



ONE OF THE DOORWAYS OF THE VARIED INDUSTRIES BUILDING

—Courtesy San Diego Panama California Exposition



THE HOME ECONOMY AND FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC ARTS BUILDING

—Courtesy San Diego Panama California Exposition

San Diego Exposition—Development of Spanish Colonial Architecture

By FRANK P. ALLEN, Jr.

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VERY little has been written about the development of architecture in the Spanish renaissance, dating from the expulsion of the Moors, and except in Spanish America little has been done to carry on that development, despite the extraordinary possibilities it contains. The information about it is confined mainly to scant mention in the course of writings whose main purpose has been the setting forth of special events in political and social Spanish history, with such suggestions as these events offered of the effect on architecture, sidelights, as it were. It is pleasing to think that the Panama-California Exposition, which in many ways has sought vigorously for permanent values, has emphasized its contribution to architecture by the creative work in this interesting Spanish school. It is hardly possible that com-

ing years will not witness a marked influence on building design, more particularly in the semitropic sections with whose natural conditions the Spanish idea is in peculiar harmony.

At about the time Christopher Columbus was sailing across the Atlantic, to behold the new world and contribute his enormous portion to the activities of humanity, an event of even greater immediate import was transpiring in the land from which he sailed. The final expulsion of the decadent Moors was taking place.

Spain had been controlled by this foreign people. There were several powerful Spanish principalities in whose fortified cities still struggled the remnants of the earlier Spanish civilization, but the dominance of the Moors and the continued quarreling of the Spaniards, not only against the common



FROM A LOGGIA OVERLOOKING EL PRADO

San Diego Panama California Exposition

foe but among themselves, had prevented anything resembling national unity. The marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella had brought together two powerful groups and made possible the massing of resources which alone could re-establish the effective union of early days.

The invaders then were expelled. In spite of the embargo they managed to carry away with them a vast treasure in the form of everything movable, but behind them they left a vaster treasure in the form of resources which all their retainers could not carry, and this naturally fell into the hands of the church and crown of Spain and the favored nobles. Geographically, if not socially, there came about a fairly good distribution of a hitherto inaccessible storehouse hardly possible to estimate.

For a clear understanding of what fol-

lowed it is best to know something of the people into whose hands was so suddenly thrust this wealth, to be followed in the next century and a half by a much greater amount, then undreamed.

The Spaniards had been living a hard life, barren of the luxuries of ordinary life and resultantly barren of indulgence in the fine arts. A people eking out a meager sustenance seldom produces a strikingly interesting school of architecture and the Spanish people had proved no exception. In a few cities were some noteworthy examples of Gothic art, but these were few. In the ordinary arts were easily traceable tendencies to the Romanesque and Byzantine. In the forging of arms and armor there was genuine superlative merit, but almost nowhere else. Even the jewelry the Spanish smiths wrought was clumsy and of value

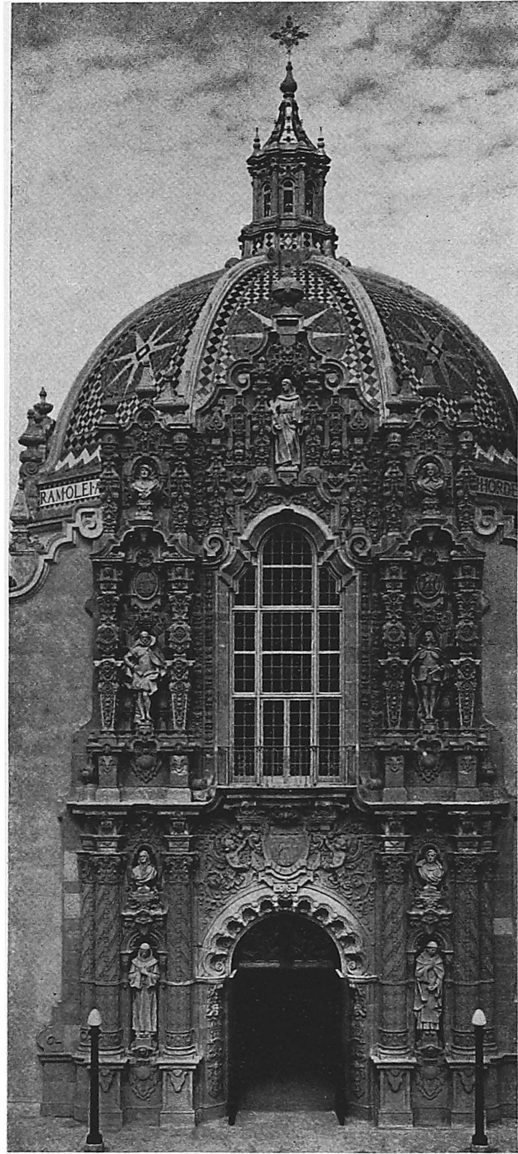
intrinsically rather than for any artistic merit, with the solid gold tableware and even solid gold tables marking the progress made in art of this character, and of course existing only in a few well-defended palaces.

Here is a poor people suddenly endowed with wealth, a little later endowed with the enormous wealth of the Aztec treasure houses transported bodily to Spain by the adventurers in the trains of Cortez and Pizarro and their lieutenants. A people without taste of any sort is presented with money sufficient to gratify the wildest desires.

The result was—just about the result of sudden acquisition by any number of persons in any other country. It is not necessary to go back to fifteenth century Spain to discover a type of nouveau rich. There followed a riot of extravagance, and as the patrons of architecture drew increasingly large revenue from Moors and American colonies there came an increasing flood of



SIDE VIEW HOME ECONOMY BUILDING
San Diego Panama California Exposition



THE RICH FACADE OF THE CALIFORNIA
STATE BUILDING
San Diego Panama California Exposition

artists and artisans from France and Italy and Greece and the Orient, eager to contribute their artistic abilities for a consideration. The old Spain had not nourished its artists, and importations were necessary.

Everything was ripe for the development of startling novelties. The later Gothic was passing and the renaissance was on the threshold. The creators were assembled



IN A MISSION PATIO

San Diego Panama California Exposition

from all parts of the civilized world. Money was plentiful and display was wanted. Display, ornamentation, splendor were the watchwords, and the artists were forced to follow the dictates of their patrons. Their

wares were designed to meet the market.

The Italians were the first in the field, and the result was that the earlier buildings of that period were essentially Italian. Many were entirely Italian, save that they

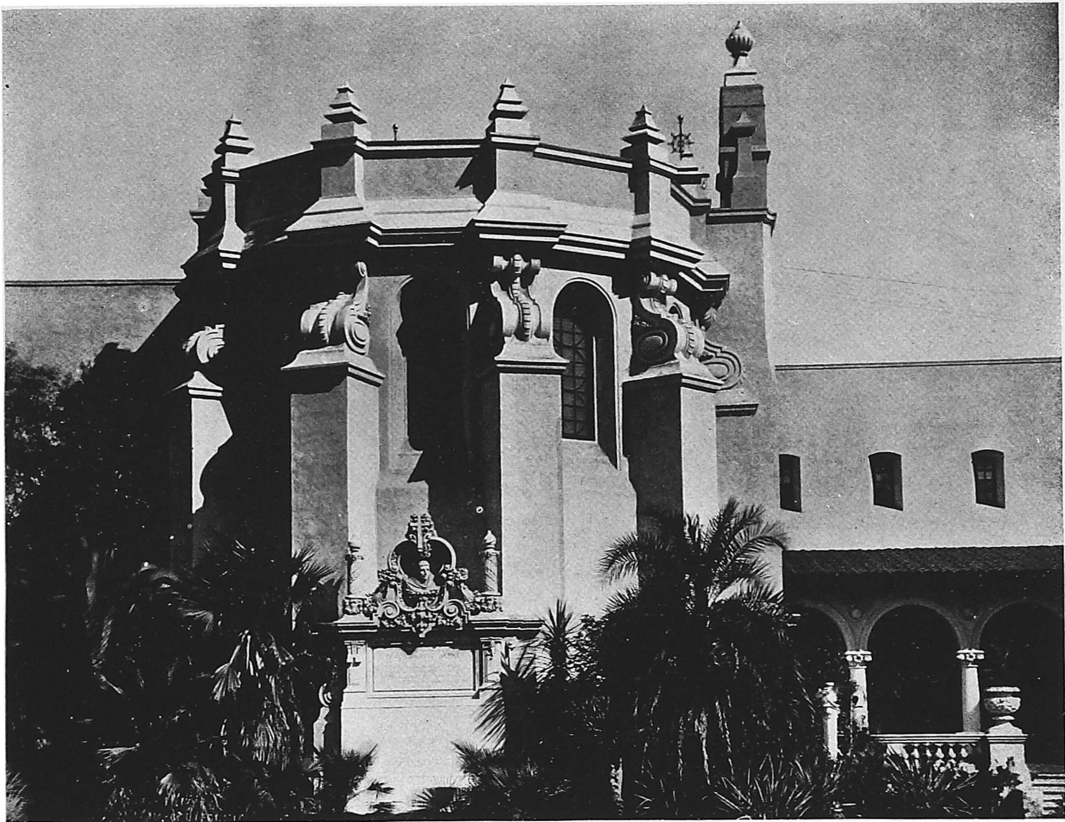
were in Spain. Then came the French, but that apparently was not found sufficiently elaborate. Remember that a people like an individual, without taste, yearns first for display, for the impression that "it cost a lot of money," and again it is well to remember that this mental state was not and is not confined to Spain.

Yet with all this influence it was impossible to smother the genuine merit of the men who executed the work. As a whole the architecture was bad, but there were features of vital interest in the brilliant design and the exquisite workmanship, due to the genius of the builders, whether or not they worked with clenched teeth, and sardonic grins.

The building progressed, and as soon as the half century flood of bullion from the despoiled red men diminished there came a

fresh flood of wealth in the commerce of the settlers in the colonies. Spain grew enormously rich, and in the course of time, with the advance of education, came a natural improvement in taste. By the middle of the seventeenth century the style had broadened and taken on the baroque and rococo, borrowed from every school of architecture preceding, done in the characteristic florid manner as the artist and the patron saw fit. Then came the *chirugueresque*, which took its name from the architect Chirugero, who with his sons had done much to crystallize the dominant features of what was becoming the nearest thing to a standard.

This is a hasty summary of the principal influence on the architecture of continental Spain. It is very far from a full explanation of the Spanish Colonial as developed in



THE TABLET TO FRAY SERRA

—Courtesy San Diego Panama California Exposition



LA PUERTA GRANDE AND THE CALIFORNIA AND ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

—Courtesy San Diego Panama California Exposition

America, for into this entered other highly important factors.

In recognition of his services to the crown, Cortez was granted great tracts of land and great supplies of bullion. His lieutenants were given corresponding favors, and even the common soldiers reaped

a colossal reward, made the more valuable by the privilege of using the Indian labor.

These soldiers were not aristocrats. Even Cortez was a man of no rank and is not credited generally with a surplus of efficiency in any field save that of conquest. Inflated with the realization of their easily

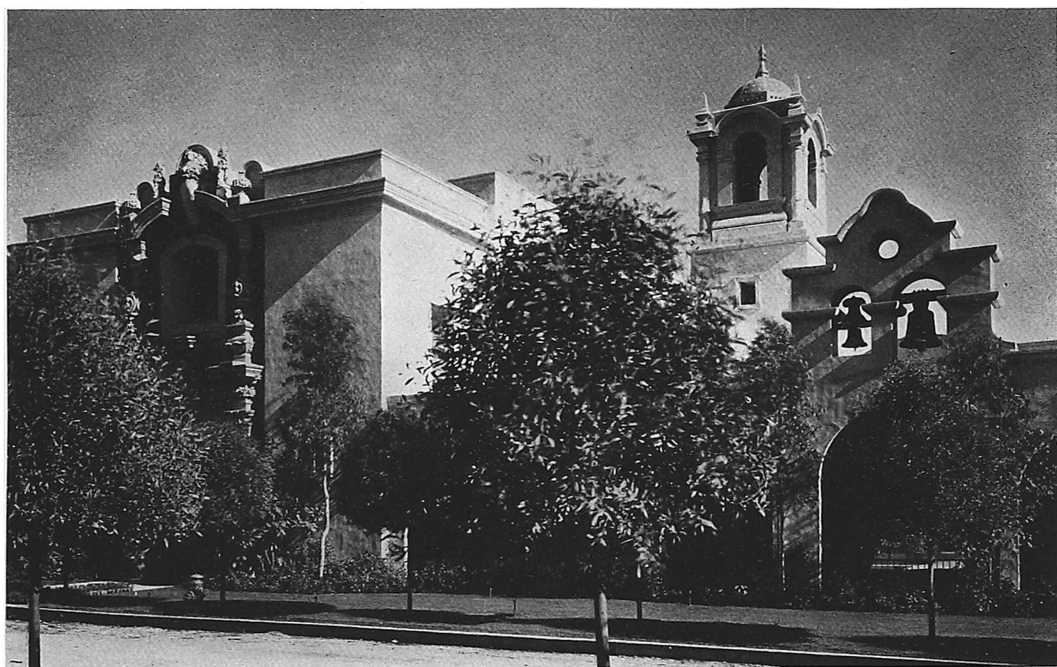
understood importance in Mexico, and Peru, they returned to Spain to spend their later years and their money like the soldiers, loaded with money and barren of the taste to use it. In their poverty days they had seen the exterior of a few noteworthy buildings, the interior of none. During their years of adventure across the Atlantic there had been changes at home, and the streets which had been bleak were now filled with new structures of good size and designs and workmanship which stunned the returned wanderers.

Immediately discovering an amazing opportunity for "dog and display," they settled down to copy the fine residences or build residences which should be gaudier than those they saw. There was no way save in building, in those days, to create much of a sensation as a splendor. The introduction of the automobile and the yacht in recent years have simplified this matter.

But the attempt was a failure. Important as the adventurer had been in Mexico and Peru, he amounted to nothing in the

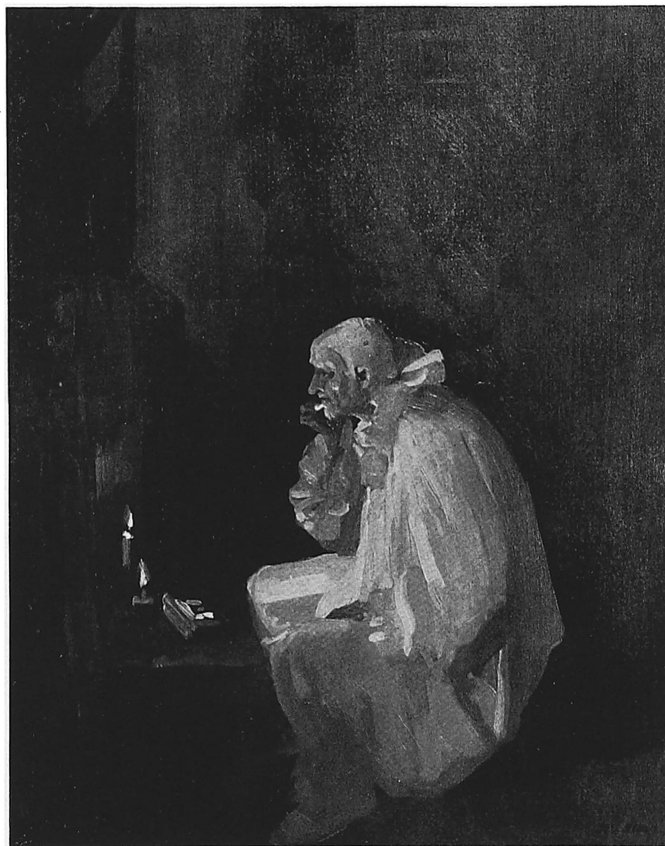
haughty aristocracy of Castile and Aragon. It was natural that, with a good bit of a heartbreak, he should return to the new land where he was respected for his force at arms and his money if for nothing else. It was natural, too, that he should take back with him a fairly vivid picture of the architecture which had impressed him so mightily, and a strong desire to duplicate it in his new home.

At first there were no imported architects or builders, and the work was naturally crude. Later, as the viceroys' expenses became borne by the crown, or more often the colony, the viceroys brought architects from Spain and Italy, who made use of the Indians who were good stoneworkers and carpenters, but for the most part the new architecture of America, aiming at the Spanish idea, was designed by men who either had only a passing acquaintance with that architecture, so far as first hand study was concerned, or who had *never* seen it. Almost without exception the builders were Indians who had never been in Spain.



MISSION BELLS OF THE INDIAN ARTS BUILDING

—Courtesy San Diego Panama California Exposition



"CLOWN MAKING UP"
By JOHN SLOAN

*In the Fine Arts Building
Panama California Exposition*



"PO-TSE"
By ROBERT HENRI

*In the Fine Arts Building
Panama California Exposition*



CORNER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRIES BUILDING

San Diego Panama California Exposition

It is worthy of mention that some of the architects again went to Spain, and today there are visible many buildings showing a decided Indian influence that is unmistakably due to the repeated migrations.

But the effect on the Spanish Colonial architecture's development is of more immediate concern. Able as the architects

might have been, they could not reproduce the Spanish idea accurately without the aid of trained Spanish builders, who were unobtainable. The most noticeable result was in detail, which the untrained Indian skipped over as hastily as he could. One of the best examples of this has been reproduced in the Foreign and Domestic Arts building, on

the southeast corner of the Plaza de Panama, which in some ways is the most typical building on the grounds.

From a distance the building looks thoroughly Spanish. At close study one discerns the sloughing of detail. It is the precise effect which was sought, reproduction of the Spanish Colonial architecture exactly as it was wrought two and three centuries ago. In varying measure this is true of practically all the buildings on the grounds, a detailed description of the idea of which would require pages of description, just as it required weeks of patient study in design.

The distinguishing feature of Spanish Colonial architecture? Briefly, it is Spanish design, and Spanish design of the best period, with Indian execution.

Imagine an intelligent farmer boy who has studied architecture from texts at his disposal: He loves the study, but has not the opportunity to carry it on at the Beaux Arts, and is forced to take up the designs that appeal to him, and as he sees them, without understanding fully technique, or relations, or much of anything in the purely scientific. He is forced to express his own individuality in detail.

Now that is not altogether unfortunate. There is a tendency in every art to over-emphasize detail, at the cost of spirit. What takes place in the farmer boy's work? He enters it with a swing and a vigor and a dash that is seldom found in the Beaux Arts. He puts red blood into stone. He puts sunshine and salt air into inanimate clay. His enthusiasm transmits life to the materials with which he works.

There is a free handling of style with a crispness that can hardly come by other channels. Some of the best work has been done by revolutionists, intentional or otherwise, whether in architecture or painting or music or belles lettres, in the practical as well as in the fine arts, in economy, in government. Out of sources which appall the academicians have come results which have

founded new schools. This emphatically is true in the case under discussion.

To the northerner the Spanish Colonial may seem ornate, objectionably so, and inappropriate. He is right, in a measure. The style is unsuited to the north, but in the semitropics it is the best style extant, and its future is a big one. The numerous projections break the strong glare of the sun on a blank wall, affording a restful contrast of light and shadow. The fine detail gives a most agreeable texture to a spot which otherwise would be a direct or a reflected glare of the hot semitropic sun. The style fairly breathes the luxuriance of palm and olive and acacia and the overwhelming splendor of the jungles, and it has more of freedom than any other style. With that spirit the architect can do positively anything he wishes, for he can draw on every architectural style and still keep within the Spanish Colonial—for the reasons mentioned in the outline of the almost unlimited sources.

Take a trip some day to Guanajuato, in Mexico, and find the church of San Miguel. Look at it from a distance and you observe what appears to be a flawless example of Gothic architecture. On close study there is readily discerned the flat detail, with the Indian individuality that appears almost constantly. The architect of the church of San Miguel was Ceferinco Gutierrez, an almost illiterate Indian who had never been out of Mexico.

This is an extreme case, but it gives a fair idea of conditions and the method of handling ideas, and is an admirable sidelight on the development of the Spanish Colonial as a distinct school.

With the use of intelligence the architect of the Spanish school can build a whole city of infinite variety, yet a unit in design. The San Diego Exposition is a noteworthy example of these possibilities, a magic Spanish city in itself. It must prove to be a stimulus toward more construction of this sort, and that prospect is as pleasing as it is interesting.