

CHRISTMAS AND BIRTHDAY CARDS;

AND HOW TO PAINT AND DECORATE THEM.



THE fashion of sending cards of kindly greeting to loved friends as the season of Christmas cheer returns to us is one of which it would seem that folk, both big and little, will never weary. For many months before the merry season begins

busy brains and deft fingers are very hard at work composing and carrying out ideas that will find favour with the public. And then as the time draws near the shops vie with each other to set forth such a tempting array that one can only wish one had twice as much pocket-money to spend on the dainty trifles exposed to view. The faces of purchasers, too, are well worth a study—some radiant with delight, others bearing quite a puzzled, anxious expression that betrays the wish of the heart to send the prettiest and best that can be bought to their dear ones.

Beautiful and artistic as are many of these cards, and pleasant as it is to send as well as to receive them, there is yet an added charm that greatly enhances the value of the gift when the sender is also the designer and executor. It tells us that not alone have the thoughts of a few passing moments been spent on us, but that our friend has expended time and loving care in producing a token of affection that shall carry to us good wishes for present and future happiness. But then, to be truly welcome, they must be as well done as is within the power of the worker to do them—a slovenly daub no one can admire, although it be sent with the best intentions.

It is to help our readers to execute some of these pretty remembrancers in an acceptable manner that we propose in this paper to give some useful suggestions. And first, as to choice of subjects, for much depends on a suitable selection. We may be sure of one class of subjects never failing in interest—flowers invariably please, for most persons, according to our belief, love the sweet, pure blossoms that teach lessons all will do well to consider,

that cheer us with their brightness, enlivening our rooms as no other decoration ever can, and diffusing abroad such fragrance as no manufactured perfume can hope to rival. Possibly the intended recipient of our work may have some hobby in which all leisure hours are spent, or it may be that there is some favourite pastime it is the delight of his life to indulge in, or some pursuit, in following which all that appears to him of the greatest interest centres; well, if we take a little trouble, and cudgel our brains a bit, we may be able to compose an imaginative piece that will be to him a source of special pleasure. There are few boys whose happy lot it is to have enjoyed a holiday by the river who will not readily appreciate a boating sketch, but it must not only be true in drawing, but it must be true in all its details, for these young critics will not be disposed to regard with favour a boat that is not fitted out correctly with all its appointments intact. It seems to us that boys are more observant of such minute particulars than girls. Perhaps it is that they have a more practical turn of mind, for they will be studying the build of the boat, or noticing how it is balanced, while the girls are gazing across the glistening water at the banks, wondering at and longing for the flowers that deck the river-side, or peering down into the transparent depths watching the tall weeds, and trying to catch them as the keel glides gently past. The lads can talk learnedly of the tides, of feathering their oars; while their nautical phrases might well astonish some of our oldest tars. Have a care, then, for if the rowlocks be out of position, or the rudder wrongly fixed, woe to the prettiest sketch!

Skating scenes are very effective and appropriate also at Christmas-time, when the frost sparkles on the trees, and the snow lies downy and white upon the ground. For those who can draw figures well a wide field is open that will tax their highest efforts. Landscapes will be acceptable to folk of older growth. Many of our readers have spent some weeks during the sweet summer-time in lovely country places, and maybe the companions of their happy rambles through the wild woods, down cool lanes, shadowy with the overhanging branches of the trees, over hill and dale, or rocky mountain-passes, are just those to whom they would like best to send a tender greeting. What more fitting subject could be found than a view of some beautiful spot around which pleasant reminiscences cluster? Such cards are suitable for birthdays, perhaps even more than for Christmas.

Then we must not forget our child-friend. What an excitement there is when the postman's knock is heard on Christmas morning, and the tiniest toddler of the flock holds forth chubby hands that the man fills full to overflowing with envelopes containing merry Christmas wishes! She cannot hold so many, and mamma comes to the rescue, and raising the tiny, dainty frock, shows her how to hold it so that she may carry safely in it all the letters to their several owners. How proud the small mite is as she trots up to one after another of the family group, and lets each take their own out of her novel postman's bag! And when hers are found, as they are sure to be, how delighted she is, trying to open the envelopes that she can scarcely tear with all her force! Let her find some pretty robin redbreast, some bright holly-berries, and some dear child-faces to smile upon.

There are some children who revel in comic pictures, and, indeed, the grotesque in art has its place and time as well as the more serious imaginations. Funny pieces are often much liked, but let us be careful not to let comicality degenerate into vulgarity, as it can easily do. Having sufficiently considered our subjects, let us see how we can manage to carry them out to the best of our abilities. Now as to the materials on which to work. Although these offerings are termed Christmas-cards, it does not necessarily follow, as we all know, that they are composed of cardboard. Satin, mounted and unmounted, ivory, and wood are all pressed into the service that there may be plenty of variety, and that the taste of all purchasers may be suited. Satin ready mounted on cardboard may now be bought for amateurs to paint on; this saves the trouble of mounting at home. It is usual to mix Chinese white with all the colours for satin-painting. The texture being somewhat loose, it will be found that two or three tints have often to be laid before the requisite strength is obtained.

Let us suppose we are painting a flower. We lay in first the leaves of darkest tint, then the lighter, and let them dry. Next we wash in those still more delicate, leaving the high lights of pure white until the last. Finishing touches that give depth to the centre should be put in with colour as little diluted as possible. In all cases where Chinese white is not mixed with the water-colours, they must be used in as dry a state as can be to allow of the brush working well; only in this way can clear outlines be preserved. Daisies are charming on a white satin mount; we are tempted by its beauty to describe one now before us. There is what might almost be termed a spray of daisies thrown across the satin card. It looks as if a bunch of these flowers had been pulled up root and all with

some blades of the grass amongst which they had grown, and copied in miniature. At the right hand bottom corner the darkest tints abound; the leaves preponderate here, some green, some a pale golden brown, others a soft neutral grey; a few unopened buds relieve the hues of the leaves, for they are tinged with red at the top. From this somewhat heavy commencement the leaves are thrown upwards with daisies in various stages of development and tiny buds intermixed; these are lightly tipped with red, their petals shadowed down to the yellow centres with pearly grey. The grasses are principally of a greyish-brown hue, and serve as a kind of background to the flowers; thus the violent contrast between the green leaves and the satin is gently moderated. The satin ground is tinted on the right a very pale blue, which is gradated off skilfully into the light. As to the pearly grey tints; much of the transparency of the painting depends on their being kept pure; they soften down harsh contrasts, and form the demi-tints whereby shadows are gradated into the local colouring, thus enhancing the beauty of the whole by securing a tone and finish otherwise unobtainable. The amateur had best first make a sketch of the subject on a card or piece of drawing-paper, and then copy or trace it off on to the satin; for these mounts are so easily soiled that they require great nicety of fingering, and they will bear no erasures. A clean drawing-board is an important item towards insuring success, because it is very objectionable to turn to the back of the card and find it grimy. It is well also to lay a sheet of writing-paper below the satin for the hand to rest on, so as to avoid finger-marks. If the satin resists the body-colour, a drop or two of ox-gall may be added to the water used for diluting the colours.

Ivory cards admit of the most beautiful paintings being executed; they may be square, or in the form of a cross. For the latter a spray of passion-flower is the most suitable decoration; for the former, landscapes or flowers. Ordinary water-colours are used, every tint being mixed with white. The outline should be sketched in simply with the brush—a fine one is best for the purpose. In painting, be careful not to let the fingers rest on the ivory, for the least touch will cause it to resist the colours. The safest plan is to gum it slightly along the upper edge to two or three thicknesses of writing-paper, these may be fastened to the board with drawing-pins; there is then no necessity to hold it in place, and consequently no danger of finger-marks. Then there are the thin wooden cards that can be prettily ornamented. If a little ox-gall be mixed with the colours they will work easily; water-colours are employed with the addition of Chinese

white. The outline may be sketched in with brush or pencil. No directions are wanted for painting on cards, properly so called, for any one who can paint at all can tell how these are done. Sometimes a drop of gum will improve the painting in certain parts when mixed in with the colour, it helps to give solidity and variation to the tint.

Pen-and-ink drawings on cardboard are very effective and easily managed. For them fine etching-pens

and Indian ink are used; sometimes, however, quill pens of various sizes are resorted to, according to the artist's requirements. Black-grounded cards with gilt panels are fashionable, on the panel any decoration that the worker fancies may be carried out.

Much more might be written on the subject of card decoration, but our space is limited, and probably our readers will be able with a little consideration to furnish themselves with further ideas.

A WONDERFUL POOL.



"They set forth to angle—
Wise Harry and John."

THE morning was gloomy,
The sky a dull grey;
"Hurrah!" shouted Harry,

"We'll set out to-day!
'Tis the weather for fishing
For which I've been wishing—
None better, I say!"

Then, rushing and tearing,
In haste to be gone,
With rod and with basket
Their shoulders upon,
With lines in a tangle,
They set forth to angle—
Wise Harry and John.

In a very few minutes
A small pool was found;
"Just the right place!" said Harry,
"To wander around!
It might have been vaster,
But we'll catch the fish faster—
Of that I'll be bound!"

From morning to evening
For nibbles they sought,
But useless their efforts—
They angled for nought!
In vain each endeavour:
The fishes seemed clever,
And *wouldn't* be caught!

Then along came an urchin,
Returning from school,
And he lingered awhile
By the side of the pool.
"When you've fished here," said Harry,
"What weight would you carry
Back home as a rule?"

"If fish dwell here *at all*,"
Said the lad with a sneer,
"I guess they'll be little;
At least that is clear!
For this fact is remaining:
*Till yesterday's raining,
The pool wasn't here!*"

G. W.



"And he lingered awhile
By the side of the pool."