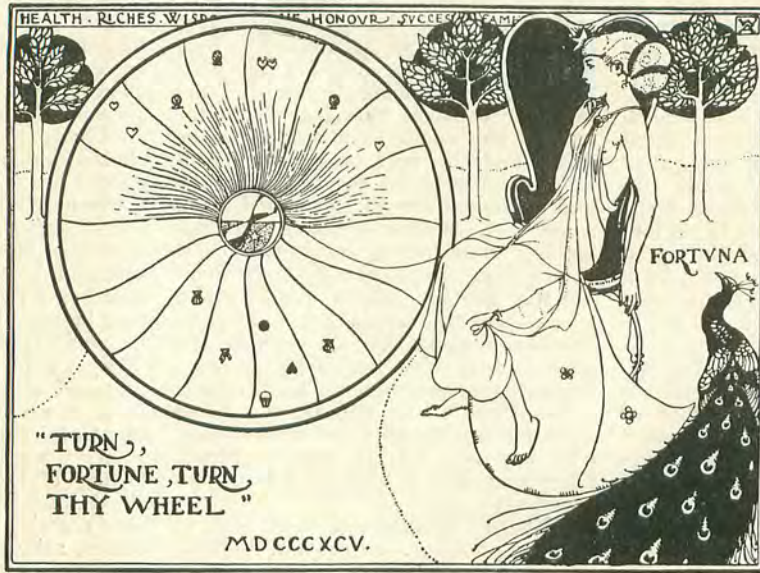


PRIVATE CHRISTMAS CARDS.

THE origin, full popularity and gradual abandonment of a widely spreading social custom usually covers many generations; but the rise of the Christmas card, its rapid acceptance and the signs of its waning hold upon public taste, all fall well within half a century. Nor, trivial as it may appear by the side of matters affecting morals or health, does its little history fail to reflect many far more important movements that were its contemporaries. It has been said of modes, that when once a garment is recognised as "the fashion," it is a proof that it has really ceased to be fashionable. But the affectation of superiority which would limit a fashion to a few aristocratic leaders, cannot be urged against the Christmas card. It came into being with a new recognition of the beauty of the Christmas festival, and was in its intention a formal expression of the settling of quarrels, the balancing of social accounts, wiping off old debts, and at least professing to be in amity with all men as befits the season. Nor was it a movement confined to any particular class, all ranks of people were alike anxious to forward, by its help, kindly greetings to their friends. Nor, curiously enough, although in idea distinctly the outcome of an ecclesiastical feast, did it attract those



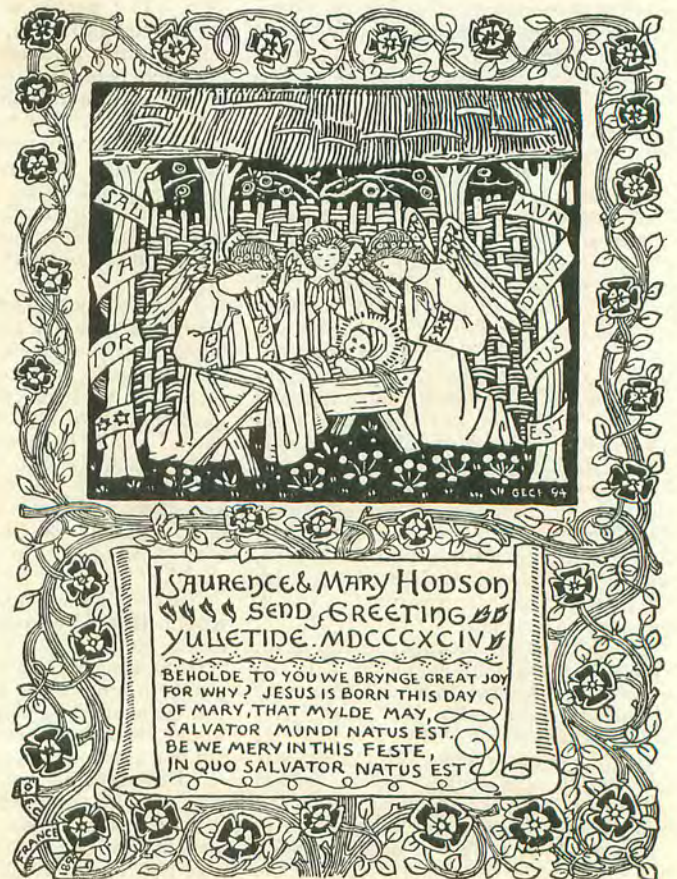
only whose creed implies formal recognition of certain appointed days. As in far Japan the New Year's exchange of very similar cards of greeting was observed by non-Christian peoples, so in England the feast of Christmas was interpreted in the sense of the angels' message to include all men of good-will, Jews, infidels, Turks and heretics alike. How the pleasant and graceful courtesy grew to overwhelming proportions, so that which was at first a sincere message became a purely formal

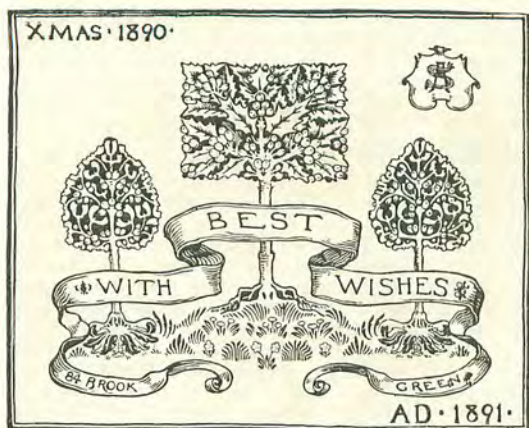
For if you have to strike an average message that shall suit the more distant acquaintance as well as the dearest friend, it is the lowest mean average that is usually struck. Thanks to the growth of various new economic processes which enable a special design to be prepared for lithographic, or still better, for ordinary letter-press printing, at a price out of all proportion to older methods of engraving, it is now possible for anyone of quite moderate means not merely to have a



MAY THE TREE OF THE NEW YEAR CONTINUE THE FRUITFULNESS OF THE PAST

GREETING FROM E. & F. JACKSON, 1894





So much for the commercial side of the affair, which is always best got out of the way as soon as possible. The artistic side is not so easily settled. This, for two or three reasons. First, people's tastes differ, or they think they do, to an alarming extent. But if you look close into the matter, few people have much of their own. What passes for taste is merely (as a rule) the selection of somebody else's taste to imitate. We all imitate more or less; those who are careful to choose great examples reap the reward. For although it sounds like a paradox when put in plain words, we are generally more original when consciously following another's lead than when we believe we are initiating something no one ever

thought of doing before. In the first case, the unconscious personal element so modifies our intended imitation, that the subtle difference is often enough to give a distinctly individual character to the work. When we purposely try to be absolutely original, we either produce some hideous thing that all well-conducted minds had rejected before, or it turns out to be a plagiarism that the trickster memory had supplied us with, and not recalled the source at the same time.

For designs, we may go far afield, and yet find someone has been there before. When one realises the really stupendous fact that in England alone about 200,000 designs have been published for Christmas and New Year's cards, the chances of getting hold of a new idea at once suitable and in good taste appears somewhat remote.

As we may take it that the cost and technical knowledge involved in the preparation of a colour design limits us to black and white, we will only consider that the conventional expression "black and white" includes any single colour on any single colour. It is, in fact, merely the vernacular for "monochrome," which sounds rather like a text-book.



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So in choosing your design, do not be afraid of selecting a good model, and adapt it exactly to please your taste. If gifted with artistic talent, you prepare the design yourself, whatever colour you elect to have it printed, the drawing should



be in absolutely black ink—ebony wood-stain, costing sixpence a bottle, or the liquid Indian ink, sold by artists' colourmen, or perhaps, best of all, waterproof American Indian ink, which costs a shilling a bottle. If you use the latter, you can make any corrections in Chinese white, which is a great advantage, hence its superiority to purely soluble inks.

The design is best if drawn about half as large again as the intended impression. One warning is of the first importance, namely, to use as few lines as possible, and those strong and clearly defined. Never employ a dozen fine lines when one thick one will do as well. To be simple is much harder than people suppose; in drawing a detail, a dozen scratches all somewhere near the exact place of the contour gives a specious air of careless abandon. In the hands of a master it may not only do this honestly, but at the same time impart a sense of movement; but in the hands of a novice it implies carelessness merely, which is not quite the same thing as careless power. If you are not sure of your prowess in figure-drawing, treat the doubt as a certainty that you are unequal to tackle the most difficult of all subjects. But even this need not keep you limited to still-life forms, because any old



To WISH
MR GLEESON WHITE
A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

15 TOWASHEND ROAD.
RICHMOND-ON-THAMES 1894.



woodcut or engraving may be pasted on your card, and a border, with appropriate lettering, added. I say any old engraving, because the copyright laws forbid you to make copies of modern work. For this purpose dozens of old woodcuts of the Nativity and other suitable subjects, and many exquisite etchings and engravings of the Old Masters, are both admirable and available. As copyright extends forty-two years, after the publication, or seven years after the artist's death (whichever be the longer), it is safer to consider nothing since 1840 as open to indiscriminate reproduction. If, however, you will be entirely original, first think out your subject well, and sketch it in pencil, then add the lettering. Now to draw a design may be a thing not within the power of everybody to acquire, but to letter well means only good taste and infinite patience. If your lettering is poor, the whole result will be feeble; but really firm, well-placed inscriptions will add dignity to a poor design. In fact it is hardly overstating the case to say that the importance of the lettering is far and away beyond that of all the rest. In the reproduced designs, the charming fancy of

Mr. F. G. Jackson's card would seem ten times as good, did bolder and better-placed lettering fill up the space at the lower right-hand corner.

In "Fortune's Wheel," by Mr. Alan Wright, a design made for Dr. Harrison Low (who reproduced it in most marvellous carbon photographs), the lettering is entirely good; so in Mr. Arthur Gaskin's "Hodson" card, the lettering, rough as it is, is admirably planned. In the delightful little silhouette, the placing of the wording is so good, that one overlooks the fact of its being just hasty—but quite consistent—printing.

The mottoes available are legion. It is best to hunt up an unhackneyed one, or invent a pleasant greeting of your own, not too coldly formal in its wishes.

If your artistic power can only design a few sprigs of flowers, see that the sprigs are placed well on the card, and study to arrange the wording so that the design is improved by it. To know what to avoid, one has but to look at the cheap illuminated texts, where gigantic and hideous ornamental letters, so-called, ruin the effect of the decoration, which is often quite decent in its way.

Do not be afraid of simplicity, better three simple sprigs in a row, with plain type-letters below, than a formless, shapeless mass. If possible enclose all you design within a strong border-line (not necessarily rectangular), it brings the whole into unity, and yields a decorative effect.

Did but space permit, a hundred designs might be reproduced here, in proof of the popularity this pleasant innovation has already won.

A last word of warning, to prepare these things well before the time; the block will take a few days to make, the printer also will require one or two clear days. Everybody is pushed to the extreme limit of busy-ness at Christmas-time, and by planning in advance you will save yourself anxiety, and refrain from adding to that of others. It is always a pity when any pleasure is gained at the cost of another's worry or pain, so this little homily may be forgiven at a season when the ruling sentiment of all should be one of thoughtful consideration for the happiness of others, in small things as well as great.

GLEESON WHITE.

VARIETIES.

WHAT HIS OPINIONS WERE.

During a riot in Belfast some years ago, a man was asked by some of the mob what his opinions were. He was a prudent man: he did not know anything of the views of his questioners, but he looked at their weapons, their bludgeons, and their fowling-pieces, and having surveyed them all, he answered—

"Gentlemen, I am of the same opinions as that man there with the big axe."

MILLIONS OF PIGEONS.—The wild pigeon or passenger-pigeon is very plentiful in many parts of Canada and the United States, but of old it was much more so. Their countless numbers may be guessed from the fact that a flock seen by Wilson, the ornithologist, was estimated to consist of more than 230 millions. About the close of the seventeenth century these birds so swarmed and ravaged the colonists' crops, near Montreal, that a bishop of the Roman Catholic Church there was requested to exorcise them with holy water, as if they had been demons.

A GEOGRAPHY LESSON.

Forty counties England boasts,
Or in her midst or on her coasts;
Sixteen the stormy seas do face,
Two dozen fill the inland space;
Wales adds one dozen to the score,
Three are islands, nine skirt the shore;
Thus, for each week in all the year,
England and Wales a county count, that's clear.

PEACOCKS FOR EATING.—The high appreciation of the peacock at the most sumptuous banquets is referred to by many classical authors. The bird is nearly always included in mediæval bills of fare on state occasions. In the days of chivalry one of the most solemn oaths was taken "on the peacock," which seems to have been served up garnished with its gaudy plumage.

MAKING THE BEST OF IT.—A girl who knows the world will not only make the most of everything she does know, but of many things she does not know, and will gain more credit by her adroit mode of hiding her ignorance than the pedant by her awkward attempts to exhibit her erudition.

WHAT IS A GENTLEMAN?

Girls may gain some insight into the characteristics of a gentleman from the following description by the late Cardinal Newman:—

"The gentleman," says the Cardinal, "has his eyes on all his company; he is tender towards the bashful, gentle towards the distant, and merciful towards the absurd. In his conversation he will remember to whom he is speaking, have thought for all his company, and avoid allusions that would give pain to any of them, steering away also from topics that irritate.

"When he does a favour to another—and he does many—the gentleman will somehow make it appear that he is receiving the benefit instead of conferring it.

"He is never mean or little in his disputes. Moreover he shows that he has an intellect far above the average, in the fact that he never mistakes personalities and sharp sayings for arguments. Most of mankind do so.

"When grief, sickness, or losses come to him, he submits to pain, because it is inevitable. Bereavement he takes with heroic philosophy, because it is irreparable. He goes to death without a murmur, because it is the will of God."

A REASON FOR COURAGE.

"If I get down-hearted," remarks a thoughtful writer, "a voice says 'Let not your heart be troubled.'"

"I listen, and listen, and listen, and by-and-by it says again, 'I will be with you always, even to the end of the world!'"

"God and me! Can you reckon up how much that is worth?"

DOUBLE ACROSTIC I.

The intrepid warrior, combating 'gainst fearful odds,
Adjures his comrades by their sires, their homes, their gods,
To guard the narrow path, to bar the invaders' way,
And, till that path is broken, keep the foes at bay.
The poet who the heroic act so well has sung
In words that burn like fire, and make old men feel young.

1. The friendly king who, when his neighbours build
And claim the aid of all throughout the land,
Contributes trees and brass and workmen skilled
To raise the noblest fane that e'er was planned.
2. A seaport, first by Julius Cæsar meant
To join the city to a tideless sea;
Finished by Claudius Cæsar's wise intent
The city's granary and mart to be.
3. Ill-fated monarch, last of all thy race,
Romance hath shed her lustre o'er thy time;
Thy wayward passion brought its own disgrace,
And all thy subjects suffered for thy crime.
Why should thy lovely queen neglected be?
Why seek another beauty's brilliant eye?
What in the enchanted cavern didst thou see?
Where did thy war-steed bear thee off to die?
4. A mystic invocation long ago
Was used in casting horoscopes to tell
The fortune of men's lives, that they might know
Their bliss or misery ere each befell.
5. A Swiss canton; here manufacture yields
Remuneration for the lab'ring poor;
Here agriculturists till the fertile fields,
And teeming garners hold the harvest-store.
6. Beyond the western main a mountain stands,
Its lofty summit ever robed in snow,
A striking object in those glowing lands,
As does its native name, "White Woman," show.
7. A fair Italian realm in days of yore
When, southward wandering to found a home,
Came wild advent'urers from some eastern shore,
Who built a city, and then called it Rome.
8. A bird of Southern Africa, whose plumes,
Fantastically placed, have gained his name;
Fearless of venom, serpents he consumes,
Yet, kindly treated, he becomes quite tame.

XIMENA.