THE PRINTING DEPARTMENT

PICTORIAL POST CARDS

WHEN a printing office has the necessary facilities there ought to be some money in turning out a series of pictorial post cards with local views. If your district or town has some notable scenery or buildings, the idea may take well. Some Canadian offices are doing it already. The following simple method of sensitizing ordinary post cards is suggested by a continental writer: Coat the cards with equal parts of a 9 per cent. solution of potassium metabisulphite and a 25 per cent. solution of ammonia-citrate of iron. The cards should be, after sensitizing, dried in the dark and exposed in a printing frame until the deep shadows appear a grey blue, and then thoroughly washed with water until the whites are clear. There can be no doubt that the picture post card craze is very much on the increase, and The London Daily Telegraph has recently thought the subject of sufficient interest to devote an article to the subject, calling attention to the fact that the latest indication of the increase is afforded by the introduction of "penny-in-the-slot" machines to supply the cards.

A NEW COLOR PRINTING PROCESS.

According to a continental journal, a patent has been applied for in Germany for a new process, called steno-chromography, and the leading feature which makes it interesting is that, although the pictures may be in several colors, it is not necessary to lay the paper down more than once. The process appears to be especially suitable for the printing of bank notes, etc., as it is impossible to counterfeit the prints by any of the methods at present known. It is also adapted to the printing of colored illustrations simultaneously with the text, either at one or several printings, as may be desired. The prints may be either in litho or typographic style, and in the latter case, the process is applicable to rotary presses. The invention should prove of great value in three-color printing, and further details will be awaited with considerable interest.

ELECTROS AND RED INKS.

The non-affinity of the copper surface of electros to the red or vermilion inks is pretty well known to printers, though not many, perhaps, know the chemical reason. The British Printer points out that, as a general rule, the many varieties of red produced by inkmakers from coal tar products are harmless when printing from electros, but the vermilions obtained from mercury are apt to combine with the copper, and a reducing action follows, resulting in a smeary, smoky stain. The mercury has an affinity for copper, and no true vermilion color results. Electrotypers early found a remedy by coating the electro with a substance uninfluenced by this chemical action. First, a coating of silver was precipitated on the electro, and did good service, but was found to be too soft, requiring frequent replenishing in long runs on the machine. This led to experiments being made with the extremely hard and brittle metal, nickel, and eventually nickel plating was applied with perfect success. This suits the printer's purpose in every respect, making the face of the reproduction as hard as steel, and permitting thousands of impressions to be taken from the casts without renewing. The application of nickel plating has proved of considerable value to the printer, more especially to the color printer working from electrotypes. We may add to the above remarks of our contemporary that zinc plates are equally susceptible of injury from vermilion inks, and nickel-faced zincos are the remedy.

THE VALUE OF OVERLAYS.

It will probably hardly be credited, but it is nevertheless a fact, that with a perfectly plain surface, bearing no engraving, it is possible to obtain a very fair semblance of a picture, provided we have a properly graded overlay. For instance, it has been demonstrated that if we make up a moderately thick overlay with cut-out parts of a picture, so that the shadows have the largest number of thicknesses of paper and the lights the smallest, we can, by inking a plain surface and placing the overlay on the tympan, get the contour of the picture, though it may be somewhat crude. Of course it is not to be supposed that we are going to get pictures by overlays only without engraving the blocks, but the idea demonstrates the value of overlays, and shows that the more perfect the overlay the more perfect the resulting proof will be. Thus it is possible to conceive that if we could get a relief by photographic or other mechanical means which should interpret the tones by means of varying thicknesses of gelatine, we should have the most perfect overlay. Actually this was the principle of Husnik's gelatine overlays, which were made from the same photographic negative as the block, but these overlays were not appreciated to the extent they ought to be, because we think that printers failed to grasp the fact which we have referred to above, that an overlay alone will yield a fair picture without the engraving. How much better, then, must an engraving be when helped by a properly constituted overlay. An American inventor, Mr. N. S. Amstutz, some time ago announced a method he had devised of cutting out overlays by means of an engraving machine, and he has shown also that a celluloid overlay prepared by his method can be made to yield a contour picture from a plain, unengraved inked surface. It may be added that the same result cannot be achieved by an underlay, yet, of course, this does not prove that the underlay has no value.

TYPE TRANSFERS.

Printers are often called upon for a pull from type or block to be used for transferring to zinc for etching, but photo-engraving houses who have required such pulls have too often found that printers do not properly apprehend the requirements of such business. Transfers of this kind should be pulled on a smooth and thinly coated transfer paper, with ink formed of a mixture of equal parts of stone-to-stone transfer ink and good black litho ink, the whole being thinned down with a little turpentine. The ink should be well distributed and dense, but not too thick on the roller, and the latter should be a hard and thoroughly good one. The impression should be pulled with a hard packing, such as glazed board, so that the impression may