God rest ye, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay!

THE words sounded through the hall of the big office building in a high, clear soprano, which made both John Harden and his son, Ralph, look up, startled and irritated. Then, as "merry gentlemen" sounded farther off, John Harden thought, "It's a good thing that woman didn't come in here singing that! 'Merry gentlemen,' indeed!" and he looked over at his son, who sat brooding at his desk.

"If Ralph would only give me his confidence!" he thought. "Money trouble of some kind, I suppose, and I'd help him out if he'd only tell me. Troubles enough of my own, but not about money. If a million dollars would remove this threat of blindness, I'd pay it in a minute."

"Let nothing you dismay!" came the clear, light voice again, and Ralph thought:

"How can I help being dismayed, with a pile of gambling debts I'll never get out from under? Father suspects, too, I know, for he looks glum all the time, and keeps his hand over his eyes so much. If he'd only ask me, maybe I'd have the courage to tell him."

As the singing voice neared the office again, Harden growled, "Tell that girl to hush up or go away!" Then the office door opened, and the words "merry gentlemen" made both men look up, impatiently. But, instead of a bold young woman—stood a scrubby newsboy, saying:

"Collectin' for the Times. Circulatin' manager's so busy he sent me."

"Where did you learn to sing?" asked Ralph.

"St. Luke's choir. We're practicin' fer Christmas. Get fifty cents a Sunday, and I get a dollar Christmas, 'cause I sing a solo. Gee, it's luck, fer Dad's been sick and if it goes on this way, I'd never get clothes fer school. Whaja think? Got five dollars out o' choir money saved fer a new overcoat!"

"Here's another toward it," said Ralph, "and I hope your father gets well."

"Thank you!" exclaimed the boy, pocketing the dollar. "Gee, I hope he does, too, 'cause he's all the family I got. He works in a factory where the light's bad, and sometimes his eyes go wrong."

"Couldn't he work somewhere else?" queried Mr. Harden.

"Yep; there's a grand place goin' to be vacant at the paper-box fact'ry, where there's hardly any eye work, but there's so many after it—"

"Wait!" said Harden. "I know Mortimer, who owns that factory. I'll give you a note to take him. What's your father's name?"

"Albert Wickens, and he's all right! You tell 'em I said so—known him all my life, an' I recommend him."

Presently Harden looked up, saying, "Here's the note, and a dollar for your New Year's greeting in advance. Don't forget to come in with it—it's paid for, remember!"

"You bet I'll come! I'd get a handsome lickin' if my Dad ever heard o' my bein' crooked! I'm proud o' my ole man an' I want to make him proud o' me."

With that, the door slammed, and the young voice was heard caroling down the hall.

The two men looked at each other, speaking simultaneously:

"Son, I have something to say—"

"Dad, I have something to tell—"

Then, with half-embarrassed amusement, they both laughed, healingly.

"I guess there's a good deal we have to tell each other," said John Harden. "I propose that we get a private room at the club and have some lunch, and talk things over."

"Great!" said Ralph, rising to help his father with his coat. "I'm not looking forward, exactly, to what I have to say, because I'm ashamed of it, but it'll be a relief."

"Nothing you can tell me will be as bad as this estrangement has been," replied his father. "If it's anything I can help you about—"

"It is, and if you'll straighten me out this time, I know I'll never get in such a hole again. When that kid said, 'I'm proud o' my ole man, and I want him to be—"

Ralph choked and stopped, but by this time they were in the outer hall, so John Harden simply took his son's arm and pressed it affectionately.

As the elevator reached the street level the two looked at each other and smiled, for down the hall they heard a high, clear voice singing:

God rest ye, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay!

Christmas Card is 81 Years Old

the First Greeting Card

Christmas Greetings
Best Wishes for a Happy New Year

Hearty Greetings
and Best Wishes for Christmas
and the coming Year

GREETINGS
With Best Wishes for Christmas
and the coming Year

(Copyright)

Greeting Cards of Today

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

IT WAS some unknown wit who made the statement recently that "Christmas greeting cards will cost this country $55,000,000, and that does not take into account the time lost in trying to remember to whom they should be sent." Although it would be difficult to estimate the value of the time "lost in trying to remember," as this wag suggests, there are those who can testify to the fact that his estimate of $55,000,000 as the total cost of Christmas greeting cards is a modest one, if not actually an underestimate.

Dealers in Christmas cards will tell you that their business has virtually doubled each successive year for the last five or six years. And the season of 1927 probably will exceed all others in the volume of sales. One wholesale dealer in Christmas cards has reported that early in November his orders had already passed the 1926 total and each week saw a steady increase over the previous week. The number of Christmas cards used in the United States long ago passed out of the realm of millions into billions.

If there is anyone who can testify to the increasing popularity of the custom of sending Christmas cards, it is Uncle Sam's mail man. He will tell you that these gay little bits of cardboard have doubled and trebled and quadrupled the burden on his back around Christmas time. Time was when you could send a Christmas card for one cent. Now it costs two cents, but not even this extra penny—which soon runs into the thousands of dollars for the coffers of the Post-Office department—has diminished the flood of cards which begins to pour into the mails at the beginning of the third week in December and continues until after January 1.

For the Christmas card is a gift in universal use for remembering one's friends at the holiday season. Rich and poor alike send them. The "social leader" has her cards of special design engraved on costly vellum and sends them out by the hundred. The working girl buys hers at the "five-and-ten" and sends them out by the dozen. Count that man poor in friendship, indeed, who has never received a Christmas card. And some complain of an "embarrassment of riches" in this regard, for the problem, as suggested by the wit in the opening paragraph of this article, is a real problem to many. How many times have you, looking through the stacks of cards that the mail man brought you during Christmas week, come across one which held your attention more than momentarily as you said, "Here's one from Mr. and Mrs. Blank. Did we send them one this year?" In fact, the custom of sending Christmas cards has become such a problem to those conventional-minded persons who have never fully realized the meaning of the "gift-without-the-giver-is-bare" statement that they have declared, "Never again!" But the next year finds them adding their quota to the mountain of Christmas cards which pile up in post offices throughout the land.

Although the Christmas card is a comparative newcomer among Christmas traditions, it can by no means be regarded as an "infant industry." The figures already cited prove that. But as one regards the amazing growth of the idea, one wonders sometimes how our forefathers ever managed to celebrate Christmas without Christmas cards. For it was only 81 years ago, in 1846, that the first Christmas card—first, at least, in the sense that it was the forefather of the present Christmas card idea—was sent out. The man who originated it was Sir Henry Cole, later famous as a social and educational reformer. He had already begun applying the fine arts to manufacture and was the pioneer in illustrating children's books with woodcuts of famous paintings.

Just where Sir Henry got the idea—if it was not original with him—for his Christmas card is not known. Lover cards and illustrated writing paper had been popular in Europe for many years. In Germany illuminated cards were sent on Namenstag, the feast of one's patron saint. In 1844 some unknown person in the city of Leith, Scotland, is said to have sent out New Year's cards to his friends bearing a laughing face and the words "A Gude New Year to Ye," but since this did not have a wide circulation, it is doubtful if Sir Henry got the idea there. He may have got it from the custom of English school boys of writing "Christmas pieces" on paper which they decorated with many scrolls and much flourish of penmanship.

But wherever Sir Henry got his inspiration, after deciding to send out cards to his friends bearing his good wishes for their happiness at Christmas, he went to J. C. Horsley, a member of the Royal academy in London, for the design, and Horsley's product was that shown at the head of this article. The German influence may be seen in the Germanesque style of leafy trellises which divide the card into three panels. The smaller side panels show two of the acts of charity—feeding the hungry and clothing the naked—and the central panel shows three generations of a family party at the festal board quaffing their Christmas cheer. This card was six by four inches, colored by hand, and a thousand copies were issued. For some unexplained reason, Horsley issued his design under the nom de plume of "Felix Summerly," and the card bears the line "Published at Summerly's Hive Treasury Office, 2 Old Bond Street, London."

Since this card bears the inscription "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You," it can be regarded as the first holiday greeting card ever printed and sent out as the forerunner of a custom that was to become world-wide. Strange to say, Sir Henry Cole's friends were not especially pleased at this remembrance and it is said to have received much unfavorable criticism. So he did not repeat the experiment and it looked as though the Christmas card idea was to die a-borning.

However, in the early sixties ornamented note paper and envelopes began to appear in the stationers' shops around the holiday season and the use of these began to increase each year. Next these designs were stamped in relief in the center of a card with colored or embossed edges decorated by stencil or by hand. Thus the business of making Christmas cards got under way slowly. It was even slower in getting started in America and it was not until 1873 that the beginnings were apparent in this country.

In that year Louis Prang, a lithographer of Boston, exhibited samples of his flowered business cards at the Vienna exposition and they attracted considerable attention. He had an agency in London and one of his women employees there (her name is unknown) suggested to him that he put a greeting in place of the name of his firm and issue them as Christmas cards. This was done the next year, so that 1874 marks the beginning of the Christmas card in this country. It was not until two years later, however, that the Christmas card idea became widespread and this was due to the exhibits of such cards by different printers and lithographers at the Centennial exposition in Philadelphia.

Another forward step in the Christmas card business was taken in 1879 when a British company, which had offered prizes for Christmas card designs, held an exhibition of the best ones submitted in Dudley hall in London. About this time a Boston card manufacturing company held a similar exhibit at which the first prize winner was given the sum of $2,000. At the London exhibit it was learned that the majority of the prize winners were women and two of them, Kate Greenway and Alice Havers, later became famous for their Christmas card designs.

In fact, in the early years of the Christmas card business, before the great demand for them resulted in mass production and more emphasis upon quantity than quality, the Christmas card design was an important piece of creative art, so much so that it has been said that "The Christmas card enjoyed a golden age of art in the decade from 1878 to 1888." One of the reasons for this was that the exhibitions and contests which were being held by the producers of Christmas cards were stimulating interest in this form of art and uncovering many new artists.

"One of the art events of the year 1880 was a Christmas card exhibition arranged by Louis Prang at the American Art galleries," writes one investigator in the history of the Christmas card. "For several years thereafter similar exhibitions were held, with competitions in the artistic merit and popularity of the designs; and such men as Richard M. Hunt, John La Farge and Louis C. Tiffany were sufficiently interested to act as judges. The exhibition of 1884 carried a special feature. The quantity of dilettante work that hitherto had found its way to the exhibitions tended to turn away the best artists, but now their interest was deliberately sought in the hope of raising the level of Christmas card design. Twenty-two artists of first rank were commissioned to paint designs and these were purchased and entered in the popularity contest. Among those whose work was shown was E. H. Blashfield, the dean of American mural painters, and J. Alden Weir. And the collection was exhibited not only in New York, but also at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and at the Art institute of Chicago. But the later influx of cheapness and mediocrity proved too overwhelming for the continued interest of the best artists in Christmas card designing."

Until the eighties the illustration on the card was the main thing and the only reading matter was a simple greeting or an appropriate motto. Then poetry on the cards became popular and it became so popular that it brought into the Christmas card field several noted poets. On one occasion a London firm offered Lord Tennyson $5,000 for 12 poems of eight lines each to be used on Christmas cards, but he declined the offer. The craze for poetry became so pronounced and it was used so generously that finally the manufacturers of cards were forced to place a limit upon the verses and set that limit at 12 lines.

The religious motif also was popular from the beginning and as late as 1896 one manufacturer declared that the most popular of all Christmas card designs was a reproduction of the Nativity scene, with Murillo's Nativity as the greatest favorite. Since that time various motifs have appeared in Christmas cards until now every symbol of Christmas, contributed by every nation, appears on our Christmas cards.

Camels, the star in the east, the three wise men, palm trees, buildings of decided oriental appearance recall the scenes in Palestine where Christ was born on the first Christmas; the Yule log and the mistletoe are reminiscent of the Druids of ancient Britain; holly, plum puddings, roast beef, singers of Christmas carols, typical English landscapes remind one of the good cheer of the English observance of Christmas; jolly old Santa Claus, originally a Dutch patron saint, but now thoroughly Americanized (one Christmas card this year shows him speeding over the snowy landscape in an automobile of distinctly American make!) appears on many; the turkey is a symbol for both Thanksgiving and Christmas feasts and is a distinctly American contribution.

Nor do Christmas cards stop with Christmas symbols. Each year sees a new idea introduced with new symbols which are not especially associated with Christmas. In 1911 the Dickens centennial was echoed on the Christmas cards; the revival of interest in Americana in recent years has put all kinds of antiques—furniture, hoop-skirts, muffs, bonnets, sleighing parties and husking bees—on our Christmas cards, and last year, as the result of the great interest in ship models, many a ship went sailing across the cards.

Just as Christmas cards of the past reflect the interests of Americans of those days, so do this year's cards indicate some of the major American interests now. Among them are radio and aviation, the latter, no doubt, due to the various historic flights which have thrilled the nation during the past year. Sports, too, have their place and it is not unusual to find on Christmas cards scenes illustrative of the various types of outdoor recreation. This, however, is not a new idea, since swimming, boating, cricket and tennis scenes were reproduced on English Christmas cards more than thirty years ago.

Community Building

"Health Center" Has Cut Mortality Rate

East Harlem, one of the most congested districts in Manhattan, has carried on a most interesting health program during the past six years, resulting in a decidedly reduced mortality rate, writes Savel Zimand, in the New York Times.

The East Harlem health center is operated by the health department of the city, assisted by private health and social agencies. During the last five years the general death rate of Manhattan has increased while that of East Harlem has been reduced materially. The rate for Manhattan in 1925 was 4.9 per cent greater than in 1920 and that of East Harlem was 20 per cent lower, according to Kenneth D. Widdemer, executive director of the center.

One of the most important gains was made in the case of infant mortality. From 412 deaths of children under one year of age annually in 1916-20, the number dropped to 194 in 1925. All of the children's diseases decreased.

The American Red Cross was responsible for the origin of the center, providing headquarters and the funds during the first three years. Six years ago the city health department and 22 agencies established the real center. From time to time departments have been added and the facilities increased.—Welfare Magazine.

Close Association of Parents and Teachers

The Kansas City Council of Parents and Teachers, organized as a council in 1915, has grown to a membership of 22,096, standing as one of the foremost councils of the national parent-teacher organization. The council is made up of the following groups: Sixty-nine grade school associations, with 19,252 members; 26 preschool associations, with 537 members; 6 high school associations, with 948 members; 4 junior high school associations, with 1,247 members, and 2 church and community house associations, with 112 members. The largest single group membership comes from the Bancroft school, where 1,054 parents are active members. The Northeast Junior high school, with 630 members, is the largest high school association in Missouri. The J. C. Nichols school association has the distinction and honor of having every father, mother and teacher a member.

The room-mother plan, together with the hearty co-operation of principal and teachers is held responsible to a large extent for this 100 per cent membership. Mothers act as sponsors for each room, answering questions of parents as to the purpose of the movement, its value to children, and the use of dues. The mother sponsors work with the membership committee.—Christian Science Monitor.

Trees for Highways

The following communication to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch is pertinent:

"I should like to ask through your columns just why do the advocates of tree planting on the public highways not advocate fruit and nut trees, where the soil is adaptable or suitable for such trees, inasmuch as fruit and nut trees would be so much more valuable to the citizens of the state and reduce the cost of fruits and nuts, which are becoming prohibitive?

"At least every other tree should be a fruit or nut tree, and I believe every citizen would be willing to pay for at least one fruit or nut tree. I'm sure I would pay for more than one.

"Make the highways attractive by mixing fruit and nut trees among the shade trees—half of each, at least, and give fruit and nuts to all."

See Home as It Will Be

Architectural service is not an extravagance, not even an expense—it is an investment and a genuine saving.

Always build from plans, and before going ahead have a picture made of what the plans call for; in that way avoiding disappointment later when the building is up.

The expense of a rendered perspective sketch is small, and it often reveals the need of changes here and there. These can be easily made in the plans.

The Weed Law

Rank weeds give a neighborhood a scraggly and unkempt air. The complete citizen attends regularly to the mowing and removal of unsightly weed patches wherever he may be responsible for those unpatriotic growths. Where the property owner or vacant lot owner neglects his duty, there is authority and responsibility to inspect and act for the community good at the expense of the derelict weed-crop producer.—Lafayette Journal and Courier.

Don't Spare Paint

Those who refrain from adequately painting exposed wood are in the class with the penny-wise, pound-foolish. In addition, failure to paint loses one an esthetic pleasure which must be classed with one of the truest joys of life.