

required for painting. All that is necessary is a firm, hard surface on the card, which had better be white, a small etching pen, and a bottle of Indian ink. Birds are particularly pretty in etching, and if a little help in designing is required, nothing can be better than Giacomelli's lovely groups of birds, some of which nearly every one possesses in at least one of the many volumes he has illustrated. They make an endless study, and can be arranged in many pretty ways to suit individual taste.

3. *SEPIA*. — Pretty little designs can be first sketched in on small cards—a church, lighthouse, hills, running stream, and rocks—anything in fact; and then painted in with sepia or indigo. The first shades must be washed in, and the finishing touches must be worked with a very fine brush, remembering always to have an unglazed card to work on.

4. *DRIED FLOWERS*. — Lovely cards may be made of dried flowers and ferns. Many of us have seen the pretty specimens of flowers from the Holy Land, and though, of course, these must ever have a special attraction for us, there seems no reason to prevent the wild flowers of America from having an interest of their own; more especially if we have friends in distant lands—and, in these days, who has not? In case any of my readers may wish to attempt the art of drying flowers, I will describe the process. Obtain two boards and two thin leather straps—these will be quite sufficient for your purpose if you do not wish to go to the expense of a correctly made press—and some botanical blotting-paper, which may be had at any stationer's; I prefer it rather fine and white. Gather the flowers, if possible, on a dry day, and place them, after taking off any large stalks, between two of the sheets of paper. Between each layer of flowers place at least three or four sheets of paper, and strap the whole between the boards as tightly as you can. Change the papers daily until the flowers are nearly dry, then every few days will be sufficient until they are quite dry. Draw the design upon the card—of course seeing that it is a suitable one for your purpose. An empty basket, a vase, a plain wooden cross, or merely a few stalks and a bow of ribbon, are suitable designs when you have a sufficient variety of flowers. Make some very strong gum—I find the powdered gum

arabic the best—and arrange the flowers on the design according to your fancy. Leaves of the flowers painted, and merely the dried flower gummed on, makes a pretty variety.

A Christmas Visitor.

How an English lady entertained her young friends, making their little hearts happy at this festive season, may not only interest, but suggest to readers a way of amusing the children when a Christmas tree cannot be had.

When the first faint echoes of old King Christmas' footsteps are heard once more, and the boys and girls of England are beginning to wonder what he has in store for them this year, it may not be amiss to suggest to the mothers, child-loving aunts, or kind hostesses, who scatter his gifts, a novel arrangement for their distribution. A year or two ago, when I wished to invite a party of my small friends to come and make merry with me, I racked my brains to discover some novelty to take the place of the ever-welcome but too familiar Christmas tree, the drawing-room snow-ball, or the fairy hamper. Happy inspiration came one day in the form of "Old Mother Hubbard," for so we christened our elderly friend, and by that name she still lives in the memory of old and young who had the pleasure of making her acquaintance. And now I must give my readers a peep behind the scenes.

Contrary to the usual order of things, Mother Hubbard's life began with her skeleton. This was lent by a West-end firm; it was nothing more than an ordinary costume stand running on castors. This I swathed very strongly up to two-thirds the depth of the skirt, with a stout coarse sheet sewn firmly to the wires at the top and at the bottom, the corners well wrapped over each other, and very securely fastened round the imaginary ankles, that none of the bran with which the skirt is to be filled may escape. I found the easiest way to fill it with bran was to twist a strong piece of paper into a funnel, and insert the small end between the wires at the top of the skirt. This can then be easily filled with a scoop from the sack of bran obtained from a corn chandler. Alternate layers of bran and toys were thrown in till the skirt was more than half full; the toys were quite small, and mixed with pretty

crackers, each wrapped in white paper—the large, soft sheets used by cooks are the best—and sealed with a bright red seal. The paper prevents the bran from adhering to the toys, etc., and ultimately to the carpets of the house. The upper portion of my skeleton was stuffed, but headless and armless; these deficiencies had to be supplied. An oval bag of strong calico, stuffed with bran, very like an overgrown pin-cushion, was sewn to the trunk for the head; and two long bolster-shaped bags, similarly stuffed, composed the arms; up the center of each arm was passed a very strong zinc wire, bent into a hook at one end, so that it could be securely fastened to the figure. The wires must be left long enough to extend into the middle finger of the black cotton gloves, which were also stuffed and sewn to the arms at the wrists. The arms and hands can then be bent into any position that may be desired.

The drudgery is now over, and all that remains is to conjure up the old lady's wise-looking countenance, and dress her as becomes her age and character. A rapid sketch in colored chalks by an artist friend served for my model. An old but respectable black quilted satin petticoat was first arranged to hang within an inch of the ground, so as to conceal the wooden stand; a bright-colored, simply-made print gown, borrowed from one of my maids, was then put on, and the plain skirt draped in highly bunched-up paniers; then a scarlet shawl, with the corners tacked up to simulate a round short cloak; but this fell over a figure much too upright and youthful for the old mother. However, a soft, flat sofa cushion, strapped on the shoulders underneath the cloak, gave quite the desired effect. A mask with high cheek bones, rather large nose, and pointed chin, was then fastened to the head, the empty eye-sockets being first filled with eyes drawn in ink on paper; the edges of the mask were concealed by a muslin cap, bordered with a full quilling of tulle, and tied under the chin with black ribbon. This was surmounted by a conical hat made from two pieces of stiff cardboard; a broad ring for the brim, and a quarter of a circle for the peak, covered with black sateen, with a band of scarlet ribbon and strings of the same tied under the chin. A pair of gold spectacles completed a striking impersonation of the old dame, who drew forth many a

start and exclamation of surprise from the uninitiated, whose astonished gaze she met with a steady stare from the corner of the drawing-room where she rested after the fatigue of dressing. She carried a large basket on one arm and another on her back, which before her visit to the children, were filled to overflowing with presents of every description. Two slits were made in her petticoat, to clear as far as possible the wires underneath; these served as pockets, from which to draw forth the treasures from the bran; they were concealed by the overskirt.

Numerous reports were circulated among the little people as to the expected arrival. Curiosity was at its highest pitch when, after some loud rings at the door bell, Old Mother Hubbard at last tottered in on the arm of a gentleman. She was surrounded in a moment by the whole party, with eager, excited faces. Her cavalier was plied with all kinds of questions intended to solve the mystery as to whether she was "real" or not, and certainly it is rare to find any real old lady give so much pleasure to a Christmas gathering. That evening she received an invitation to a similar party, but the unwonted dissipation was too much for her, and, after a rather too exciting waltz with her host, she fainted, never to recover. But Mother Hubbard lived long enough to give, perhaps, the greatest pleasure of all to some children to whom pleasures are few and far between. One fine winter afternoon she was hoisted into a light cart, and drove off, amidst the merriment and wonder of passers-by, to a home where twelve little "incurables'" sad lot is softened by the care of a truly motherly matron. The dame arrived with replenished baskets and pockets, but here no eager children crowded around her. The bright faces were there, but the old mother must totter round the little cots and invalid chairs to bestow her gifts on their occupants. Fragile little arms were stretched out to welcome her, and even half-witted faces beamed at her approach; but when some gentlemen of the committee, then sitting, came in and cordially shook hands with the old lady, adding some bantering remarks on her appearance, their delight knew no bounds. But it is quite time Mother Hubbard made her bow, with the hope that she may be allowed to have a part in the Christmas festivities of 1887.