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Consider yourself an average New Bernian if you've found that purchasing a greeting card for someone else to send is almost always a big mistake.

Never again will we run such an errand for a relative or friend. Few things differ as widely in this life as the preferences all of us have for a "certain kind" of card to mail an ailing acquaintance or a loved one bereaved by death.

Sorting through the many messages displayed on a card rack, we try to find just the right thing. Quite often it isn't there, although the variety of sentimental lines seems endless.

If you lean toward the conservative in expressing your affection, concern or distress, you don't want something "mushy" or "goosey." And even if the message doesn't spread it on too thickly, you shy away from a card that is excessively decorated.

Surprisingly, cards that are simple and in the minds of some of us show good taste are few and far between. Since this is the case, and greeting manufacturers are in business to make money, it is rather clear that the majority of purchasers prefer something with glowing adjectives and an ornate overdone cover.

Most of us are awkward in expressing condolences face to face, and no less awkward in extending sympathy from a distance through the medium of a card. Instinctively, we realize that this or that printed message just doesn't sound right.

Inasmuch as this is the problem confronting us when we shop for our own cards, you can imagine the pickle someone else is in when we assign the chore to them. The results, except in rare instances, are unsatisfactory.

And, after all is said and done, we're apt to totally overlook the fact that picking out a card that will find a responsive chord in the heart of the recipient is more important than choosing something we would prefer to receive under similar circumstances.

For example, it may be that you couldn't care less for humorous cards, and we use the term humorous advisedly, but intend to mail a "get well" missive to an acquaintance who appreciates something silly rather than serious.

Regardless of your own squeamishness about being flip-pant at such a time as this, you probably will do the right thing if you settle for a card that approaches the situation wittily.

Several years ago we called on a friend who was recovering from a serious illness in a local hospital. Far from being shallow, he could be classified as a deep thinker and rather religious, the sort of person who ordinarily wouldn't attract a get well written in a lighter vein.

So what was the first thing he did, when we entered his room? Pushing a stack of serious cards to one side, he handed us a couple of cards that were as silly and wacky as any you'll ever see.

It hurt his innards to laugh, but laugh he did, and he was still

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CLEAN SWEEP Lila Daugherty, a 15-year-old New Bern High School student, is much too pretty to ride a broom through the skies. Enthusiastic about pushing for a neater and more immaculate city, she thinks that such a weapon against litter can be put to better use. For all of its national awards, the State's first Capital still leaves a lot to be desired when it comes to cleanliness, and it will take the cooperative efforts

of all New Bernians to make the town worthy of its reputation. Follow the lead of Dame Nature, who goes all out for a brighter Springtime, and tidy up your premises. Getting rid of unsightly blemishes that mar your surroundings will give you a lift, eliminate health hazards, and make everyone else in town a little happier. What else could you ask for?—Photo by Billy Benners.