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Severe but Deserved. It is startling to read of three Americans having been sentenced to be shot in Mexico, their crime being the murder of persons in whose life insurance they were interested. They had conspired to defraud the New York Life Insurance Company by securing policies on certain lives, then killing the insured and collecting the policy money. This they had done in two cases and fraudulently drawn \$25,000 from the company. One of the murderers, one Hurlburt, acted as the company's agent in Mexico, under a false name. He was a fugitive from justice. It seems a pity to execute such miscreants by shooting, rope's end is good enough for men of that class.

Christmas Fire Risks. No two things are more violently contrasted than Christmas festivities and fire dangers. Yet they are too frequently associated as cause and effect.

Already some stores have made excellent arrangements for being burnt out, or flooded. We see windows crowded with highly inflammable decorations so fixed as to appear as if set for a fire. Straw, muslin, tissue paper, fluffy cotton, that would flash into flame on the slightest provocation, are seen in windows where gas jets and oil lamps are so placed and so ill-protected as to create a serious risk. A gust of wind might bring one of these lights into contact with inflammable goods. Electric bulbs are regarded as though they involved no risk as they may be seen placed in almost direct touch with flimsy decorations which they are preparing for a blaze. Storekeepers need informing that the heat of an electric bulb will char certain fabrics, which is a long step towards their taking fire. In his warning against Christmas display, dangers Mr. Davis, Ohio Fire Marshall, writes: "If gas is used the burner should have a globe or wire screen, or both. There is no safe place on earth for a swinging gas-bracket. The arc light should not be used

in dry goods stores because the heat in the arc is 4892 degrees F. and glowing particles of carbon drop from it.

Incandescent electric lights are less dangerous than gas but are far from safe in show windows. Light fabrics or cotton in contact with a small electric bulb will char in ten minutes and then a puff of air will cause them to blaze. The combs and ornaments made of celluloid will explode if exposed to the heat from one of these lamps.

Electric lamps in show windows should not hang by flexible cords and inflammable goods should not be placed in contact with lamp sockets. Electric lamps in such locations should be renewed after 300 hours' use, because the heat produced by a lamp grows with age owing to the increase of resistance in the filament.

Christmas tree dangers will make another story.

South American Character. Their Debts and States. The report of the Council of Foreign Bondholders for 1904-5 mentions that the Columbian, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras and the Buenos Ayres Cedulae still remain in default.

The report says: "It is certain that sooner or later these defaulting countries will realize that the absence of all credit and the fact that the money markets of the world are closed to them, outweigh any sacrifices they might have to make in order to pay their obligations to the bondholders."

The "Economist" remarks:

Experience has shown, as a rule, that when a defaulting Spanish-American State resorts to honesty, it is a *policy* rather than a principle, and if Honduras and Guatemala again make some kind of offer to their creditors, the motive of their action will be a characteristic desire to indulge in fresh borrowing. The Honduras Government simply ignores its creditors.