

Porto Rico's Self-Help School.

By EDITH MARY IRVINE-RIVERA.

PORTO RICO has a self-help school. It is an institution of which we may all be proud, situated on the edge of a beautiful town called San German over on the west side of the island. The Polytechnic Institute is a self-help school in the sense that the poor boy or girl earns his or her way through school by working in the manual training department four and a half hours a day, and the pay students are made ready for the rainy day, or equipped for better service to their country, by knowing how to labor with their hands. These work three hours a day. This method has given splendid results so far, and it has turned out that those who work three or four hours a day in manual training department obtain



John Will Harris, founder and president of the Polytechnic Institute of Porto Rico.

in the manual training department. These who do not miss school because of the rainy season, and who are able to pay for their education, are the ones who are able to attend the school. The school is situated on a hill, and the view from the hill is a fine residence on the hill where the Hon. John Will Harris, the founder and president of the Institute, with his family have the latch-key hanging out to one and all.

If you are lucky enough to find Mr. Harris in his office at the tip-top of the house (for he is an extremely busy man), you would look out upon one of the finest panoramas to be seen on the island—the beautiful rolling hills to the rear with their sun-kissed green and their shade-mantled purples; the grounds of the Institute with their palm-peopled valleys and timber-laden hills to the fore, and a frolicking stream winding in and about. On these grounds, which comprise more than one hundred acres, you would see several concrete buildings which have been erected by students, and are the boys' and girls' dormitories, as well as different provisional frame schoolhouses.

Then Mr. Harris, never too busy to explain, would point out to you that across that ravine and another gulley yonder bridges are to be constructed. There will be a lake in that hollow there, and yonder in the centre of the estate will be the campus. He would probably take down a huge portfolio, and point out to you the plan that one of New York's most notable architects has prepared, which when fully completed will give the Polytechnic Institute one of the most beautiful sites in Porto Rico and a campus of which any State in the Union might well be proud. Running his finger over the blue-print, he would show you where the domestic arts building, the academic hall, the scientific hall, the library, the manual training shops, the Y. M. C. A. building, the hospital group, etc., will all be located; and you will find yourself getting a bird's-eye view of some one hundred buildings which are to be dedicated to the threefold development of Latin-American youth.

Mr. Harris and his family have not always lived up on the hill. Just a few months ago they moved to the new house, after having cramped themselves into a

rickety old place for several years. He smiled at the inconveniences and discomforts till sufficient money should come to build the new house. Finally it came and something else came too; for on March 13 of last year it came to pass that the New Era Committee of the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions voted to contribute one million dollars for the Polytechnic Institute, this money to be remitted in

five payments of \$200,000 each, the payments to begin in April, 1925. This meant that a great plan was at last to materialize; but at the same time it meant the summoning of a tremendous amount of patience, for there was a big waiting list of aspiring students, and no more room in the dormitories nor appropriate recitation-halls in which to accommodate

the students. It was a very honest man, Mr. Harris, who said one day as he stood on the hill, "We need a recitation-hall the worst way. We could admit at least a hundred more students right now if there was a place to put them; but there's nothing to do but wait until next April, which means a waiting list until the next school year."

There are at the present time more than two hundred boys and girls in the Institute, and it is making a record year. The school-work covered is from the fourth grade of the primary school to the last year of the high school, and technical training classes besides. One of the interesting points about the methods being carried out is the fact that there is a good wholesome playtime woven in with the study and work. There are tennis-courts for students and teachers, also basket-ball, volley-ball, and baseball tennis over which the students are wildly enthusiastic; and above all there is a beautiful spirit of good will and Christian unity apparent among teachers and students alike, which helps on the progress of the institution to a large extent.

When complete in every detail, the Polytechnic Institute will represent two million dollars. One million is already sure and forthcoming; there is still one million lacking, but the Spartan faith of the man who originated this great idea and who is to-day the president of the institution is not lacking. He knows that the same God who put it into the hearts of people to donate money for the first dormitory wing of the Institute, and who made the staunch Romanists of the town of San German believe in his work in spite of their prejudices, so much so that they contributed liberally, and who has blessed the work in such a way that the enrolment has increased from twelve students to more than two hundred, will stand by him to the end, and like a pilot steering his bark over a rough and boisterous sea he stands at the helm.

The completion of this institution means untold good for Porto Rico and its sister islands as well as other Latin-American countries. It means that every boy or girl enrolled learns the dignity of labor and the magnificence of self-support, be he or she rich or poor. It means in addition to an A1 education in the

fine arts and sciences a religious education which bespeaks a new era for Latin-American youth, for hundreds of boys and girls who have either been brought up in the superstition and idolatry of Romanism, or have been allowed to become free-thinkers, will find themselves in a completely changed atmosphere; for here Christ is presented as a personal and living Saviour, a spirit of common brotherhood permeates the atmosphere, and noble purpose is the dominating key-note. So, when we say we are proud of the Polytechnic Institute of Porto Rico, we speak mildly. It is a great pulsating centre of

educational activity. Already a splendid lot of men and women have gone forth from its threshold to fill important positions in their country and to lift the standard of life before their fellow men; so, while it may take considerable time and labor and persistence to complete the one hundred buildings now in the plan, each day clearly demonstrates that it is all worth while, for it will surpass many of our educational centres on the mainland, it will do honor to our flag, and will stand as a lasting monument to the glory of God.

Santurce, Porto Rico.



One Wing of the Boys' Dormitories, built by the students.



Teachers' Cottage, showing the cupola of the president's residence.