VISITORS to Costa Rica are struck first by the simplicity and beauty of the architecture; the simplicity that characterizes the peon's hut and the president's palace, both of which are made from the native bricks and roofed with the quaint Spanish tiles, the making of which is one of the prettiest industries of this little republic.

San José sits in a cup-like valley, guarded on all sides by sleeping volcanoes. Anticipated earthquakes have influenced the architecture of the city. The dwelling houses are designed with only one story, though a few public buildings boast second-story balconies. These houses are built with apparently no thought of modernizing the styles of the architects' forefathers of a hundred years ago. The country seems to have found, as it were, a pattern in houses that suits its taste, and to have no inclination to depart from it. The result is a town at once quaint and dignified. In planning a home, as many rooms as are desired are grouped around an open space or patio, about which run the broad galleries which characterize the buildings in all southern countries. The galleries in this case are within and give on the courtyard instead of looking out on the street. This makes the privacy that the Spaniard demands for his family life.

It is these patios or courtyards that offer the possibilities of the house—possibilities that the beauty-loving home-maker seldom overlooks. The galleries are practically the living rooms of the family, and are furnished most charmingly with hammocks, tables, all sorts of easy chairs, oftentimes with bookcases, and with walls hung with family pictures. Flowers in hanging baskets are much in evidence, and there are always several canary birds to add their music to that of the guitars and mandolins found in every Spanish home. The patio itself most often resembles a tropical jungle with its wealth of palms and ferns and vivid flowers. A breakfast room gives on this, though usually the eleven o'clock breakfast and the five o'clock dinner are served on the gallery. A story might be written about the simplicity and excellence of the Spanish cooking. The breakfasts begin with that most delicious of all tropical fruits, the anona, which tastes like vanilla ice cream, paw-paws and bananas celestially blended with our Southern "sylabub."

Even the roofs that slope down over these galleries are gay with flowers. Vines grow in lush profusion and drop curtains of green
oftentimes to the ground, while varicolored lilies flaunt wonderful colors against the dull red of the tile roof.

The homes of the peons and the poorer classes who live in the outskirts of the town or in the country are the most picturesque feature of the place. Close your eyes and conjure up a sloping, irregular cobblestone street, stretching as far as the eye can reach out toward the mountains, which stand always veiled in mist, purple like a dove's breast; on either side of this street, which is selected at random from the many leading out from San José, are the homes of the poor, not poverty-stricken, however, when it comes to beautiful surroundings. See, yonder little adobe house, painted a heavenly blue, looks as if it might be a piece of stage scenery designed by an artist who had a daring eye for color; the roof is hidden by a waving wealth of bright pink orchids, the kind that wither away and die in the greenhouses of the rich. Its neighbor just across the street is yellow, painted many years ago and faded to a soft cream, throwing in bold relief the night-blooming cereus (queen of the night cacti) which spreads its luxuriance over the entire roof and sides of the house. Sometimes you are startled by the sight of a garden of old-fashioned clove pinks growing in great contentment on one of these roofs, or maybe it is a lavender orchid, powdered with diamond dust, as delicate as some rare piece of old lace, flaunting its beauty on the back room of a hovel, or over the room where the pig sleeps. The houses are painted all colors of the rainbow, partiality being shown for blue and pink and the various shades of yellow. And not one of these is too poor to boast a living, lovely frame of flowers. Tuberoses grow in the tiny gardens to marvelous perfection and in unbelievable abundance, and red hibiscus hedges enclose many houses whose owners are too poor to afford a rock fence.

Our own unlovely villages in the south and south central states might take lessons with profit from Costa Rica. For we, too, have clay of the same quality, and unlimited sand for cement blocks; in fact, as good or better material than the makers of the building material down there have at hand. The tiles they make are patterned after the regulation Spanish tile, and are shaped by a crude process of wetting the clay and putting it into trenches to be baked into form. The paint for the Costa Rican houses is usually of home manufacture. It is also made from the native clay, refined and mixed with lime, colored by inexpensive dyes or more often by improvised paints—the blues being made from the bluing used by washerwomen the world over, and the reds and pinks from brick

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THE TYPICAL COSTA RICAN PATIO IS A JUNGLE OF PALMS, VINES AND FLOWERS.
THE COSTA RICAN GALLERY CIRCLED THE PATIO IS USED AS A LIVING AND DINING ROOM.
THE DESERTED HOUSE

dust. Ochre gives the yellow tint, or a certain tone of clay mixed with water until it is the consistency of thin mud will do.

When we consider the cost of lumber to-day, and that getting lumber means losing our forests before the encroaching saw mill, and even then what flimsy houses, hot in summer and cold in winter, the poorer classes in small towns and in the country live in, the Costa Rican’s comfortable home, defying both heat and cold, the simplicity of the structure and the ease with which the material may be acquired, right at our own back doors, as it were, should make its own appeal.

THE DESERTED HOUSE

THEY kept a lifeless form within the room,
And decked his brow with roses red of bloom,
Nor saw his face more white beneath the red.
Beside the hearth a goodly feast they spread
Of meat and wine. “He will not taste thereof!”
They called—and called at last, “Ah, dead is Love!
See! Who comes fingerling his garment’s hem?
Destiny, drawn to sing Love’s requiem!”

They have gone down their ways. The dwelling stands
Forsaken now amid the open sands.
Mute is the morning of their minstrelsies.
Yet of a night the moonlit organ-keys
Rise to an unseen touch, the corridor
Awakes to pattering footsteps on the floor.
A little silver ghost runs desolate,
And beats its arms against the iron gate.

Agnes Lee.