

# The diversity of Aurelio Bertiglia

Italian Postcard Artist 1891 - 1973

Diana Lawer

The most popular postcard illustrators favoured by collectors have their own inimitable and easily recognisable style. One glance at examples of the work of artists such as Mabel Lucie Attwell, Tom Browne, Donald McGill, George Studdy and Louis Wain makes for instant identification. One clear exception to this rule, however, is Aurelio Bertiglia, whose artistic styles are as varied as were his many subject interests and commercial outlets.

Little biographical information is available about this popular artist but details on an Italian dealer's website reveal that he

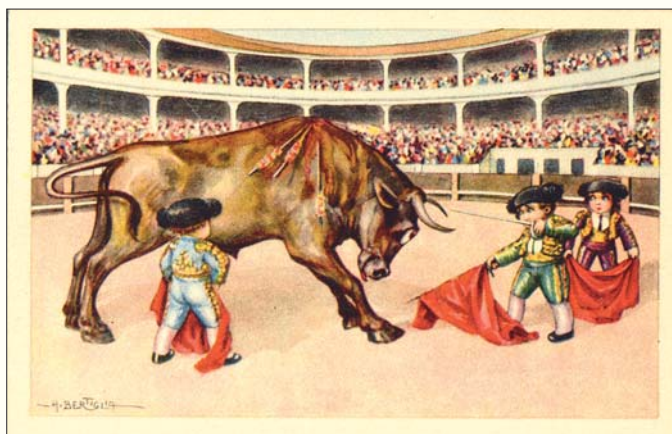
was born in Brusasco, near Chivasso in North West Italy, on 23 June 1891.

He was a self-taught illustrator who began producing postcards for Italian publishers from the age of 14. His incredible output of well



over 10,000 cards - almost as many as Donald McGill - spanned periods before and after both World Wars. Some believe that he utilised his talents exclusively for postcards but others maintain that this versatile painter was also a commercial artist and caricaturist who worked in many fields, including magazine

(left) This example of a little pierrot, No. 978, posted from Brussels in 1927, was my first Bertiglia card and one of the most treasured in my collection. It was published by Degami of Milan.



Young matadors here on this Edizione d'Arte card in Series No.2327. It was not postally used.



Young wine producers treading grapes makes for a cute subject on this greetings card No.300/2 published by NMM in their Edizione aprile 1942-XX series. It was probably produced for British servicemen stationed in Italy as it has been overprinted Merry Christmas. Ralph writes to Dorrie from the Officers' Mess, HMS Fabius, Taranto, Italy, on 11th December 1945: With very much love and every good wish for a very Merry Xmas and an extremely Happy and Prosperous New Year.

illustration, fashion design and as a graphic designer for publicity material and music scores.

for his delightful child studies, cute, saucer-eyed, chubby children with large, rounded heads and fore-



This unposted card showing Dutch children was sent to a Miss Sargent With lots of love and kisses to dear little Mary from Uncle and Aunt Rose. Published by CCM it is No.2626

The many examples I have of Bertiglia's postcard work show just how extraordinarily brilliant he was in his diverse choice of styles and subjects. Numerous categories with his trademark signature include children, animals, glamour, romance, social history, war propaganda, political comment and landscapes. Many were drawn in the Art Deco style. European postmarks, messages in various languages and overprinting on the cards, are proof of the immense international popularity he enjoyed during several decades of the 20th Century.

Bertiglia is best known

(right) A cheeky bi-lingual caption on an unused CCM card No.2218. The caption translates as 'To bed? Oh, these men are all the same!'

shortened bodies. He was fond of depicting children in various scenes of domestic life and his studies also featured young people in old-fashioned dress or in costumes of many lands. His





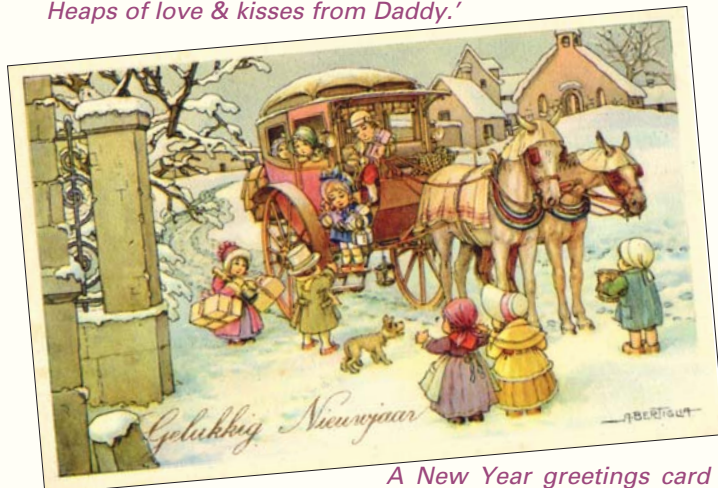
(left) This music score card entitled 'Adio Monella' [Goodbye little rascal] was posted in Italy to Graz, Austria, possibly c.1922 although the postmark is indistinct. It is an Edizioni d'Arte card, Series No.2241, published by CCM.

brand of humour. His work was commissioned by various Italian publishers, based mainly in Milan: CCM – short for C. Chierichetti of Milan; Edizioni D'Arte; GGM; NMM and Degami. Alan Overton, the late postcard dealer who was based in Belgium, was in the process of compiling a catalogue of Degami cards. He told me that the trade name Degami was short for Della Gasparini Milano. Degami was the largest publishing concern

scenes with Arabian, Dutch, Japanese and even Spanish bullfighting children are always popular. Some illustrations reveal his own cheeky



Many cards, like this one, were sent home from Italy by British soldiers in parcels and therefore bear no stamp or postmark. This CCM card N.1087 and published 6.6.1917 was written on 20th April 1918. Daddy writes to Joe: 'Would you please ask Mummy if she will buy me two packets of pipe cleaners to put in my parcel. Perhaps you would like to buy them for me with your money –eh? Also if Mummy finds my book of recitations, would she put that in too. The men here are always talking about "The Barge" so I must get some more of the same if I can. Ask Mummy if she knows of any others. It is very cold here today and we had snow this morning. I hope it is fine in Dorchester so that you can go out & play touch and sixty. Heaps of love & kisses from Daddy.'



A New Year greetings card with the caption in Flemish sent locally from Mechelen to Rumpst, Belgium, on 30th December 1938. No publisher is shown but it is No.1550-9. These old fashioned snow and stage coach scenes, a departure from his usual child studies, are often featured on Bertiglia's greetings cards.



(above) An unused postcard from a popular set of various vices bearing captions in three languages - Italian, French and English, depicts Rage. It is No.2013-5 and the publisher has added the printed date 31-3-1917

and included a number of minor Italian publishers, including NMM. Many cards were published under direct government control and censorship and bear the imprint Ufficio Revisione Stampa Milano.

Bertiglia's delightful children can also be found on his innumerable 'music score' cards. Perhaps they are postcard versions of designs for actual music

(right) This card No.3030 of a wedding scene issued by the minor publisher Rizzoli was sent home to England in October 1943 by a serving allied soldier and sends a premature seasonal greeting: 'To Min Wishing you a very Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year. I'll be an optimist and say I hope to be seeing you soon. Love from Roy. What price this wedding?'



A card in this Occupations series by CCM is No.1094-2 'The Rag Gatherer' and was sent from France in January 1918. A father writes to his son Teddy in Mill Hill, London: 'I expect by the time I come home again your album will be full. This is a new card and will help to fill up. Have you seen any little men like him at home? I hope you are a good boy, fond love from Daddy.'



A typical Art Deco illustration from one of Tuck's Kiddies Sketches III, 'PYROPHOTO' Series No.3553. Each card in this set is entitled 'Nursery Ways'. Auntie Edie in Birmingham 'sends lots of kisses' to Miss Astin at Silver Birch, Orphanage Rd, Erdington, and 'hopes your cough is better'.

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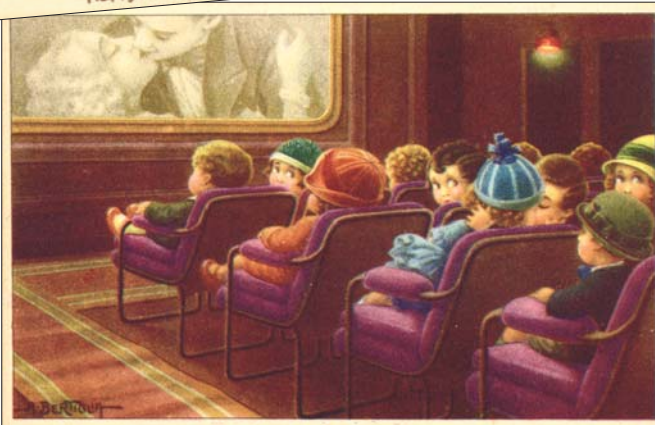
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Further child studies, but in a slight change of style, were produced for a set



A more colourful illustration on this Tuck Kiddies Sketches IV Card, Set No. 3554. It was posted from Cheltenham to Heswall, Cheshire, on 31st July 1914.

scores as, together with a backdrop of music and lyrics, they always show the names of the librettist and composer. Similar cards in this series, published under the Italian imprint Editions Astrea, are of French songs.



An unused NNM card from their Series B.550 with a popular movie theme. Two children in the audience are emulating the romantic couple on screen!

published by the Italian firm, GGM. They depict a variety of occupations and are captioned in Italian, French and English.

Another popular set, again bearing captions in three languages, depicts a variety of vices such as Anger, Envy, Gluttony, Idleness, Lewdness and Pride. Bertiglia postcards were always popular with British forces serving in Italy during both World Wars. They were purchased there to send home and I have

(right) Trains and boats and planes pose no problem for illustrator Bertiglia. This cute postcard was published by CCM, No.2572, and was posted from Budapest in September 1923. The Hungarian message, presumably an ongoing one, translates: 'As for the photo, they are quite poor quality but now we can't do anything about it. In the family photo uncle Endre has moved a bit. From your picture your foot is missing, that clever photographer has cut it off. Our photo is very blurred. I'm very curious about little George's photo - if it was successful (to be cont.)'



Bertiglia cards like this one proved very popular with tourists. Writing to her daughter on 1st December 1928 Mummy writes to Miss Belline McIntyre at the White Hart Hotel, Lancaster Gate, Hyde Park, London: 'Here we are at Stuttgart after having had a lovely drive all through the mountains covered with snow, it was lovely. We are staying in a nice hotel here but have to leave tomorrow for Munich as the weather may not last. Regards to Nanna and tell her I will write her a letter from Vienna. Lots of love and kisses, darling.' The card No.2445 was published by CCM.



A beautifully illustrated postcard full of detail. The lifebelts, lifeboat and faces at the portholes add interest. The card was not posted but the long message is dated 24th August 1942, Pierrot writing in French to his dear little Jackie: 'I am sending you a liner which many little boys and girls are boarding and which without doubt is en route to a place where there are some lions, crocodiles, monkeys, large plants and trees, and dense forests where the sun is not able to penetrate ...' The card, issued by EDIZIONI MILANO, bears a logo of two boys.

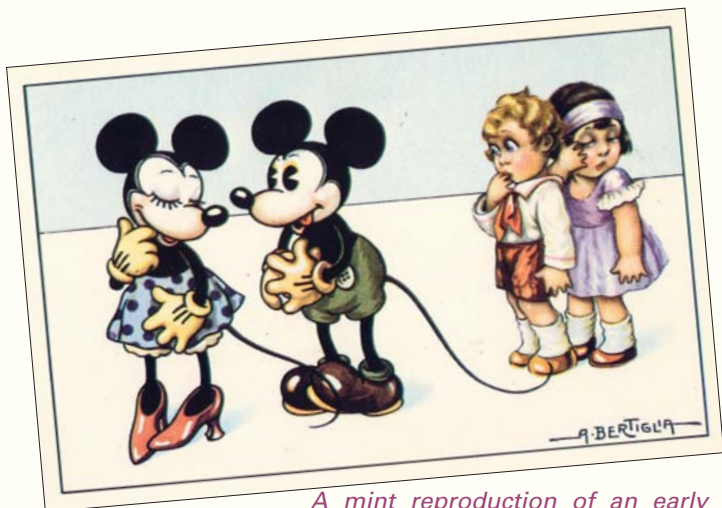


Bertiglia copies Studdy's dog Bonzo here on a card sent from Elsenborn, Belgium, on 5 August 1928.

style in predominately brown, beige, pink and green tones. Tuck issued 12 sets of six cards, numbered I-XII. Each of the six cards in a set bears the same number, namely No. 3551 for set I through to No. 3562 for set XII.

As it would be very useful to have a complete record of all 72 Kiddies Sketches titles I have been co-operating with the Bristol dealer, Christine Booth, in the hope of one day compiling a full list. These Raphael Tuck cards were obviously destined for the European market, too, as





A mint reproduction of an early Mickey Mouse card by Bertiglia with no publisher given

(right) This unused card showing a glamorous young woman with her two dogs is numbered 99 and the only clue to the publisher is 'Visto Revisione Stampa N.3728 Milano' printed on the reverse.



Bertiglia's choice of subject material shows that he was keen to portray all the latest topics and trends. With the popularity of the cinema at its height in the 1920s and 1930s he often depicted children at the cinema, involved in film making or in actual roles, portraying them as famous



An elegant fur-clad woman with her chauffeur-driven transport in the background. An Edizion d'Arte card (N.2387) it was written from Dinard, France, on 8 July 1925 by Henriette to her friend, Aimee.

many had additional captions in French or Italian. (Those we have been able to identify to date are listed at the end of this article)

It might also be useful to research exactly how postcard artists' designs came to be used

abroad. Were agents employed by publishers to obtain illustrations by foreign artists? Did illustrators sell their own work for use across Europe? Or were their illustrations simply copied without permission?

(below) A more sombre WWI card 'For the Homeland and for Honour'. No publisher is shown but it was posted on 14 September 1915 to a soldier in the military hospital at Peschiera.



This pretty WWI card shows a girl with her Italian soldier doll. Written on 19 June 1916 Contessa Nina Carsis of Milan receives this message in English from her 'little Angel' in Alassio: 'Beatrice and I thank you for the post-cards you sent us and also for the photographs, the pen and purse. I hope all of you are well. Ricky is better now I hope, so she will come here with us. Beatrice and I are very well. Kiss for me Daddy, Ricky, Giacomo and a big kiss for you ...'

film characters. One delightful card shows a 'Charlie Chaplin' child in City Lights above a poem in Italian of the same title. His studies of domestic or wild animals and all kinds of transport – trains, boats and planes – are always beautifully illustrated.

Another surprising aspect of Bertiglia's work

are the many cards featuring an almost exact replica of George Studdy's famous Bonzo dog! A few others show Disney's Mickey Mouse. Copying popular characters was a common practice among many international postcard artists but it is hard to believe, considering the strict copyright laws in force today, that this



Here the German eagle, being plucked by the Russian Bear, a British soldier, and a French woman, is ready to be roasted in a German helmet slung from a tripod of rifles over an open fire tended by a little Belgian boy. No caption is needed here! The publisher is not given but the card is written in Portuguese and posted in Portugal to 129 Rue Montmartre, Paris, in January 1915.



This amusing card mocking the Germans bears a tri-lingual caption. It shows allied soldier children giving their opinion on the enemy's use of poison gas! Published by CCM No.1019 the unposted card has a long message in French dated 30 December 1915.

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tinuing to illustrate cute cards portraying children he issued more sombre patriotic examples



*Series 518, produced by NMM, illustrates the conquest of Ethiopia by the Italians. Here the Emperor Haile Selassie is depicted being forcefully banished. The card was not postally used.*

blatant plagiarism was once condoned or simply ignored.

Bertiglia is not only collected for his delightful drawings of children but also for his 'glamour' cards. Very much in the style of his Italian contemporaries, Carloti and Nanni, they are worthy examples in this genre. He also seems to have had a penchant for depicting glamorous ladies with horses and dogs. Many admirably illustrate the fashions of the day and provide useful social documents for research into costume and



*The British and Greek soldiers are left behind by the German Nazi armoured vehicle on the Via Della Vittoria - the Way to Victory. Note again the stereotype English brolly and the caption 'Divieto di Transito al Pedrone' - Forbidden to cross at your peril! The card, 961/1, published by NMM was sent to Caporale Gino Volpi at Military Post 54T on 13 July 1941*

even transport history. Other cards among his vast and varied output can be placed in the 'romantic' category.

During World War One Bertiglia did his bit for the war effort. As well as con-

and also produced anti German propaganda postcards. In a style very different from his children and glamour categories the caricatures in this series are full of symbolism and political satire. The late Frenchman



*This anonymously-published postcard is a puzzler. The caption of the telegram sent by General Guglielmo translates as: 'Thank you God for a splendid success' and shows Belgian refugees fleeing from Anversa (Antwerp) after the German invasion of May 1940. Was the Kaiser included on the design as a ghost?*



*This Second World War card is full of symbolism. Italian and German soldiers are shown overpowering the wounded British Lion and clipping its claws while the Union Flag and the traditional English brolly are broken! The unused card, No.961/1, is published by NMM and bears the printed date 1941-XIX*

Gerard Neudin, a postcard catalogue compiler, estimates that Bertiglia produced around 200 cards of this type.

Following World War One he captured another important aspect of Italy's history on postcards. From the Middle Ages Trieste had been one of the oldest regions of the Hapsburg monarchy



and this city and prosperous seaport lying between the Adriatic Sea and Italy's border with Slovenia was joined with Italy in 1918. At the same time the city of Trentino was also annexed to Italy. These cards show how much he kept up to date with world affairs, revealing a satirical streak on cards commenting on political and international events

Two decades later he was producing yet more propaganda - for the Ethiopian War. His homeland, engaged in an armed conflict with this independent East African state, overran it and imposed Italian rule. That Bertiglia supported the Italian campaign is evident in a series of cards in which he depicts his fellow Italians as benevolent saviours of the Ethiopian people.

The Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, was taken on 5 May 1936 and the Emperor, Haile Selassie, together with the country's leaders, was forced into exile. The Fascist invasion of 1935, condemned by the League of Nations, fostered anti-Nazi feeling amongst the Western powers, and the Ethiopian occupation was seen as a contributing factor to the start of World War II.

He produced fewer

*This card, entitled on the reverse Il Falconiere, (No.6557 - Uff.Rev.Stampa Milano, Serie 1034/1) was posted from Chieti to Rome in December 1933. The subject is after the work of the same title by a famous Milanese painter Tranquillo Cremona (1837-1878), who trained in Padua and Venice.*

postcards in World War Two, some mocking the allies, two examples of which are shown here, but these were obviously issued before Italy changed sides in 1943. In nearly all these wartime propaganda postcards he used child images to get his message across but I have yet to find any WWII cards by him directed at his new Nazi enemy after this period.

Bertiglia also produced numerous barren landscapes, mountain views and seascapes, often in monochrome, which are almost unidentifiable as his work. This stark, colourless style appears to be associated with his 'later period' as many of these cards were posted during the 1930s and early 1940s.

His artistic ability can also be seen on postcards where he emulates the style of the great masters. It is not known where, or if, Bertiglia received art tuition but it cannot be denied that he, too, was a master of his craft. His prolific output – including the glamour images, animal and flower illustrations and even his landscapes - are all meticulously drawn.

Surprisingly, for such a highly proficient artist, very little is known about his life. No details can be found of how he died but I recently discovered new information on the Internet as well as a photograph. It appears he spent his later years at various times in Cantavenna, a small village in Piedmont, moving in 1963 to Rome where he died on the 2nd October 1973 at the age of 82.

Bertiglia has left a rich legacy of work that collectors all over the world compete to buy and at any one time hundreds of his postcards are available for sale on eBay, fetching high, and often extremely high, prices. His delightful and unique illustrations will continue to add artistic excellence and colourful interest to any postcard collection.

Numbered PCs indicate where postcards are used in the article.

### TUCK'S Kiddies Sketches Series

12 sets of six = 72 cards – Green denotes a full set of six identified Red type denotes an incomplete list

#### I - Card Nos. 3551

Good Sport (Little girl with gun, a dog and chicks)  
(Little girl falling off tricycle)  
(Two little girls ice skating; another fallen over)  
(Two little girls mountaineering)  
(Two little girls playing ball)

#### II - Card Nos. 3552

Smiles (Three little girls; outside two look coy)  
Smiles and Tears (Two little girls hold hands; a third one cries)  
(Two little girls smile at each other; a third cries)  
(Two little girls hold hands; a third sits and cries)  
Who Smiles (Two little girls hug, watched by a third)  
I Just Smile! (Two girls hug, a third looks pensive)

#### III - Card Nos. 3553

Nursery Ways (Girl pushing baby in wooden pram)  
(Two little girls, one powdering dog's nose)  
(Girl and dog play tug of war with doll)  
(Two little girls, one tries to put coat on puppy)  
(Girl sprays perfume on her friend's hair)  
(Two little girls, one has nice doll, other scruffy undressed doll!)

#### IV - Card Nos. 3554

Happy Though Married (Boy & girl at well, with a rooster)  
(Boy & girl feeding chickens)  
(Boy & girl having a picnic)  
(Boy & girl with pitchforks, haymaking)  
(Boy & girl resting under a tree)  
(Both walking home, boy carries drinks barrel)

#### \* V - Card Nos. 3555

Young Naturalists (Two little girls and puppy with beetle)  
(Two little girls with snail)  
(Two little girls with butterfly)  
(Two little girls with flower bouquet & frog)  
(Two little girls with beehive)

#### VI - Card Nos. 3556

The Tango (Girl plays violin while two girls dance)  
(All six cards have title 'Tango' and show the same three characters in various poses)

#### VII - Card Nos. 3557

A Disturbing Influence  
'Twas Ever So  
The Challenge  
The Duel  
Friends Again  
All's well that ends well  
(The above set shows a father's disapproval of a boy and girl romance)

#### VIII - Card Nos. 3558

Romeo and Juliet

(All same title - a delightful story sequence in six cards showing Romeo's attempts to climb onto the balcony)

#### IX - Card Nos. 3559

Love at first sight (Bashful boy and girl meet)  
The Momentous Question  
Yes or No?  
Wedded (Wedding scene)  
Off for the honeymoon  
(Tearful parents wave goodbye)  
Alone at last!

#### X - Card Nos. 3560

Half a-wake/Reveil inattendu (little girl waking up, puppy on bed)  
Morning Prayer/Priere de Matin  
The Morning Tub (Little girl washing face at outside water pump)  
Porridge for Two/Partage fraternel (Girl and dog eating breakfast)  
Morning Lessons/La Petite ecole (Girl reads book, + dolls, teddy & dog)  
Helping mother/Soins du menage (Little girl sweeping up)

#### \* XI - Cards No. 3561

When a man's married (Various pictures of domestic bliss with same title)  
Wife getting ready; man sweeps up  
Wife going out shopping; man holds baby  
Wife sits in chair reading; husband holds baby  
Wife sits in chair fanning herself; husband hangs out washing  
Wife in bed asleep; husband 'walks' crying baby

#### XII - Cards No. 3562

(Sequence of boy and girl with puppy)  
There's a Beauty/Comme il est beau!  
The Little darling!/L'Enfant gate  
He's Off His Food/Manque d'appetit, mauvais signe!  
Off to bed/Au lit!  
This will make him sleep/Potion Calmante  
He's Taken the Whole Bottle/Il a bu toute la bouteille!

Child studies were produced for a set published by the Italian firm, GGM. They depict a variety of occupations and are captioned in Italian, French and English. The set includes:

The Barber; The Bootblack, The Chimney Sweep; The Doctor; The Embroiderer, The Hairdresser; The Judge; The Laundress; The Match Seller; The Milliner; The Musician; The Newspaper Boy; The Painter; The Poet; The Rag Gatherer; The Sculptor; The Shoemaker; The Street Musician; The Swell; The Tenor; The Tinker, The Traveller; The Typist and The Writer.

Bertiglia postcards illustrating musical

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instruments, players and poetry,  
all published by NMM, Serie 4650 and  
marked Edizione Ottobre L942-XX:

4650/1 - 'E l'amor mio ...' Clarinet  
4650/2 - 'Quando nascente voi ...'  
(yellow flowers)  
4650/2 - (Tuba + pink roses)  
4650/2 Sceno Voscilo za God Ottobre L942-  
XX (Guitar + violas)  
4650/3 - 'Ed io degli stornelli ...'  
4650/4 - 'Quando nascente voi ...' (pansies)  
4650/5 - 'Jo benedico ...'  
4650/6 - 'Fiorin fiorello ...'

*also*

Fior di Gaggia CCM Milan, No.2337, (Clar-  
inet + white lilac)

#### NMM Edizione Novembre L942 xx-1

4650/1 - Sceno Voscilo za God (piccolo +  
red clover)  
4650/2 - Sceno Voscilo za Rojstir dan (Gui-  
tar + pansies)  
4650/3 - Sceno Voscilo za God (tuba + pink  
roses)  
4650/4 - Sceno Voscilo za God (two guitars  
+ yellow primroses)  
4650/6 - (no caption - purple iris)  
4650/7 - Sceno Voscilo za God (two guitars  
+ yellow primroses)  
4650/7 - Sceno Viscilo za Rojstin dan (Con-  
certina + white snowdrops)  
4650/8 - Sceno Voscilo za God (guitar +  
orange wallflowers)  
4650/9 - Sceno Viscilo za Rojstin dan (cello +  
red gladioli)

#### 'Music score' cards include:

Abat-jour  
Addio monella  
Ah! Le beau reve  
Ah! Quel piedin  
Bambola infranta  
Bella ca, bella si  
Buongiorno a Maria  
Capinera (Mandolino)  
Cara piccina  
C'est la Pluie  
Chitarra malinconica  
Ciondolo d'oro  
Cocaina  
Come le rose ...  
Como Pioveva!  
Corredo (Serie 2291)  
Dansons le Shimmy  
Ddoje serenata  
Donna!  
Donne e Amore  
L'Edera sei tu!  
Era nata a novi  
Est ce bien toi  
Eva  
Fanfarra 'e Maggio  
Farfalla  
Fili d'Oro  
Gelosia  
Gelsomino;  
Godi anche tu!  
Il Canto del Marinaio  
J'en ai marre  
La Canzone del silenzio;  
La Chioamavano cosetta  
Ladra  
La Duchessa del bal Tabarin  
La Figlia della strada  
La Legenda di Frafalla  
Le Rose rosse

Le Train roulait  
Les Baisers  
Lettere ucisse (Serie 2295)  
L'Ignoto  
Lison Lisette (Editions Astrea Serie  
No.2235)  
L'America  
Lontananza  
Lucciola  
Madama di Tebe  
Madonnina Blu  
Mon Cerchiata di Blu  
Mon soleil c'est ton sourire  
Nun so geluso  
'O Mare  
Pacienza stracquata  
Perche mi baci?  
Piccola fioraia  
Quand une femme vous aimee  
Quand y a une femme dans son coin  
Reginella  
Rien que nous deux  
Ritorna!  
Romanzetto coniugale  
Salutissim  
Santa Lucia Luntana ...  
Sara mi non si credo?  
Scalella 'e seta  
Se non ci fossero le donne  
Serenata  
Sogna la Gioventu  
Tic-ti, tic-ta  
Torna la Paesello  
Tra la siepi  
Trottin Rose  
Tu non sei che una bambola  
Varca d'ammore  
Veleno  
Viperer  
Zaza

#### World War One designs featuring children:

Published by Arca Ltd, Paris:  
Chi vince?  
Comunicarti Ufficiali!  
Civilta!  
Dio non e piu con loro  
Il trono vacilla!  
La Maratona  
Sfrattati!  
Nouvelle Europe  
1914!...  
Tableaux!  
Un bagno inaspettato  
(uncaptioned) - girl in barrel with 'Bor-  
deaux' on it

#### Series 1009. Unknown publisher

Divine Fire  
Justice  
The Awakening

#### Series 1019. Unknown publisher

The Banquet of the victors  
The Last Refuge  
The Last Tango

#### Two others not featuring kids:

##### Series 1011:

The Door-Keeper discharged!  
Telegramma: (Kaiser watching crowd of  
refugees)