

The Polytechnic Institute of Porto Rico

by

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There is in San German a jewel unknown to many outside of that district - a Polytechnic Institute, worthy of note both for the way in which it came into existence and that in which it is working out its high aims. It is situated in the country at the entrance to San German.

Agriculture is taught in a scientific and practical way, and the seventh and eighth primary grades and the four high school grades are taught in accordance with the plans of the Insular Department of Education, as are also the fundamental sciences for an industrial career. The teachers in the sciences are university graduates and the instructor in agriculture is an experienced agriculturist of the island.

The founder and director of this school, Mr. J. W. Harris, was a minister of the Presbyterian Church in San German, and left that work to undertake this educational work with admirable devotion and self sacrifice. He raised funds in the United States and bought more than one hundred acres of land in San German; he found teachers, erected most modest wooden buildings, and thus began in 1912 the instruction of a dozen or so of young men and women; and for which Don Juan Cansio Ortiz, now living in Mayaguez, gave some old school buildings formerly occupied by his secondary school in Lajaa.

*Subjects
Bibliography*

Mr. Harris has little by little enlarged the sphere of this altruistic work; its fruitful activities have gone on multiplying from day to day until now more than one hundred and forty students of both sexes, the greater part of which live on the campus, are receiving instruction. The wooden buildings have been increased but there have also been erected larger buildings of concrete for dormitories, one for each sex, with spacious well ventilated rooms, which the students are now occupying, although neither of the buildings is yet completed because of the lack of sufficient funds and the high cost of materials.

Mr. Harris has a large and comprehensive plan in which all the edifices necessary for the completion of the work have a place, such as class room buildings, dormitories, laboratories, work shop, domestic science hall, and homes for teachers, - in a word, to cover all the needs of the great educational plant. He goes on building little by little as the resources at his disposal will permit.

It must be taken into account that seventy per cent of the students are poor boys and girls who can pay nothing, while the tuition even of those who pay something is very moderate. The Institute is helped somewhat by the products of the farm.

It is most wonderful! The students work with their own hands, plows and hoes, cultivating the land under the direction of the teacher of agriculture. They themselves have graded and paved the macadam road opening up the grounds from the main Government highway to the school. They themselves have done the work in the buildings so far constructed, taking part in the construction of concrete blocks, and in the work of carpenters, masons and painters, under the direction of the teacher and director of labor, Mr. Clarence Harris.

All this has been accomplished by the great will power of this extraordinary man, and Mr. Harris will no doubt succeed in carrying out his splendid project. "Where will you get the money for the carrying out of your ideal?",

I asked him. "Oh", he answered, with all the faith of a believer, "I will hunt for it".

The Commissioner of Education left highly impressed with that work. Public men ought to seek an opportunity of knowing that superior man and that most interesting school. The young people of both sexes who live there study joyfully in an atmosphere of delightful happiness.

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Commissioner of Agriculture