

## CULTURE OF BANANAS.

### A CENTRAL AMERICAN INDUSTRY OF GREAT PROPORTIONS.

The banana has the foremost place in the importation of tropical fruits to this country—easy of cultivation—big returns to the banana farmers.

As a table delicacy and a fruit now universally sought and consumed by the American people, says Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly, the banana readily and easily takes the foremost place of all the vast products of the tropics. It has been but a brief span of years since this dainty and toothsome denizen of Central America became generally known, especially to the vast interior cities of the United States. But the intimacy which steam navigation has established between this country and the tropics, as well as the rapid transit to points remote from the seaboard, has rendered possible a most stupendous traffic in the most delicate and perishable fruits. Under such favorable and encouraging conditions, the banana trade, with almost incredible rapidity, has increased from a few thousand clusters, eighteen years ago, to the enormous annual importation of over five million bunches.

If tradition is to be relied upon, the banana has an ancient and royal lineage from the earliest and mythic epochs of human career. The fruit is also known in the East as "Adam's Fig," which fortifies a claim made of its having furnished to his great broad leaves, the primeval costumes of our first parents. It is considered the *musa paradisiaca* of the botanists, and its vast spreading foliage would have easily invited selection as a covering for the nakedness of those early dwellers in the Garden of Eden.

Contrary to the prevailing idea, the banana is not indigenous to the Western hemisphere, as its first roots were brought over to America by a monk in 1516, and was first cultivated in Honduras. It is natural, therefore,



LOADING BANANAS AT PUERTO CORTEZ.

that the first country of its adoption should now be the foremost in its importation, and the unknown ecclesiastic, who brought over the first germ, was the pioneer in one of the greatest fruit industries of the new world.

The lowlands of all tropical countries are essentially hot, and while not gracious and inviting as a residence for man, they furnish a very necessary condition of both soil and climate for the development and propagation of the banana. Under such a climatic state, the vigor and energy of man will decline and he would be unable to properly cultivate the plant and reap the full benefit of its production, if required to use as much exertion as is demanded in other latitudes. But nature here, in her great and beneficent economies, comes to his relief and has provided against the necessity of any hard work and moderated all demand for any severe mental or physical exercise. The farm work is light, simple and easy, while it can all be confined to the cool hours of morning and evening, leaving the laborer to enjoy his favorite siesta, in some inviting shade, during the heated term.

There is a fallacy prevailing that the banana forms the principal and staple food of these natives. This is not only a mistake, but, strange as it may appear, they often warn foreigners, sojourning in the country, to beware of too free an indulgence in this species of fruit. The natives never eat the banana, except when it is cooked like the potato, and generally while it is green. This precaution against eating the fruit is not so necessary in temperate climes, where disorders of the intestinal functions are not so dangerous and where the digestion is not weak and low, as in hot countries. The banana grows luxuriantly



BANANA FARMERS OF SULA VALLEY, HONDURAS.

throughout the lowlands of British and Spanish Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. A small supply also comes from Colombia, Jamaica and Cuba, but the bulk of our supply is harvested in Central America. The most suitable soil is the shady, alluvial deposits, along the banks of rivers and streams not often subject to overflow, and the cultivation is confined to weeding, thinning out and "molding up." Any deficiency in the "stand" of the crop planted is easily supplied by the purchase of slips at one dollar per hundred. Just eight

months after this slip is put in the ground it will furnish its first bunch of bananas, and one only requires a machete and a forked stick to gather the fruit. When ready to cut, the bunch is taken four feet from the ground, in order to allow the moisture to drain back into the stool of the plant; the forked stick receives the bunch and lets it easily to the ground and the stalk is allowed to decay and enrich the soil. Suckers soon shoot



A BANANA SHED, NICARAGUA.

out from the stump and all but two are cut away and planted elsewhere. One average bunch will stand about four feet in height, weigh ninety pounds, have twelve handles or clusters and contain 180 bananas. An acre will produce about 250 bunches during the second year after planting, and an average yield for the future of 300 bunches per annum. The price of the fruit fluctuates slightly during the season, but averages at the steamer from twenty to thirty cents per bunch, and to the frugal and careful farmer this represents a profit of thirty-five or forty per cent. This may sound extravagant, if not incredible, to our American farmers, but it is nevertheless a fact, which can be substantiated by a number of our citizens, who have settled in this country and are making small fortunes. Land can be obtained very cheap, and to clear it up and prepare the first crop has been computed to cost nine dollars per acre. The natives care but little for any more than their immediate necessities, and consequently are mostly the laborers of numerous enterprising foreigners, who constitute the bulk of the banana farmers. The opening of new markets and the greatly increased demand for the fruit has stimulated the clearing and opening of many new and extended farms during the past three or four years. There is always a certain and sure sale for the product, as each farmer, at the very beginning of the planting season, can contract for the sale of his entire crop to any of the



NATIVE MESTIZO LABORERS.

competing lines of steamers which regularly visit the coast. If he chooses this course the only thing that should concern him is proper attention to make the yield as great as possible, having no uneasiness as to his market. The competition for the business has become very strong and many additional steamers and new markets have been created, as a stimulus and encouragement to increased production.

Barios, as this will traverse the Montagna Valley, one of the richest sections of Central America.

The trade of Honduras, confined also to the Atlantic side, is the most extended of all the tropical countries. Her leading banana ports are Puerto Cortez, Ceiba and the islands of Utila and Ruatan, although some fruit is also taken from Tela, Truxillo, Iriona and Gracias a Dios. The bulk of the imports, however, come through

Puerto Cortez, the terminus of the Honduras Railroad, which traverses the great Sula and Ulina valleys for a distance of forty miles. This section is exhibiting the greatest development of the banana industry to be observed in Central America, and with improved railroad facilities is destined to become one of the greatest fruit depots of the world.

The business of Nicaragua is confined to the ports of Bluefields, Greytown and Pearl Lagoon, and practically the entire product is shipped to New Orleans or Mobile. Renewed interest in the industry is manifest throughout this section, and fresh lands are being opened to banana cultivation along the Rama and Escondido Rivers.

The banana trade of Costa Rica, confined exclusively to Port Limon, shows the most rapid growth of any other Central American country. Its



GOLD BRICK, ONE-THIRD ACTUAL SIZE, WORTH \$72,000.

product, raised mostly in the canton of Matina, has grown from an output of a few thousand bunches in 1882 to 1,500,000 bunches for the present year. According to the statement of Consul Delgado, at New York, that city alone has received about 700,000 bunches during 1896, while the receipts at New Orleans from Costa Rica have been fully as much, if not in excess of that figure. From calculations made, on reliable statistics, the approximate banana production of Central America for the present year is as follows:

British Honduras	325,000
Spanish Honduras	1,750,000
Guatemala	450,000
Nicaragua	600,000
Costa Rica	1,600,000
Total	4,725,000

This is considered a very conservative estimate, and if the amount of local consumption, rejections and loss from over-mature fruit is considered, the product will easily aggregate over five million bunches. Add to this the amount of the fruit brought from Jamaica, Colombia, Cuba and other sources, and the whole will approximate very close to eight million bunches. Engaged directly in this business are about thirty steamers and an equal number of sailing vessels, while double that number are engaged in the traffic in connection with other products of the tropics.

**How to Keep Flowers Fresh.**  
Some people are not aware that flowers will keep fresh much longer if the stems are set in a dish of sand than if they are plunged simply into water. Put the flowers into a vase as usual; then carefully sift into the vase by means of a funnel sufficient sand to fill it nearly to the top, shaking it so that the sand will settle down among the stems. Gradually add water until it stands a very little above the top of the sand, and replenish the water as often as needed.

An ordinance prohibiting screens in saloons has been adopted in Cleveland, Ohio.

## HEN KILLS A "RATTLER."

A Fierce Duel in Which "Biddy" Whipped the Snake.

Attorney Ben T. Hardin, of Kansas City, Mo., is never happier than when he has a gamecock under each arm. He is an enthusiastic breeder of fowls, and



A HEN WHIPS A RATTLESNAKE.

raises nothing but game chickens. Occasionally the chickens raise trouble. They raised a rumpus about a week ago, and as a result Mr. Hardin was treated to the novel sight of a fierce duel between a hen and a rattlesnake. The lawyer was proudly watching his pets wander towards the bushes at the further end of the yard, when suddenly one of the hens gave a cry of alarm. It was too late. The seven rattles on the tail of a big snake sounded, and an instant later the fowl was struck. A hen by her side, instead of running away, got her fighting blood up, saw a chance for a good battle and pitched in. She fought scientifically, and proved that she knew a good deal about the vital spots of a snake. She made a few passes, dodging for advantage, and before the reptile realized its danger one fierce peck at the back of its head ended its existence. The hen that was bitten by the snake died in agony.

## GOLD BRICK WORTH \$72,000.

A Solid Cone of the Precious Metal, One-Third Actual Size, as Pictured.

A solid cone of gold was received in New York recently by the agency of the Bank of Montreal, from the Caribou Hydraulic Mining Company, of British Columbia. The chunk was the result of about two months' work

## BLAZERS AND BOLEROS.

### FEATURES OF WOMAN'S DRESS THAT ARE AS POPULAR AS EVER.

Simple and Stylish Design of a Blazer That is Suitable For Either Ladies or Misses—Handsome Boleros of White Organdy and Motre Uniquely Decorated.

Nothing seems to hold popular favor more completely than the blazer, writes May Manton. The style shown in the illustration is both simple and



LADIES' AND MISSES' BLAZER.

stylish. The pattern is given for misses as well as ladies, there being absolutely no difference in cut between those worn by the growing girls and



HANDSOME AND STYLISH BOLEROS.

their mammas. The fronts are without darts and there are straight backs, which are laid in underlying plaits at the waist line, side forms and under-arm gores by means of which the fitting is effected. The sleeves are two-seamed and show the regulation slight fullness at the top. The fronts are reversed to form lapels which meet the rolling coat collar in uneven notches.

As shown, the material is light weight covert cloth, but all-wool stuffs as well as pique, linen, duck, crash and cotton cheviot are well suited to the style. Whatever the material, the finish is an important point, and differs according as the material is washable or is not. All goods classed under the latter head are made unlined, the seams being neatly bound and both collar and revers simply self-faced without stiffening.

Wool goods of all sorts call for a lining of taffetas and for an interlining of tailor's canvas in both collar and revers, as well as a two-inch facing round the lower edge and at the wrist of each sleeve. When so treated the blazer takes that set that nothing else can give, and should be quite as stylish as though made by an expert. The revers and collar are invariably faced with the material, but the facing may be either the severe machine stitching or an applique of narrow braid as indicated.

To make this blazer for a lady in the medium size will require two and one-quarter yards of forty-four-inch material.

### Ladies' Boleros.

The models illustrated in the large engraving, and described by May Manton, show two different styles of the ever popular bolero. No. 1 is composed of white organdy tucked in clusters or groups that are joined by bands of insertion. The garment is simply adjusted by shoulder and under-arm seams. The back shows a straight lower edge while the fronts are shaped in rounding outline. The collar is a close band overlaid with violet ribbon stylishly bowed at the centre-back. To the upper edge of the collar is sewed a full divided ruche of lace providing a soft and becoming fullness. Epaulettes frills bordered with ruffle of lace, headed by a single band of insertion, droops over the sleeves of the bodice which is composed of white spotted muslin over violet batiste.

No. 2 is carried out in white moire uniquely decorated with black satin ribbon. It is worn over a gown of barege showing white and royal blue. The jacket is sufficiently short to permit of the wearing of a deep girdle. The back is slashed after the manner of the latest models and is joined by shoulder and under-arm seams to the fronts that close at the neck, gradually separating below this point to show the full waist beneath. The collar and epaulettes are similar to those seen in No. 1. Jaunty little boleros of this description can be made of silk, satin, velvet, moire velours, canvas and other fashionable weaves, and decorated according to individual taste. Among the suitable trimmings are ribbon applied in straight bands, ruffles or narrow quillings, lace, bands of insertion, or heavy guimpe lace applique over brilliant hued satin. Spangles and sequins are frequently seen upon black satin, the effect being exceedingly beautiful.

It requires but the merest trifle of material to make either one of these charming little boleros that can be made either to match the waist over which it is worn or of contrasting fabric. Remnants can be picked up at a trifling cost, making it within the reach of every woman to possess a stylish little accessory that will do wonders in smartening up last season's gowns.

To make either bolero for a lady in the medium size will require one and seventh-eighths yards of twenty-two-inch material.

### Neat and Useful Wrapper.

A neat and useful gown is here shown composed of polka-dot percale, trimmed with bands of insertion. The upper portion consists of a short yoke that is simply adjusted by shoulder seams, and has a straight lower edge. The full portion has side seams, and is gathered at the upper edge and joined to the yoke, a single band of insertion

concealing the seam. The sleeves are one-seamed and sufficiently loose to permit of perfect freedom of the arms, a feature necessary in gowns of this description. Gathers adjust the fullness of the sleeves at the upper and lower edges, and a single band of insertion completes the wrists. The neck finishes with a neat rolling collar. Percale, dimity, gingham, lawn, batiste and all washable fabrics are adapted to the mode, or the garment can be made of either French or outing-flannel, in which instance it can



LADIES' MOTHER HUBBARD WRAPPER.

be used as a nightdress when traveling. Ladies contemplating a sea voyage will find gowns of this description exceedingly comfortable and practicable.

To make this wrapper for a lady in the medium size will require eight yards of thirty-six-inch material.

Japan has ordered four thirty-one-knot torpedo boat destroyers of the Yarrows, of England.



NEW "TRANSFORMED" COIFFURE.

seen here. It is fixed to a single strand easily concealed among the front locks and does not heat the head.

### The Discoverers of Anesthesia.

The credit for first using anesthesia, which has done so much to lessen human pain, must be shared by three men; Wells, of Hartford, Conn., who employed nitrous oxide in 1844; Morton, of Boston, who tried ether successfully in 1846, and Sir J. Y. Simpson, of Edinburgh, who introduced chloroform a year later.

Texas is to tax cigarette dealers to the tune of \$1000 a year.