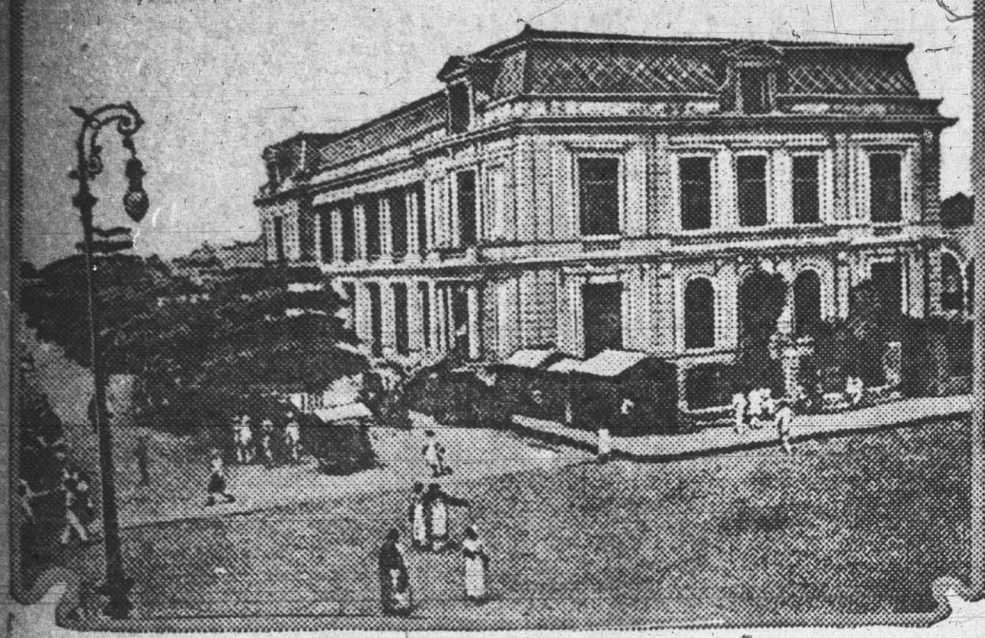


YUCATAN'S BUSY CAPITAL



The Federal Palace, Merida.

SAILING into a foreign port at the break of day appears to be a favorite custom with the average sea captain, and the occasion to which we write was no exception. For several hours our ship's course had been guided by flashes from the friendly lighthouse, and the latter we knew stood on the Yucatan shore at Progreso. The morning broke calm and peacefully over the tropical waters of the gulf, and soon the movement of anchor chains automatically announced that the limit had been reached—the limit of deep water—and five miles away lay Progreso, one of the world's most important shipping centers of henequen or hemp.

Going ashore at Progreso is rather an exciting novelty if not a dangerous experience, writes William A. Reid in the Bulletin of the Pan-American Union. The sea is alive with sharks, and they are darting here and there about the big ship, to the consternation of the stranger. The clear waters which bathe this shore seem to accentuate the size of these monsters, and while the visitor shudders the boatmen on the ship's tender, as we are bounding shoreward, announce that arrangements may then and there be made for a shark-fishing excursion later in the day.

Progreso from the sea presents long rows of houses flanked on either end by miles of sandy beaches, while a tall lighthouse about the center of the port dominates the surroundings. The general appearance is attractive, and even more so when we notice tidy buildings and the cleanly clothing of even the laboring class. The time was August when we arrived in Progreso—about the very worst season of the year for the foreign visitor in Yucatan; but business matters do not wait for the most propitious occasions. As a matter of fact, the winter season in the United States furnishes the best time climatically for visiting Yucatan.

Few Signs to See in Progreso.

Sightseeing in Progreso does not detain the visitor. But the port with its 5,000 people is usually a busy one, as the bulk of the vast henequen crop passes via Progreso to world markets. The smaller ships calling for cargo manage to draw much closer to port than the big ocean vessels; but when the long-tailed of piers are constructed several miles out into the roadstead the handling of the country's commerce will be greatly facilitated.

In the shipping season the town presents unusually active scenes with its trucks, mules, and men. One might imagine himself amid the cotton bales at New Orleans, so much do henequen and cotton resemble each other in the method of shipment and size of bales. By and by the day grows warmer, and one is glad to board the train for Merida, 30 miles southward. Traveling on this three-foot gauge road is cheap, being only about two cents a mile for the best accommodation offered. Slowly through the suburbs of Progreso our train steams, but soon we are moving rapidly over a level country with a dry and parched appearance, abounding in shrubs, cacti, and coarse grasses; but to this condition Yucatan owes its vast revenue derived from the marvelous little maguay plant and its product. Here and there are breaks in the barrenness and we catch sight of swamps with lilies and other water plants, a relief to look upon.

As our train proceeds, with stops at little stations en route, the cars are better filled, and at the same time opportunities are afforded for getting close glimpses of the henequen workers and their fields of maguay plants that lie in view from the car window. Long before sighting Merida the landscape becomes dotted with windmills, and when finally the capital city is reached one can almost imagine himself in old Holland or Barbados, about the only difference being that Yucatan has the modern-style mill. These windmills explain that Merida, like other regions of the country, must pump water from beneath the surface, so few are the lakes and streams.

Driving About Merida.

After being made comfortable in one of Merida's hotels we start out to view the city. There is no lack of vehicles and the stranger is literally swamped with proffers of a "delightful drive." Most of these small carriages, generally drawn by a single pony, have rubber tires, and many are kept conspicuously clean and inviting looking, despite the dust of the suburban sections of the city.

Merida today claims 62,000 people; and among its residents are numerous families of wealth which have acquired riches in connection with the great industry, the growing of the maguay and the production of henequen. Merida, while not as old as the port of Sisal, dates from 1542, when a settlement was founded by Francisco Montejo on the site of the ancient Maya city of Tihoo. Today one of the most interesting buildings to be seen in Merida is the casa Montejo, still well preserved after weathering the sunshine and storms of centuries. Another edifice which every visitor should see is the cathedral which was started in 1561 and not completed for nearly 40 years.

For those fond of seeing relics of bygone ages a visit to the museum will be full of interest, and especially so if some of the ancient Yucatan ruins are to be seen and explored. In the former one may inspect articles and curios that have been collected from the ruins and preserved—really a link connecting the art and trade of past centuries with present peoples.

Merida, commercially, industrially, and socially has greatly improved during recent years. Streets and avenues have been paved with asphalt, electricity has been provided, labor-saving machinery introduced, and otherwise life and conditions have been modernized.

Climatically, Merida is hot, but healthful. During the hours of mid-day the sun's rays are extremely unpleasant and the stranger is told to keep in the shade. Cool breezes from the surrounding seas, however, often temper the heat of the whole peninsula. The months of March and April are regarded as especially trying to the newcomer in any part of Yucatan; winter by far is the best season for visiting the country, and during these months the excursion to the famous ruins existing in several different parts of the peninsula can be made with a fair degree of comfort. The temperature in Merida ranges from about 75 degrees to 98 degrees Fahrenheit.

Volan the Popular Vehicle.

The visitor in Merida for the first time will be interested in a native vehicle known as the "volan," which might be aptly termed a half brother of the famous calash of Quebec. The volan has two big wheels and is usually drawn by three ponies working abreast; it is provided with easy-riding springs, a thick mattress floor covering offers a soft seat on the floor of the vehicle, while a top with side curtains protects the traveler from the sun's rays. Highways in Yucatan have not greatly improved with the degree of the prosperity of the land, and the volan seems to be a popular method of cross-country transportation. The stranger out of curiosity, if for nothing else, usually goes for a ride in this rather novel means of travel.

Mingling with the business men of Merida provides excellent opportunities for studying the commercial side of affairs; and I found many of these gentlemen willing to talk freely about Yucatan's future outlook. One of the first things which seems to have impressed itself upon the average resident is the improved condition provided for the laboring classes, such as higher wages for work and generally more freedom of action than in former years. Better wages out on the henequen plantation is of course reflected in the business activities of Merida, for the latter is not only the capital of the state but a place in which everything centers. The working day has been reduced to eight hours, and for this time the henequen laborer is paid the equivalent \$1.50 to \$3; five days the Yucatecan works and two days of the week are reserved for rest and recreation. On the larger plantations schools have been opened at the expense of the landowner, and numerous improved sanitary regulations are in force.

If the stranger tarries in Merida he is likely to have opportunities for seeing something of the home life of the people. Even during a stroll along the best residential streets a glance into open-door patios reveals charming flower gardens and a degree of comfort and refinement not noticeable from outward appearances of the average private home. Many of Merida's citizens are hospitable to a marked degree, and when the foreign visitor finds favor and is invited to the family circle he is on the road to many enjoyable functions.

Why Not Make Some Gifts This Christmas?

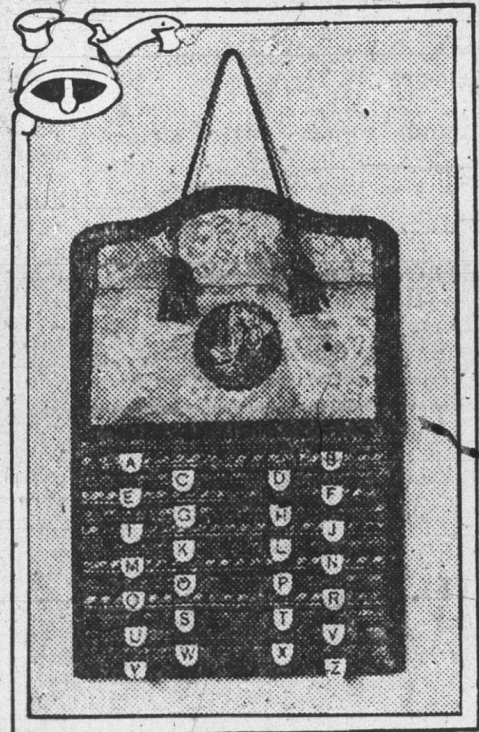
TOO often the days immediately before Christmas are spent in worrying over the buying of gifts which the giver can but ill afford and which are going to people whom she cares little about. These are what we



call "duty" presents and of all gifts they give the least pleasure to the giver. So try to put yourself in your gifts this year. Begin early and knit the cherub a play suit. Nothing is so soft, so warm and so comfortable for robust children outdoors in early winter weather.

For big brother get ribbon two and one-half inches wide, eight inches long; fringe both ends, then embroider initial in center or have gold letters put on. The band can be glued inside of his hat to identify it.

Father will need a new desk calendar and file for his office. So cover a

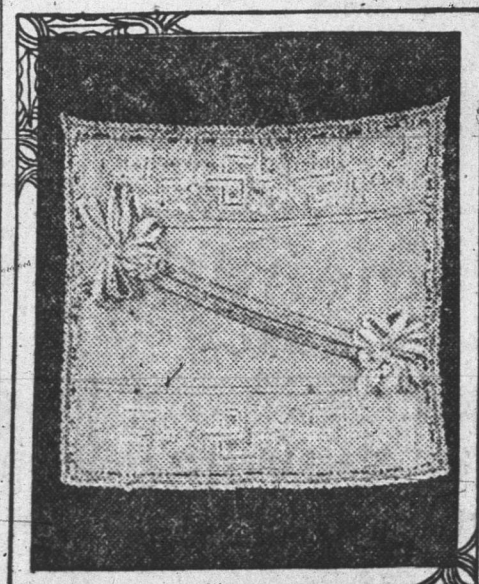


form with leather, cretonne or any durable material and hang it by silk cords. Crimson is a suitable color scheme. Apply an easily read calendar near the top center and with celluloid tabs index the lower part so daddy may fill his advance engagements in proper style.

For daddy and brother a child can enamel gayly the handles of garden and carpenter's tools. This adds an attractive touch to cold steel.

For the children an "evergreen pie" served at the Christmas breakfast table always causes great excitement. To make it fashion an immense pie dish of cardboard, paint it leaf green and cover thickly with sprays of evergreen. Put in the presents—all previously wrapped and labeled—and then put on the lid. The latter is shaped in cardboard and covered with nice evergreens.

The wee baby makes a new appeal to our gift instincts. Cover a downy square pillow with palest pink silk and



like the one pictured, cover this with fillet lace and handkerchief linen in strips that are strapped with satin baby ribbon set off with two soft rosettes. A delightful carriage pillow is this.

Some Good Things For the Christmas Stocking

SOME philosopher or other said long ago that we do not appreciate that which we do not work hard to obtain and that we love more the people whom we do for than we love the people who do most for us.

If your best friend motors make her a cap, a la sunbonnet, out of some durable silky material that matches her motor coat. Stiffen the visor with buckram, line it with plaid silk and



use the rest of this for a banding that ties carelessly in front.

Smoking jackets, suspenders, bath mules, necktie and collar cases for travelers, knitted golf gloves, throat muffers and tooled leather picture frames are some of the gifts you can make for the men in your family.

Nothing "boughten" could compare with the joy furnished a youngster by these toys that daddy made himself. Pine or sweet gum wood are easily manipulated, and the delight enters with the gay enamel paint that daddy



so skillfully applies to the elephant's howdah, the parrot's wings and the sailor boy's midship.

Mother may like something new and attractive in the form of luncheon napkins made of one and a half yards of white linen (a good quality comes at 75 cents a yard) cut into six squares and bordered with a pipot Irish edge after merely rolling the edges.

Or she may prefer a theater bag made of brocade velvet in any of the new colors and lined with a soft silk in contrasting color. They are made with a pocket in the bottom, either oblong or round, and the top has a casing through which gold ribbon is drawn.

Now that patriotism runs high make hubby a red, white and blue pillow for

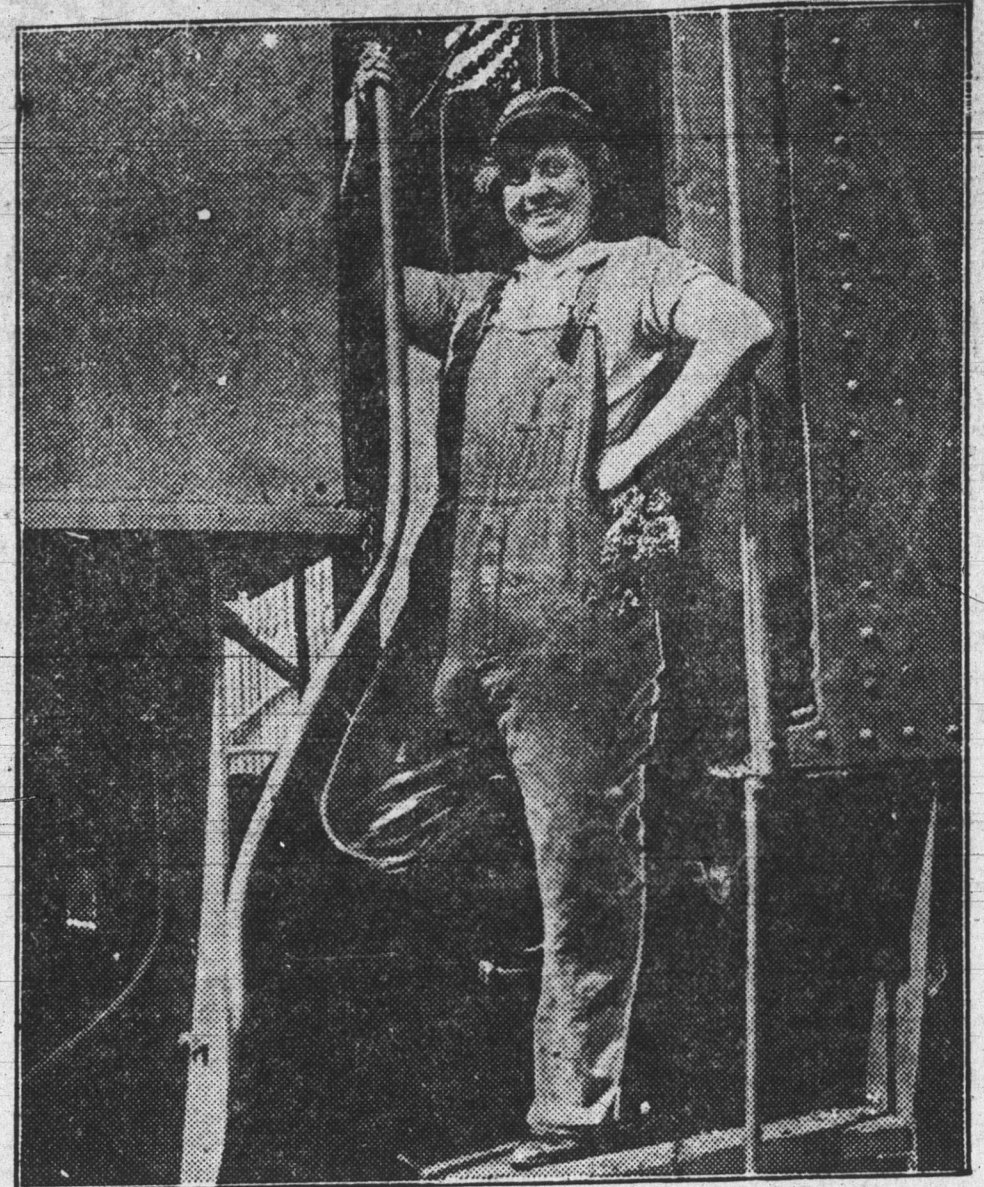


his Morris chair. The cut suggests the embroidery done on a background of linen crash.

A quickly made gift for a little girl and one which serves to teach her a lesson of neatness is a set of ribbon rolls for her hair ribbons. Small pasteboard cylinders, such as are used for mailing purposes, are first covered with cotton wadding and sachet powder and then with silk or satin. The material may be plain or flowered, but must be of a quality not to "run."

For the friend who boards a glass of homemade jelly or orange marmalade would be useful as well as ornamental. Apple jelly and orange marmalade as well as in the summer, and then one can truthfully say on the little card of greeting that it was made expressly for the friend to whom it is sent.

FRENCH WOMEN EMPLOYED ON RAILROADS



ONE OF THE HUSKY RAILROADERS.

The French railroad companies, which before the war only employed women to look after grade crossings and to distribute tickets, now use thousands of women as porters, controllers and as cleaners of carriages and locomotives. The state railway has gone so far as employing woman stokers on shunting locomotives and in a few cases woman engineers. The state railways alone employ 3,500 women.

In all their spheres of work these women, some widows, others fatherless, some daughters of mobilized men, work hard and long and rarely complain. Their employers are always pleased with them.

Students of labor conditions are asking when peace is restored what will happen to these women. There exists an arrangement drawn up between the different companies where women are employed and the men's syndicate by which the employment of women shall only be temporary. But it is quite possible that after the war women will be called upon to continue their work and probably more will be found to fill posts vacated owing to the tremendous losses in the war.

MOVE CAR BY HAND

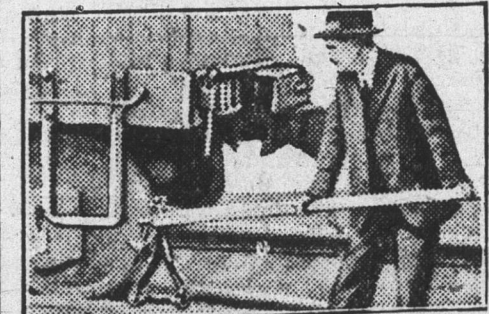
Device Has Clamp That Firmly Grips Wheel When Lowered.

LEVER IS OUTSIDE OF TRACK

By Use of Device Shown in Photograph One Man Can Move Heaviest of Cars—Slippery Rails Do Not Hinder Operator.

With a toll such as that invented by Charles McCarter of Decatur, Ill., any one can move a railroad car by hand. It has a clamp that firmly grips the car wheel when a lever (shown in the hands of the man in the photograph) is lowered. The lever has its end secured to a crank pivoted on a triangular wheeled frame, the wheels of which always rest on the track rail.

When the lever is raised cranks release the clamp from its grip on the car wheel. As the lever is arranged outside of the track it may be operated



Moving Heavily-Loaded Car.

without any hindrance where two cars are coupled, for there will be ample room to move the lever. The car wheel is rolled three inches at one stroke of the lever.

When the car wheel moves, the car mover rolls on the rail and they both travel together. One man can move the heaviest loaded car on any kind of track. Slippery rails do not hinder the operation, and there is not the least danger of the operator getting his fingers or toes mashed or being hurt in any way.

The tool and its frame are light enough to be easily carried where needed. It is especially useful where a car switched on a siding has come to a stop a few feet short of the desired place for loading or unloading. With the mover the car can be placed exactly where it is needed in a few minutes' time and without requiring the services of more than one man.—Popular Science Monthly.

ENGINEER HELD NOT GUILTY

Accused in North Carolina Because There Was Nothing to Indicate Danger to Human Life.

A locomotive engineer is held not guilty of manslaughter in the North Carolina case of State vs. Tankersley, 90 S. E. 781, annotated in L. R. A. 1917 C. 533, in colliding with a standing train and killing passengers thereon because he fails to obey a cautionary signal, if there was nothing about the signal to indicate that there was danger of collision or that life was in danger.

RAILROAD MAN IS ARTISTIC

Planted Vines Around His Tower That It Would Not Be Eyesore to Traveling Public.

The towerman of the Southern Pacific railroad at Pomona, Cal., is an exception to most men in his line of business, says a writer in Boy's World. He is not satisfied to have his tower looked upon by the villagers and traveling public as an eyesore. Consequently he has planted vines around it and trained them into designs, so as to conceal the unsightly outlines of his "nest." He has trained some of the vines to grow into the shape of the letters "S" and "P," the initials of the road for which he works. He has also made a neat border around his yard with whitewashed stones, and planted a variety of flowers, and even vegetables. In the yard he has built a tiny house to add variety to the landscape. He raises enough vegetables in this unique garden for the use of his family.

LINK SWEDEN AND FINLAND

Expected Connection Will Be Established by Autumn of 1918—Plans Completed.

Construction plans for linking up the railways of Sweden and Finland have been drawn up and it is expected that the connection will be established by the autumn of 1918. The bridge over the Tornea river, between Tornea and Haparanda, is to be a single-track bridge, but in view of the fact that there is a difference of gauge between Swedish and Russian railways, two sets of rails will be laid on it, so that the bridge may be used by both Russian and Swedish rolling stock, though not simultaneously.

AUTOS TO ASSIST RAILWAYS

Freight Cars Needed for Shipment of Munitions, and Car Dealers Urged to Unload Promptly.

Automobile dealers throughout the country are being urged to aid the government in every way possible to increase the efficiency of railroads. With huge quantities of munitions that must be moved expeditiously, it is absolutely necessary that the loading and unloading of other freight be done without undue delay. Railroads are now required to do several times as much work as in ordinary times. It is necessary, therefore, that freight cars be kept on the move and motorcar dealers are being urged to unload their shipments promptly.

GIVE RED CROSS PREFERENCE

Shipments Will Be Exempt From Embargoes and Take Right of Way Over Other Freight.

The railroad war board has notified the war council that Red Cross shipments will be exempt from all embargoes and take right of way over all save government freight. Virtually all the cargo space needed by the Red Cross for ocean transportation is already at its disposal, much of it being given free by the steamship companies.