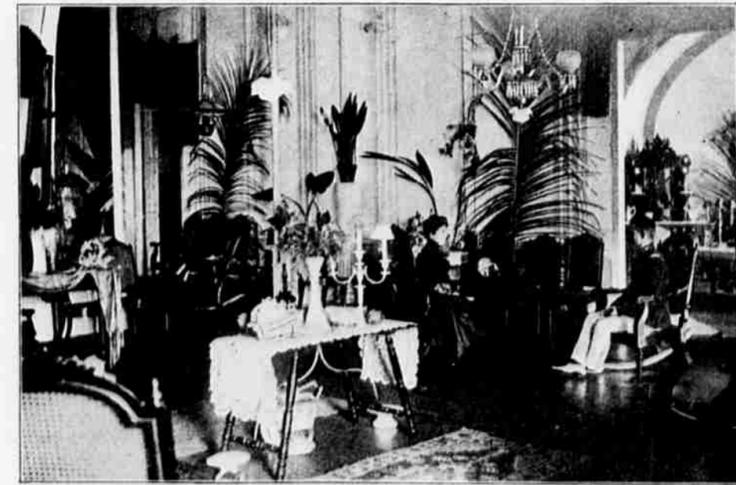
Take a jump in your imagination from the United States to Porto Rico, and sit with me in one of the theater boxes and watch the crowd as I saw it last night. I venture you have never seen a prettier sight. What a lot of beauties are whirling about on the floor below us! They are straight and slender and every one is a brunette. Not one of them is dumphy or over-fat. Each is just a god armful, and they are all petite and exceedingly graceful. What beautiful hair they have, and what a lot of it! It is as black as the patent leather shoes of the men, except where it has been dusted with powder and turned thereby for the evening to gold. How well the hair is put up! It is dressed in a knot just back of the crown and is puffed out a la pompadour, so that it makes the dear little heads of the maidens look larger.

### They Are Nice Girls.

Now cast your eye at the faces. Are they not sweet? They are full of fun, but refined. They look like nice girls, good girls, modest and pure, as I doubt not they are. See how they laugh and chat with their partners, and how they keep up the dance throughout the evening. It is only while dancing that they have the chance of being alone with their beaux, for according to Spanish custom when they sit down they must take their places by their married sisters, mothers or aunts, who act as duennas.

Now the dance is over and we can observe them at rest. What pretty eyes they have! They are large, black and liquid, with long lashes and rather heavy brows, which are accentuated by their pale brunette faces.

Notice how they use their fans. Every girl has one and she keeps it always in motion. She fans herself three times and then with a twist of the wrist throws the folds of the fan together. Another twist and it is open in the opposite way and she



A PORTO RICAN PARLOR.

ernor general at Porto Rico a sum for entertaining. It would do much to teach the Porto Ricans American ways and to bring them into accord with us. General Henry did not entertain much during his stay, but this was probably because his wife was not very well.

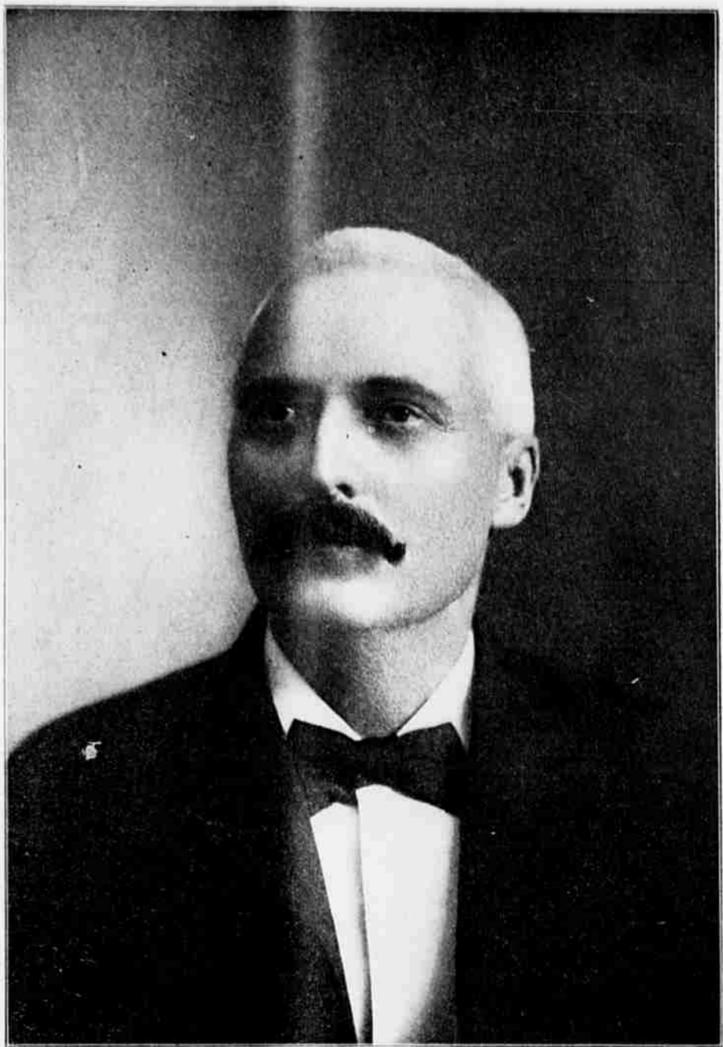
The government palace is well adapted to receptions. It is, you know, the home of the captain general, which came into our hands through the war. It is an immense building of two stories, having, I judge, at least two score rooms. A number of these are now devoted to offices, but there is left almost as much room as in the White House, and General Davis has several magnificent parlors.

Entering the palace, you go in between two of our soldiers and walk up a wide staircase, by a stack of rifles, past a mirror draped with two American flags, to the second floor. This is the living part of the palace. Turning to the left you first enter

officers is Mrs. Colonel J. R. Hoff, its vice president, the president being the wife of the governor general. It has offices just outside of Fort San Christobel and holds meetings twice a week, at which hundreds of the poor women of Porto Rico come for aid. It has now about 500 workwomen on its list. They are paid for making clothes, which are given away to such of the poor who are unable to work. They receive from 18 to 20 cents for making dresses and are very glad to get work at these wages.

Many of the workwomen are the widows of officers who lost their lives during the war. Some of them can embroider beautifully and the Ladies' Aid society takes orders for embroidery and drawn work, paying these women what they receive, with the exception of 10 per cent for the treasury of the society. This drawn work is beautiful and exceedingly cheap, and any of our

(Continued on Eighth Page.)



Joseph A. Connor.

The above is a photograph of Mr. Joseph A. Connor, who erected the first grain elevator in this state at Plattsmouth, Neb., in 1868, and built the first line of grain elevators on the B. & M. railroad west of Omaha. He helped to organize and was vice president of the Citizens' Bank at Plattsmouth for a number of years. Mr. Connors came to Nebraska from La Salle, Ill., in 1867 and lived in Plattsmouth up to ten years ago, when he moved to Omaha, since which time he has resided here. He owns and farms more land than any other citizen in the state. He is an active member of the Omaha Board of Trade, with offices in the Board of Trade Building.

## An Irrepressible Song

It was on June 29, 1819, that one of the most popular songs of the century was born, relates the Boston Transcript. Its author, Thomas Dunn English, was visiting in New York and N. P. Willis, who, with George P. Morris, was editing the New Mirror, asked him for a gratuitous contribution, and suggested that it be a sea song. Dr. English promised one and on returning to his home attempted to make good his word. Only one line that snatched of the sea came at his bidding; but at a white heat he composed the five stanzas of "Ben Bolt," as it now reads, betraying the original intention in the last line of the last stanza.

Within a year the poem had been reprinted in England and its author thought it might be a still greater favorite if set to appropriate music. Dominick M. H. Hay wrote an air for it, which was never printed, and Dr. English wrote one himself, which, although printed, had no sale.

It was written entirely for the black keys. In 1848 a play was brought out in Pittsburg, Pa., called "The Battle of Buena Vista," in which the song of "Ben Bolt" was introduced. A. M. Hunt, an Englishman connected with western journalism, had read the words in an English newspaper and gave them from memory to Nelson Kneass, filling in from imagination where his memory failed. Kneass adapted a German melody to the lines and they were sung in the play. The drama died, but the song survived. A music publisher of Cincinnati obtained the copyright and it was the business success of his career. In theaters, concert rooms, minstrel shows and private parlors nothing was heard but "Ben Bolt." It was ground on hand organs and whistled in the streets, and "Sweet Alice" became the pet of the public. A steamboat in the west and a ship in the east were named after her. The steamer was blown up and the ship was wrecked, but Alice floated safely in the fragile bark of song.

The poem went abroad and obtained great popularity in England. The streets of London were flooded with parodies, answers and imitations, printed on broadsides and sung and sold by curbstone minstrels. A play was written there based upon it and as late as 1877 a serial novel ran through a London weekly paper of note, in which the memories evoked by the singing of "Ben Bolt" played a prominent part in evolving the catastrophe. Of course everyone knows of its more recent revival in Du Maurier's famous novel.

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