

Greeting Cards

THE personal printed greeting has solved the general Christmas problem for another two years. At the present rate, the vogue can hardly hold for much longer than that, but for the time being, these personal messages constitute quite the nicest, and the most intelligent, method of maintaining the circle of friendships that has yet been devised.

Before 1914, the fashion of Christmas giving had become a burden, and had led to an incipient reaction which the war years accelerated. One very objectionable substitute developed, in the more or less promiscuous distribution of money, by those who had it, to take the place of purchased gifts. This eliminated both sentiment and thought on the part of the giver, and when repeated in successive years, led the recipient to regard it as something to be counted on as a right. On the other hand, the word of greeting, specially printed for the individual, offers the maximum of sentiment and of opportunity for careful thought, with the minimum emphasis upon the cost in money.

Bookish folk have done more than their share in showing how to give an element of permanent interest to these ephemeral bits of holiday printing. This, it is true, creates its own problem, for the number that are too good to be thrown away, and not of enough importance to justify putting them into a permanent holder, has added to housewifely difficulties. However, this is only one more of the penalties of living in the present age of new things. The other side of the problem is that a certain number of each year's offerings is certain, sooner or later, to become "collectors' items," and only the tyro thinks that he knows enough to guess which these are.

The Compleat Collector.

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By Carl Purington Rollins & George Parker Winship.

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Being purely personal greetings, these are for the most part beyond the range of public comment, except in general terms. There are a few individuals, nevertheless, who have set so high a standard, for successive years, that there can be no impropriety in saying that they have maintained their position for the current season. This applies especially to Mr. William A. Clark, Jr., whose facsimile reproductions of outstanding literary classics, accompanied by a reprint representing the highest achievement of John Henry Nash's typographic skill, have featured recent Christmas seasons. This year it is the "Sonnets from the Portuguese," reproduced with a fidelity to the original which is going to make proof of provenance more than ever an important factor hereafter in acquiring a copy of the original first edition. The reprint has a bibliographical introduction prepared by Mr. Clark, and, as its frontispiece, a portrait of Mrs. Browning done in dry point after a bas-relief by Helen Hall Culver.

A. Edward Newton began issuing his own

little holiday essays long before he became a best seller, and those who were thoughtful enough to preserve the ones that were distributed two decades ago, now possess precious treasures deserving much more than ordinary care. This year's contribution to the series has added value from the fact that it supplies a footnote to "The Greatest Book," and it is even more important as an autobiographic confession, revealing the mysterious ways of God to man, in rewarding true merit through its lapses from a due regard for the amenities of life.

The booklets sent out in this and other years by printing houses deserve a separate discussion. They range from the unpretentious but thoroughly workmanlike series of historical classics of the West built up year by year by the Lakeside Press of Chicago, to the simple folder from the Merry-mount Press with its colored woodcut by Ruzicka. If anybody has saved the complete series of these greetings from Mr. Updike's press, nearly a score in number, he has a collection of views of Boston and vicinity, which are certain of a place in the

annals of book illustration as one of the fine arts in America.

Of the booksellers, Dr. Rosenbach proves that he did not write himself out in "Books and Bidders," by sending to his friends in separate form his article on "The Earliest Christmas Books." It is illustrated by a reproduction of a miniature painting of the Nativity, ascribed to the Flemish artist known as the Master of Zwolle. Another familiar figure in the circles of the trade, who is making occasional excursions in the direction of literature, Mr. Gabriel Wells, has rewarded his intimates with a statement, as carefully phrased as it is delightfully printed, of the Three Things that constitute a rounded out life. Mr. Charles F. Heartman shows that there are other ways of looking at life, by "A National Primer in the Modern Manner embellished with 15 contemporary woodcuts by Carl W. Drepperel."

Other booklets are from those whose names do not matter to those who do not know them. One is a true tale of "Gambler's Luck," telling of how two splendid, and genuine, three hundred year old tapestries came from under the bed of a lodging at the top of a Marseilles apartment house. Another is a specimen of the fine typography of the Carnegie Institute at Pittsburgh exemplified in an edition, forty copies only, of Emerson's essay on Friendship.

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