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POSTAGE STAMPS.

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POSTAGE STAMPS.

TAKING STAMPS.

THE STAMP MAN GIVES US SOME BIG FIGURES.

The other day the stamp man happened in and entertained us for half an hour with startling facts and stories all about postage stamps. When asked if he thought that stamp collecting was on the increase, he replied that he had never seen anything to equal it. Where a few years ago collectors were counted by the hundreds, to-day they reach into the millions. Once no one but school boys made stamp collections. Now boys and girls, men and women, physicians, lawyers, statesmen, noblemen, all have the stamp craze. Even the newspapers are getting filled up with articles on stamps, the stamp mania, fabulous prices paid for stamps, and so on, until one asks if this thing is ever to come to an end. Well, perhaps so, when the world comes to an end, but from all appearances now, never before then. The stamp man said that Boston was getting about as bad as New York, where stamp auctions are held almost weekly and where stamps often bring a thousand dollars apiece.

Why, in Cambridge, but a few miles from Boston, there lives a rich collector who has nearly nine thousand different postage stamps. It has taken him thirty years to get together this vast collection

but it is worth \$25,000. Up in Maine another man has been spending, in the last year or two, \$100,000 on his collection. Last winter a large dealer brought over from England a trunk full of stamps valued at \$200,000 and sold one-tenth of his stock to this Maine gentleman alone. It is now reported that another English dealer is coming over this winter to get back some of the stamps that have been sold here, and that he expects to return with thousands of the more common stamps, thinking they will rise in value in a few years.

Before the U. S. government established a uniform rate of postage all over the country, offices were established in various places where stamps of different designs were used. These stamps, together with the locals issued in the Confederate States at the time of the war, are now exceedingly rare. Whoever possesses a Brattleboro local, for instance, has a bit of paper worth \$650.

In 1890 there was found, in an old atlas belonging to the Worcester Historical Society, a bunch of rare Milbury locals, one of which was recently sold in N. Y. for more than a thousand dollars. But the rarest stamp in the world is probably the 1c. red British Guiana of 1856, which is priced as high as \$5,500.

Stamps that are worthless to-day will, in many cases, be rare in a few years. For this reason many are buying up stamps of the United States, and even the cheaper stamps of Europe, to lay them away until their price increases many times

Men who sell collections now that were made in their boyhood days always get big returns for their investment, and never have difficulty in finding ready purchasers.

The nobility of Europe probably spend the largest amount on their collections. Count Ferrari, an Italian residing in Paris, is said to have the best collection in the world, his stamps being valued at \$1,000,000. He employs a dealer whom he recently bought out, solely to care for his collection and purchase for him new stamps.

All this sounds like a fairy tale but it is the truth. Why, many collectors are studying their stamps just as an archaeologist would an old brick found in an Indian grave. They examine the watermarks on the back of their stamps, count the perforations around each specimen, study the inscriptions, whether they be in Chinese or Arabic, and even note the quality of paper on which their stamps are printed, lithographed, or engraved.

All these things influence the market value of numerous specimens. When a few months ago the United States government altered the triangles in the upper corners of the stamps now in use, by making them appear white on a tinted ground, ordinary people did not see any difference in the new design. But the collector saw the change the very day it appeared, and is now saving the old specimens, with the dark triangles, because they were only used a few months, and consequently will be worth more in a few years.

"Yes," said the stamp man, as he buttoned up his ulster and put on his gloves before leaving us, "this stamp craze has come to stay. When there are at least one-hundred men in Boston alone who are willing to pay from \$ 1.00 to \$ 1,000 for a single bit of paper with some gum plastered on the back, and who will give you, often times, more for a stamp than its catalogued value, it does not look as if the stamp business would be given up for the next score of years."

Then our friend made his departure, after promising to call again in a few weeks and keep us posted on all the latest news relating to postage-stamp collecting.

A Chat with the Stamp Man.

According to agreement the stamp man made us another call, the other day, to talk over events that have recently happened in the stamp world, and to show us a few specimens of rare stamps he had been fortunate enough to get since he last saw us.

One of his lucky purchases was an entire set of the large United States periodical stamps which are now being made by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. These stamps are sent out to the different postmasters all over the United States to be used only in the post offices and attached to records relating to second class mail matter. When the records are complete they are sent to Washington with the periodical stamps attached to them, and there layed away for safe keeping. Therefore these stamps never get into general circulation and are not intended for the collector. Each postmaster is instructed not to sell them to any person, and thus the collector rarely sees one. A few collectors, however, sharper than some of the postmasters up in the country, succeeded in buying the stamps at the post office before the postmasters new that it was an offence against the Government to sell them. Some years ago it

was allowable to dispose of these stamps to collectors, and those who purchased them then are now making five-hundred per cent on their investment. Several petitions have recently been sent in to the Post Office Department to again have the periodical stamps on sale at the post office, but as yet the Department has remained unmoved.

Since revenue stamps have been used so extensively in many foreign countries to prepay postage on letters and packages, collectors are reviving their interest in revenue stamps in general. The stamp man tells us that it is a surprising fact to note that as many collectors are interested in the revenue stamps of Peru and Mexico as in those of the United States.

While speaking of United States stamps our friend made some queer remarks about collecting United States stamps exclusively, which seemed, on first hearing, to be almost paradoxical. He said he had advised the collector who did not have a large pocket-book to buy stamps from every part of the world, and to fill his album full, while he thought it better for the rich collector to make a specialty of some one country, such as the United States or Canada, and ignore the stamps from all other parts of the world. It is a fact that you can purchase five-thousand stamps from all over the world for less money than you can a few hundred from the United States. The five-thousand foreign stamps are cheaper to-day, but how about the same five-thousand ten years hence?

The yearly catalogues quoting the stamps once used in the old Italian or German States will tell you how prices are mounting every year, so that philatelists who collect everything will some day come out ahead of those who specialize.

Collectors who have no sympathy for Mr. Seebek, the head of the Union Bank Note Co. of New York, who has, for so many years, received the contracts from the governments of the South and Central American republics to print stamps for them and to dispose of the same to collectors at a big profit, will be pleased to learn that Ecuador and Honduras have discontinued their contracts with him and have apparently gone out of the business of issuing stamps largely for speculative purposes.

The stamp man wanted to know what we thought of the international stamp which has been discussed so much of late. Last summer a friend of ours wrote a letter to a party in Germany, at the same time asking for a reply. He wished to enclose a five-cent stamp which could be used on the return envelope, but a United States five-cent stamp would not return a letter from Germany.

He consequently had to hunt up a dealer who possessed an unused German stamp of the value of five cents, pay a large price for it, and enclose it in his letter. The object of an international stamp is to obviate this difficulty, for it could be purchased at any post office in the Postal Union for its face value. It will not be many years before we shall see such a stamp, for the United States and several other governments are thinking seriously of adopting it.

The stamp man thought he must be going after we had fully expressed our opinions on speculative stamps, specializing, the United States periodical stamps, and the international stamp of the near future, so we let him go on one condition, namely, that he would come again some other day and reveal all his stamp secrets to us.

United States Stamps in Europe.

It has often been remarked that United States stamps are cheaper in Europe than in this country. In the main this is true, but it is difficult to explain why it is so. To be sure, foreign collectors do not care so much for United States specimens as do Americans, and therefore leave these stamps on the market; but how does the foreign market get flooded when the demand for United States stamps is so great at home?

The United States periodical and unused due stamps cannot be bought at any post office in this country, and are, for the most part, as rare as unpurchasable here. In Europe, however, they can be bought; and the secret of how they get into circulation there has at last come out. Every collector knows that it is unlawful for postmasters in the United States to dispose of either the due or periodical stamps. Now according to the regulations of the International Postal Union, whose headquarters are at Berne, Switzerland, every country comprised in that union must send seven complete sets of any new stamps issued by it, to each of the other one-hundred and seventy-five countries represented.

Every time the United States government issues a new series of stamps, therefore, about ten thousand unused specimens have to be sent to Berne. It is expected that the officials there will immediately forward these to all the other countries in the Postal Union, but this is not always the case. Where one set is kept for official inspection the remaining six usually get sold to some foreign stamp dealer, who will doubtless dispose of them, in turn, to an American collector. And thus the treasured periodical or due stamp gets into somebody's collection in America, despite the precautions of the post office department. This, however, applies only to unused specimens of United States stamps and does not account for the remarkable number of cancelled stamps of the general issue, which can be found any day in London, Paris, and elsewhere, for a surprisingly low price.



Stamps Sent Underground.

It may surprise some of the readers of our Stamp Department when we tell them that letters can now be sent from place to place through underground pipes, almost as conveniently as liquids or gases. In Paris, France, there is placed, underneath the city, an elaborate system of pipes which carry letters from one end of Paris to the other in less time than it takes to tell about it. It is done by compressed air. The letters are placed inside of metal boxes which fit tightly into hollow tubes or pipes. The air within these pipes is exhausted by means of air pumps, so that the box passes through a vacuum and is propelled by the pressure of the air behind it.

There are a score or more of sub-stations scattered throughout the city, and all these, at about equal distances from one another, are connected with central stations where the mail is received and re-directed to its proper destination.

The stamps on letters sent through the air tubes bear the inscription "pneumatiques," and sometimes puzzle collectors who take them for revenues.

Not long ago there was some talk of establishing a line of pneumatic tubes in Boston, but the plan did not succeed. Before many years it is not at all improbable that all large cities in the United States will be furnished with air tubes for conducting the mail.

Another Novelty in the Stamp Business.

There is a party in Charleston, S. C., who advertises to lend money on postage stamps. In his circular he says, "Philatelists often have opportunities to buy stamps very cheaply, but a lack of ready cash prevents them and gives the other fellow an advantage. There's no excuse now, since I am at your service. Only eight per cent, interest, per annum, is charged, and for my services, as appraiser of the stamps, I am paid about five per cent. Loans are made for ninety days only, but they can usually be renewed at expiration."

There is no end to novelties in the stamp line, but a philatelic pawn-shop is the latest fad.



A QUEER DOLLAR.

The other day a party in Peoria, Ill., found three of the most curious dollars that have been seen for some time. They are known as "Sprinkle" dollars a name given them from their maker, Josiah Sprinkle, who once owned a silver mine in the West.

One day Sprinkle appeared in Washington, the county seat of Mason, then a thriving town, with a buckskin pouch well filled with silver dollars roughly made by his own hand. They were not counterfeits of the United States dollar, but had on one side the stamp of an owl, and on the other a six-pointed star. In weight they were heavier than the United States coin, and they also had the ring of pure silver.

Sprinkle was taken for an honest man by all the store keepers and had no difficulty in spending the money he had brought down with him. One day, however, the government agents heard that he was making his own coin, and immediately had him arrested. When brought into court he produced a dollar which was found to be of pure silver and worth even more than one-hundred cents. He was therefore set free, but before leaving the room he astonished the defeated officials by taking from his pocket fifty Sprinkle dollars and handing them to his attorney.

This incident happened in the early thirties, and until the other day not a Sprinkle dollar has been found for twenty years.

