

### THE LAS PIÑAS ORGAN

The quiet little town of Las Piñas, about seven miles south of Manila, is well worth a visit from the tourist or sight seer. This town became famous and has remained famous ever since Padre Diego Cera constructed the first organ of bamboo in the parish church of the town.

This organ has five octaves (considered too many in those old days) and seven hundred fourteen pipes. The organ was built in 1797 and has well withstood the knocks of time, which proves the durability of its bamboo reeds. A few of the pipes are ruined by age, but in spite of this, it still continues to emit sweet music.

In reality there were two organs, exactly alike, one of which was sent to the Queen of Spain. Her Majesty was delighted at Cera's wonderful work and, in praising phrases, declared that no similar article existed in Europe, which was true.

It has no bass tone and the only variety of tone is caused by two of the larger pipes, which measure about six feet long.

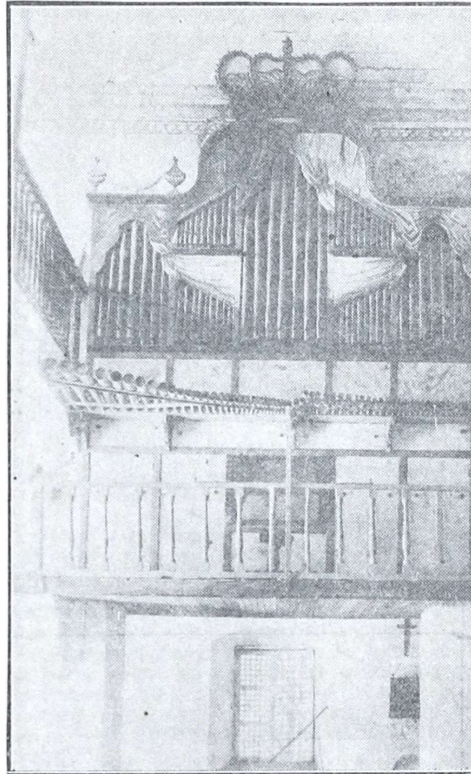
Diego Cera, the maker of the bamboo organ, was born in Spain, in 1762. His parents, Joaquin and Francisca Cera, were very pious and desired their son to fill the chair of a priest. Diego, however, had different ideas in mind along mechanical lines. This he soon found out, anything concerning machinery appealed to his eye from that time on.

Diego loved music, and was deeply interested in the mechanism of musical instruments. Accordingly he learned how to make organs.

As Diego grew older he decided to accede to his parents' wishes and enter the church. This he did, and so rapid was his rise that in 1790 he was sent to Mexico as a regular priest, to establish missions. He did not stay long in Mexico, but soon came to the Philippines. Here he took up organ-building and after constructing many other organs he did his most famous piece of work by constructing the world-renowned bamboo organ at Las Piñas.

As a town Las Piñas, though small in size, ranks important among the municipalities of Rizal province. The population is about 3,000. The old parish church dominates the plaza. It is partially in ruins. All Manila chauffeurs know the short drive along the Cavite road to Las Piñas.

Only the two bamboo organs were built. Unless the one sent to Spain still exists, the relic at Las Piñas is the last of the kind in the world. Father Cera did not build the organs



with his own hands, but retained the services of a Filipino craftsman of the parish. The skill was fortunately perpetuated in the family, and when, a few years ago, it was decided to repair the organ at Las Piñas, a descendant of the original craftsman was found who was able to effect the repairs.

The method of putting the contemplated seven-hour day into operation decided upon by the textile committee of the supreme council of national economy, Moscow, substitutes three shifts daily instead of the present two eight-hour shifts, increasing the factory hours from sixteen to twenty-one.

Few skilled textile workers being among the country's 2,000,000 unemployed, the committee proposes to use members of the present workers' families to fill the increased number of positions. The plan will be tried in four factories.

Long lines of people gather daily in front of the government textile stores on account of the shortage in retail supplies. The authorities claim that many of those standing in line are scalpers and private dealers who make purchases which they resell at speculative prices. It is proposed to do away with the queues by moving the stores to distant quarters of the city and near the homes of the workers. The production of a union card in order to make a purchase will be required.

A decree has been issued fixing the punishment of anybody who works on the holidays Nov. 7 and 8, except in case of newspaper correspondents and employes in the telegraph and health service. The two new holidays make the country's total eighteen in each year.

—Junius B. Wood in  
Chicago Daily News.

times then, more than one will say, are out of joint. Is this the mere shadow of man that is going ahead in the Philippines, or is it man himself—bone and sinew and brain and arm? There should be no surprise that not every traveler is able to be sanguine over what he sees here. The government, it is true, pours a lot of concrete every year into school houses, bridges, culverts, a few irrigation dams and public buildings. But who else? The stranger, who builds a sugar mill, some native neighbors of his, commendably following his example, and then . . . the friars who are still with us, who build new schools and colleges.

But it is not Manila, it is the towns we speak of. If the country were on the plane where the old discipline of the church left it, given the advance of the times and all modern inventions and conveniences that have come to be available, backward indeed would be the village that did not have its own water and sewer system, its lights, its theater. But the people go on as before: the bells, though broken, call them still, and they pass in to worship—over a broken threshold! A thatch shade careens in the place of a broken Venetian window, and the priest abides, seemingly in undisturbed contentment, in a dismal hut erected upon the ruins of a *once* substantial old convento.

*Santa Ana de Sapa.* Now a part of Manila, the village having been the seat of the old rajah who ruled a large district extending as far as Pasay. Founded in 1578. Corner-stone of the present church laid September 12, 1720, by Archbishop Francisco de la Cuesta.

*Dilao,* now Paco. Founded in 1580; stone church, 1599-1601, became a fortress of the Chinese who revolted in 1603, and was destroyed. New stone church, 1606, built at the expense of Francisco Gomez Arellano, archdeacon of the Manila cathedral. It was in the polemic zone, on the site of the later Battery of Charles IV, and the church was destroyed and the village moved eastward by order of the government in 1791, after the lessons taught by the English bombardment. Present church, 1808. *Dilao* is the name of a shrub producing a yellow dye. *Paco* must be from the nickname for Francisco. Combining three villages, Dilao, Santiago and Peñafrancia, the government tried vainly to impose the name of San Fernando upon all, but the vulgar term persisted.

*Sampaloc.* From the fine shade tree of that name formerly abounding in the district. Dis-

## Franciscan Friars' Churches in the Philippines

Fifth Paper in the Great Mission Trail Series

Mention has been made in previous papers of this series of the sanctuary of the Franciscan friars which was their property of San Francisco del Monte, and another paper was upon their monastery church in Manila, still in regular use, like the monastery itself, and still one of the city's particular attractions. This paper will list the churches they built throughout the provinces where they first went as missionaries and where they were the priests in the parishes they established. Under the friars the Philippines were amenable to a moral discipline which no longer prevails. Anyone driving into the provinces may observe this. Along the highways leading to the town plazas, where the churches, in wretched disrepair, are crumbling, are thatch dwellings often built upon broken stone foundations, and patches of cane fencing in spaces where the old stone copings or enclosures have fallen away.

Sets of fine old bells, often times, have been taken down from towers dangerously undermined and installed upon wooden or cane frameworks, where carelessness and indifference sometimes fasten them with rattan thongs. This is the reckless hand of revolution. It destroys the old monuments with a vindictive will, and it erects nothing in their stead. One does not argue in this comment in behalf of the old regime; one may be willing to let it lapse into oblivion, as it surely will whether one will or no; but one would wish that a new moral discipline would take hold upon the energies

of the people and awaken them. Because no church is to be built, or the old one repaired, must no one burn lime or mold brick for the building of other edifices? What a lethargy seems to have enthralled the spirit of the general populace. If they are now content with thatch chapels in lieu of masonry churches and cathedrals, why do they not have homes, mills, granaries and stores? Will they not even have machine shops and garages?

Or must the commentator conclude that absolutism befits their slothful natures, that peasants they are and peasants they always will be, as the nobles said of the churls of England; that their ambition does not rise above the cane rafter and the thatch eave, that the littered plaza does not offend them, and they do not shudder when the old friars' sacred little parks and village breathing places are defiled and encroached upon by the iron-slatted Chinese *tienda* and the bamboo market-stall. This paper, of course, reaches no conclusion; it merely remarks a condition, possibly transitory but certainly far too prolonged, which is not readily explained and which should perhaps give the governors of the people pause. Sociologically something is gravely wrong when fine crafts like hewing stone, making brick and burning lime, once so commonly known among the people, are utterly abandoned because the craftsmen have no clients.

The people have it in them, as the friars proved, but the times do not bring it out. The