

# School-Chapel of Cuenca



*to which the Benedictine Sisters and their pupils (San Scolastica College) have contributed the sum of ₱1240.*

A noble deed, worthy of imitation comes from converts of yesterday and may be a mirror for Christian-born. This splendid example of our converts' sacrifices may be exposed by the priests from the pulpit and, perhaps, serve as a stimulant to make the old Catholics repair their own churches, which have fallen or are falling into ruins.

It was last year at the end of December. The converts of Cuenca, a barrio of Pugo mission at a distance of about 8 kilometers from the mission-house, had decided to replace their old school-chapel. Four times since 1912 they had rebuilt of bamboo and straw a school for their children and a house for

God, when occasionally the Father says mass in their midst. Four times they had worked and slaved for this noble purpose, but the continual repetition had lost its charm. Now they would build a school-chapel, yes, but of stronger materials that would last longer. The annual mission was just finished, plans of a new building were approved, they would start the work at the proper time.

See here the proposition agreed upon by both the people and myself: the people of Cuenca would furnish 14 large beams and some thirty smaller pieces of lumber. Forty men would gather the grass for the roof and the bamboos for the

walls.

The Father would pay the carpenters, the cement, the iron for the concrete posts etc. and the floor.

No doubt there would be some difficulties to be smoothed later, but never had I dreamt of the following.

On the 18th of February 1913 the old school-chapel shack was torn down and the ground cleared. The next day I received a note from Cuenca: "Father the sand of Cuenca can not be used with cement. Come immediately."

Of course, I went immediately. In fact, the sand was bad and here comes the splendid example of my Christians. About one hundred of them, men, women and even children went to Camp One, four kilometers distant, to bring in the required pure sand. Up hill and down hill they went, under the burning sun, heavily laden with a basket of this now precious sand.

Three weeks later the frame of the new building was ready. A new note arrived from Cuenca: "Father come immediately." I had been there the day before. What now? Again I go in a hurry. What a surprise to find all the inhabitants around the school-chapel. And remembering the famous word "well done, Condor" of an English admiral after His battleship "Condor" had made a fine hit, I saluted my people saying: "well done Cuenkans." Some praise is always well placed, and it does not cost much.

"And the grass, my best friends?" I asked. No answer. Why? Old

Colis, a venerable chief of the locality comes nearer. Will he tell me that the fervor of his neighbors has cooled?

"Colis", I say, "next week, this school-chapel must be finished, eh?"

"That depends on you, Father", says Colis.

"On ME? But you offered to bring in the grass," I answered, while looking around in search of approbation of the well known contract.

"Sure," says Colis. "that WAS our promise, but . . . hum" . . . says Colis . . . "hum . . . hum" . . . His eyes twinkle, a forced smile appears on his puckered face, an evident sign he has a hard proposition to make; and continuing he says: "hum . . . hum . . . but now, we would like that YOU take charge of the roof." All present except myself approve. They all smile, I scratch my head.

"But" says Colis, "we will help you, yes, we will all help you, we will furnish the necessary lumber for the roof and you take care of the iron sheets".

And humming Colis sat down on his heels quite satisfied, full of . . . expectation. I had just received from St. Scolastica's College of Manila a generous gift. The Sisters and pupils of that College are of my best benefactors. Could I refuse the proposition of Colis? No.

"All right," I said. A murmur of a general approval formed the echo of my words and Colis chang-

ed position on his throne by force of amicable pulls of his old friends behind his back, as if to say "well done Colis". Our Cicero took his little pipe out of his mouth, knocked out its last ashes, stored it away into his inherited hat and rose as if to say: "Father and gentlemen and ladies, lend me your ears." No, he did not say that, but the following: "Now, Father, we must make the school-chapel of Cuenca the nicest of all the school-chapels of Pugo",

"Very well, Colis, I say, with a roof of iron that" . . . "and with walls made of boards from Manila" finished Colis in a hurry, "that will make the school-chapel of Cuenca, the nicest of all school-chapels in the world". I looked Colis straight in his eyes. This was too much for me . . . I mean: for my purse. If I said: "yes," I was in debt, I saw that in the twinkle of an eye, because it is all well to build the nicest school-chapels in the world, they must also and above all be useful spiritually: they need teachers, catechists and these must be

paid.

A long conversation followed for one hour and a half. But I avow it, I was beaten, terribly beaten by Colis: I was forced to order boards from Manila. And when I said finally, but a little dryly, "yes" I received an ovation and when I jumped into my saddle to return to Pugo, all shouted in the most lusty way: "Goodbye, Father, and a happy return to Pugo." The people of Cuenca furnished the lumber for the roof. They worked hard. They left even the work of repair at their own homes. They carried on their backs all kinds of materials, weighing more than 10,000 kilos, sawed all the lumber except the boards from Manila, and in one word: did everything WELL.

On May 30th the school-chapel of Cuenca stood as you see it in this picture. The generosity of the Cuencans has no equal, except that of St. Scolastica's College. "WELL DONE, Reverend Sisters and dear pupils of St. Scolastica. WELL DONE, noble Cuencans!"



AT THE CONVENTION OF AMERICAN TEACHERS IN WASHINGTON at the beginning of July, 15,000 educators of public schools recognized the right of the parents to educate their children according to the dictates of their conscience. Not only did they recognize the parochial schools as to their merits in advancing good citizenship and educational standards, but these teacher-delegates also declared that the private and parochial

schools should be encouraged because religious education "is a fundamental necessity for development of character". They urged cooperation between the public and parochial schools, the home and the Church in the training of the American youth. Such a truly Christian principle is a guarantee for a happy future along educational lines, if carried out into everyday practice, not only in the United States, but also in the Philippines.