

PHILATELIA

A Romance.

By Herbert Irey Watts.



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KNOXVILLE, TENN.

Philatelia.

A Romance.

By Herbert Irey Watts.

RIVERSIDE CALIF.
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--TO --
Philatelists of every country,
this little book is
DEDICATED.

Preface.

In writing *Philatelia*, I have tried to interest not only the philatelic but the non-philatelic readers. As to my failure or success the future must tell. If through this medium one person is interested in the greatest pastime and pleasure of modern times, or if, reading the story, one person is enabled to pass a pleasant hour, then *Philatelia* will not have been written in vain. As explained in the story, the name is derived from 'Philatelia,' the Goddess of Philately.

Herbert Irey Watts,
Winchester, Ind., Feb. 2, 1897.

Philatelia.

CHAPTER I.

In thoughts which answer to my own.
In words which reach my inward ear.
Like whispers from the void unknown.
I feel thy living presence here.—Whittier.



OR MANY YEARS the little building on a side street, back of the great Talston block, had been occupied by the firm of Brown & Co., stamp dealers and importers. Ezra Brown had long since purchased the interest of the man who had

been the other member of the firm, and since then he and his daughter had managed the business alone. It was not such a rushing business as the firm had once done, in the seventies, for Ezra Brown was old fashioned in his ways, and he had failed to adopt all the modern methods of stamp dealing. Now-a-days the principal business was with the children from the neighboring school, who stopped to admire the sheets of varicolored stamps displayed in the windows, and now and then come in to buy a few cents worth of stamps for the little album at home, or once in a great while some more advanced philatelist who happened to pass that way.

When such a thing as that happened, the Philatelist was sure to find some treasure that his collection lacked, for, despite its old fashionedness,

the little store was the keeping place of many rare old stamps. Years and years before, Ezra Brown had made an extended trip through most of the British Colonies seeking stamps for his stock, and when it suited his fancy, he could display specimens that would make even the prince of Philatelists pale with envy.

Ever since the death of his wife, he and Philatelia, for such was his daughter's odd name, had lived in the rooms over the shop. Philatelia, so named by her father in honor of Philatelia, the Goddess of Philately, was not in any way unusually handsome, but was to most people very attractive. She was, at the time at which I write, about eighteen years old. Tall and slender, with glossy brown hair and eyes, and well formed features, she was altogether the most attractive object in the store of Brown & Co. In addition to filling the wants of their little customers from the school, she attended to the correspondence, and kept everything in order, but when one of the collectors from the outside world chanced to come in, she would modestly retire to the rear of the shop and leave her father to attend to his wants.

So it happened that few of these philatelists had an opportunity of even speaking to her, though some of them came several times for that express purpose.

But one day Ralph Lisson, of Oak Burn, happened to be in the city, and while strolling around ran across the dingy old store. Being an ardent collector, he at once entered, and speaking

to the old man, asked to see some stamps. While he was looking over some sheets, and while Mr. Brown's back was turned, he looked toward the back of the room and saw an attractive young lady seated at a small table sorting "Continentials."

Just then the old man turned around and said "the stamps you want to see are in a book up stairs; I will send for them," and turning to the young lady, he said, "Philatelia, will you go up stairs and bring me the book which has the collection of Locals in it?"

"Your daughter, I presume, sir," remarked Ralph, as Philatelia left the room.

"Yes," replied Mr. Brown. "She is a regular philatelist herself, and understands the business thoroughly." Nothing more was said until Philatelia returned with the desired book, which she handed to her father and went back to her work with scarcely a glance at Ralph. It is to be feared that while Mr. Brown was patiently pointing out his rare stamps and talking at a great rate, Ralph was paying more attention to the deft fingers of Philatelia sorting the stamps than to the old gentleman's explanations. He purchased a few stamps asked to have some sent him on approval, which Mr. Brown agreed to do, and leaving his address, Ralph withdrew.

On his way home his thoughts were divided between the philatelic treasures he had examined at Brown's and the fair Philatelia. Being unmarried he was naturally interested in attractive

young ladies, and Philatelia seemed to him a more attractive specimen than common.

This is the way he "sized her up," and if not strictly according to the usual form it was at least purely philatelic—"what a splendid specimen she is—mint condition—well centered and beautiful color—she will be a treasure to the philatelist who gets her. I believe I'll try to get acquainted with her.

A few days later he received the sheets of stamps on approval, accompanied by a courteous letter in a beautiful hand, evidently by a lady. "I wonder if that's Philatelia's writing?" was the thought that passed in his mind as he read it. The reader will notice that he had already become familiar enough with her (in his thoughts) to call her by her first name.

A few days later he decided to return the sheets in person, on the chance of again seeing Philatelia, although he would not admit, even to himself that THAT was the real cause. But the truth will come out, so we might as well admit that Ralph Lisson, destined to be one of the chief characters of this little story, was at last a victim of circumstances, and in love with Philatelia Brown.



CHAPTER II.

I ask myself, "Is this a dream?"--Longfellow.



ARRIVING IN THE little side street in which Brown's store was located on the day he had set for returning the sheets, Ralph was just in time to see the old stamp dealer issue forth and walk away in the other direction. "Now," thought Ralph, "is my chance to have a talk with Philatelia," and the old man having passed from sight around a nearby corner, he entered the shop and saw the object of his thoughts coming up the room to meet him.

"Good morning; I have brought back those sheets you sent me. Please find the amount due for the stamps I have retained.

Philatelia returned his greeting and taking the sheets, busied herself in finding the amount due, which she soon announced, and in a very businesslike way took Ralph's money and gave him a receipt in return.

Ralph then asked to see certain stamps of Mauritius which were at once produced and while he was engaged in inspecting them Mr. Brown returned.* Seeing the stamps Ralph was looking

*This was undeniably very unkind of Mr. Brown, as Ralph was at that moment engaged in "making love" to Philatelia, which pleasant occupation he was obliged to abandon on Mr. Brown's return. Ed.

at he said, "Mr. Lisson, you have found the right way to interest Philatelia, for her especial hobby is the stamps of Mauritius, and she has a collection of these stamps nearly complete. In fact she lacks but three or four of the very rarest."

Ralph at once asked if he might have the pleasure of examining the collection. Philatelia looked toward her father and he nodded his assent to her showing Ralph the stamps. She led the way to the little table where Ralph had first seen her sorting continentals.

From a small safe in one corner she produced a small leather bound album, which thanks to her father's early trip to the British Colonies contained a wonderful collection of Mauritius, both rare and common. Not only were most of the varieties represented but pairs, strips, and oddities, such as errors in watermark, shades of color and varieties of paper were beautifully arranged on the heavy pages of the blank album.

Ralph gazed at the display in silent admiration. Such a collection could only be gotten together by an expert and was one to delight the heart of a specialist. All the specimens were clean and those which had been damaged before they came into Philatelia's hands were here neatly repaired, and each was lightly hinged in its exact place.

"Did you really arrange this wonderful collection yourself?" asked Ralph.

"Why yes. It was nothing. Anyone with time and care could do the same."

"I must add that one must have in addition the necessary stamps and at least a fair amount of brains."*

"Oh yes, one must have some brains and skill. Perhaps I have some. As to the stamps I had the freedom of all of papa's stock."

"You were fortunate in that. I see you have here some some very rare stamps but I believe I have one or two that are not represented in your album."

"Oh would you be willing to sell them?" I would be so glad to approach a step nearer to the completion of my collection. There is only one other collection of Mauritius that is more complete than mine. That you know is Taplings collection which is now in the great British Museum."

"Well, I wouldnt care to sell them as I dont deal in stamps for profit, but if they will be of any use to you I would be delighted to exchange them for stamps of my specialty."

"I would indeed be thankful for the chance of exchanging for your stamps if I can furnish the ones you want. What is your specialty?"

"I have a mania for the issues of Mexico. The stamps I want to complete a certain set are several of the Guadalajara locals."

*It is not at all unusual for young men to say such things to pretty girls, as anyone who has 'been there' will tell you, so we do not blame Ralph at all for saying what he did.—Editor.

We have several of them but they are in a safety vault and it is too late to be able to get them today.

"Thank you for reminding me of Father Times flight. It is almost time for my train and I must go without finishing looking at your treasures."

It is too bad you must go; I wanted you to see all my collection"

"Perhaps the next time I am in town you will allow me to finish?"

"Certainly, and meantime I will send you the Gaudalajaras and if you will be so kind you can send down those you spoke of."

"I will send them to-morrow. Good-by for the present," and before he knew it, Ralph had taken her hand, dropped it and had started out scarcely heeding Mr. Browns polite request to 'call again.'



CHAPTER III.

And waving wide his wings of white,
The angel, at these words, had sped
Toward the eternal realms of light! —
Poor mother! see, thy son is dead!

--Longfellow.



FZRA BROWN was dying, stricken down by his lifelong enemy—heart disease. Another hour and motherless Philatelia would be also fatherless. She was sitting by his side and in his dying moments his last thoughts were of her and to provide for her future. “Bring me the wax sealed envelope in the upper drawer of the safe, Philatelia,” requested the dying man.

The envelope was brought, and at a sign from her father Philatelia broke the seal and handed it to him. With trembling fingers he drew out some papers covered with faded writing and one of them bearing a great gilt seal. From between the pages of one of the papers he drew another envelope. Holding this in his hand he said, “listen, my daughter. What I am about to say will be of great importance to you in the long years before you.”

“In this envelope are all the stamps necessary to complete your wonderful collection and one stamp which you will not find listed in any catalogue. But it is genuine, and these papers are

the proof of it. Open the envelope and let your eyes rest upon the rarest stamp in the world—the one penny ^{green} Post Office Mauritius of 1847, the only copy in existence. Whenever in the battle of life you are in need of money, that stamp will enable you to sell your collection for a sum sufficient to support you for life,—and well it may, for no other collection of Mauritius can ever be complete!”

Philatelia opened the envelope which was secured like the first and drew out the wonderful stamp. It was on the original cover, and there she saw the date, “May 3, 1847,” and the address on the letter, “Ezra Brown, B——, United States of America.”

Having examined it she replaced it in the envelope and turned to her father. His eager gaze was following her every movement, and he now whispered, “place the papers and the stamp in the envelope and put them in the safe. At the proper time read the papers and you will then know why I call this the rarest stamp in the world. Now take this letter to the post and while you are gone I will try to sleep.”

Philatelia mailed the letter which had, from its appearance, been written several days, and as she did so could not help wondering what her father was writing to “Ralph Lisson, Esq., Oak Burn, ——,” about.

When she returned her father was sleeping peacefully. So the the day and night passed and

when the morning came, Ezra Brown awoke—
not in this world, but in the one we cannot see.

CHAPTER IV.

In the old churchyard of his native town,
And in the ancestral tomb beside the wall,
We laid him in the sleep that comes to all,
And left him to his rest and his renown.
—Longfellow.



TOWARD evening on the day of Philatelia's bereavement, the kind neighbor who had taken charge of the household affairs heard a gentle knock at the shop door and on answering it found there a handsome and elegantly dressed young man.

"Will you kindly give my card to Miss Brown and ask if I can see her a moment?"

"I will give her your card but I am afraid she cannot see you, as she is constantly weeping for her father and so far I have been unable to comfort her."

"Then kindly add that I am here in consequence of a message I received last evening from her father."

Mrs. Korran gave Ralph, for was he, a seat in the shop room and took his card upstairs. She returned very soon and, stating that Philatelia

would see him, lead the way upstairs. At the top of the narrow stairs Mrs. Korran indicated the door of Philatelia's room and retired.

Left alone, Ralph tapped on the door and in answer to Philatelia's invitation to come in, he entered the room. Philatelia had been seated at a little table on which lay nothing but a tear-stained handkerchief and a little bible. She came forward to meet him and offered him a chair. When he was seated she said "Mrs. Korran said you had received a message from my father before his death."

"Yes," replied Ralph, "I received a letter from him and am here in consequence. But perhaps if I let you read the letter you will understand why, although I am really almost a stranger to you, I took the liberty of so soon intruding on your sorrow."

With these words he handed her a letter that she recognized as being in her father's writing.

This is what she read:

B————, June 19th., 1892

Mr. Ralph Lisson,
Oak Burn,
Dear Sir:—

When you have read, with natural surprise, what I am about to tell you, I hope your kind heart will lead you to think not unkindly of me for the strange request I am about to make. Only in behalf of my daughter, soon to be an orphan could I prevail on myself to unveil my secret heart to the gaze of a stranger.

But ever since the day you first entered my shop I have felt that you are one to be trusted, and I believe your actions in the future will prove me right.

First I must tell you that, besides myself, Philatelia has no relations in the world, and living as we have lived, even friends are few. We have never tried to enter the whirling world of society. Philatelia had no desire to mingle with the world but was ever happiest when helping me in my work or passing the hours with her beloved stamps.

And now in this dread hour— when realizing that my darling must soon be left without me— I cast about in my mind for a friend to help her— and every time my heart turns to *you*. Will you accept the sacred trust? Will you be her steadfast friend and kindly counselor? I leave her property which will make her independent for life. What I ask of you is that you watch over her welfare as you would if she was your daughter or sister. The shape in which I leave her property is another motive for my asking you this. For the large amount of it is such as only a philatelist can deal with. In fact, when my funeral expenses are settled, there will be little left but stamps.

Will you take charge of this property, and as my executor turn it into the shape most profitable? In my last will, made to-day, I have named you as my executor and I pray God you will accept the trust. There is little for me to add save that

this letter will not be mailed until I am dying.

If you accede to this— my last request— will you not go to my beloved Philatelia in the first moments of her sorrow, and as far as may be comfort and console her? Do this for her sake, if not for the sake of poor old

Ezra Brown.

Ralph waited in silence until Philatelia had finished reading her fathers last letter, showing how in the face of death, and in the last moments of his life, his only thoughts had been of the one he must leave behind. Her tears were fast staining the precious paper that held her fathers last words, as she held out her hand to Ralph, and murmured between her sobs, "you have come to do as he requested?"

"I have," answered Ralph, gently.

"Mr. Lisson, I can never repay you for this, but I will pray God to bless and reward you."

They taked on, and Philatelia told him how it had been her fathers wish to be buried in Highland Cemetery, near the little village of Cloverdale, where he and her mother had been children together, and that beneath the stately evergreens in the cemetery her mother had waited through long, long years for the coming of he who had been all the world to her.

So it was arranged that on the evening of the next day they would take all that was mortal of Ezra Brown and lay him to rest in distant High-

land Cemetery.

* * * *

The world was wrapped in darkness, save where the street lights sent forth a circle of light. At one of the principal street corners a band of musicians had just assembled before an opera house to give an open air concert. They were dressed in fantastic costumes and with the lights and shadows playing over their brazen instruments they presented a weird aspect. A good sized crowd had gathered to hear them play. Just as they were ready to start a lively air, and the leader stood with baton poised, there came slowly round the corner a rumbling hearse, followed by a single closed carriage. It was Philatelia, accompanied by Mrs. Korran and Ralph Lisson, following her fathers corpse to the railway station, on the way to Cloverdale.

Instinctively the band paused, and the leader, lowering his baton, said something in a low tone to the musicians, upon which they hastily turned over their music and again stood ready to play. As the carriage slowly passed, there came to the waiting ears of the assembly, not the stirring march they had expected but the soul-stirring strains of a funeral dirge. As the hearse grew dimmer and dimmer in the distance, there rose above the wailing of the clarinets and the moans of the brass horn, the clear notes of a cornet.

Higher and clearer it came, like the soaring of a spirit on its way to heaven— "Nearer My God to Thee."

And so they went on till the dirge was ended. Thus the musicians payed tribute to the dead— although he was to them unknown. Then came the lively air, and out of their minds passed the memory of the rumbling hearse and unknown dead, even as it had passed out of their sight. But many of their listeners had recourse to their handkerchiefs— for many an eye was wet— and few there were, indeed, who saw that kindly act, that ever forgot it or the sound of the sweet-toned cornet, lingering on the notes of "Nearer My God to Thee."

CHAPTER VI.

Sleep sweetly, tender heart, in peace!
Sleep, holy spirit, blessed soul,
While the stars burn, the moon increase,
And the great ages onward roll. —Tennyson



IT WAS over. Ezra Brown was hidden under the sod of Highland Cemetery. Through all the weary winding ways of life he had come at last to sleep beside the one who was always to him a bride. Yes, side by side they lay, beneath the stately, rustling evergreen, that had been a shrub when they were children. At their heads a pure white stone rose tapering toward the sky. They lay in a shady nook sheltered

alike gaze and sound of the ever moving outer world— only once in a while a bird alighted on the double grave, or the grass was trodden by the gentle feet of children, gathering the wild-flowers. Thus they had stepped aside from the moving ranks of life— content to sleep and await the Judgement Day.

Philatelia and Ralph stood alone by the freshly filled grave. Ralph waited, watching, till his companion should be composed enough to face the kindly but inquisitive faces of the village folks, and then lead her gently away.

* * * *

They took the train at Cloverdale to go the short distance to Ralphs home at Oak Burn. Here a gentle woman, Ralphs mother, was waiting to receive them. Only the fact that she had long been confined to the house an invalid, had prevented her attending the funeral. Ralph had told her all about the old stamp dealers daughter, and she had read for herself Ezra Browns appeal, so now when Ralph came forward with his companion and said, "mother, this is Philatelia," she put out her arms and took the lonely girl to her bosom.

However pleasant it would be to me to describe the growth of affection between Mrs. Lisson and Philatelia, I must forbear, and take the reader back to the precious stamp Ezra Brown had shown his daughter, and which, as he said, was the rar-

est stamp on earth. One evening Philatelia handed Ralph the envelope with its broken seals, and asked him to read the papers inside, and learn for her the history of the wonderful stamp.

In expectant silence he drew out the enclosures. The one on top was slightly colored by the passage of time, but as he opened its rustling folds, the writing inside was seen plain and distinct, as if written yesterday, instead of half a century before. At the bottom was a blurred and scrawling signature and a large yellow seal, bearing a couchant lion, and the usual symbolic letters of the old British seals. A moments glance at the body of the document, showed Ralph that it was in the handwriting of Ezra Brown, while signed by another. Having just obtained a copy of this (now) historic paper, I here append it.

London, N., July 11, 1848.

To whom it may concern; Know ye that the undersigned Samuel Wattsons, being duly sworn, says that the One Penny Green, Post office, Mauritius Stamp, now in possession of Ezra Brown, and which he received of said Samuel Wattsons, is a genuine and original one, and the only one in existence. And he furthermore swears that it came into existence under the following conditions:

—In the spring of the year 1847, one William Collier had a contract bearing Her Majesty's signature and royal seal, authorizing him to engrave and print stamps for the Colony of Mauritius. The aforesaid Samuel Wattsons was employed as pressman by said Collier, and on the day the first plate of the One Penny stamps arrived he (Wattsons) was alone in the press room, and the rules

governing such work being then less strict than now, proceeded to the work of printing the stamps. Upon his oath he says that by mistake he printed the first sheet in green instead of orange ink, as ordered. Discovering his error, he at once cleaned the plate of the green ink, and started to burn the sheet of error.

Having applied a flame to the sheet, it occurred to him that such an error might be salable to one of those persons who collect postage stamps as curiosities.

It being then too late to save any considerable part of the sheet he extinguished the flame and found that all but one of the stamps were burned and scorched. Therefore he saved but one, and that is the subject of this document. He placed the stamp in his coat hanging near just as Collier entered and the printing in the proper color commenced.

Two months later he met the aforesaid Ezra Brown and showed him the error, explaining that all others had been consumed by fire. Ezra Brown offered him five pounds for it, provided that he would place it upon a letter addressed to him (Brown) in America, and mail it. This offer Wattsons accepted and received his money, and the same day affixed the stamp to an envelope addressed as required and mailed it.

Besides Wattsons and Ezra Brown, the only person who knows of these facts is Henry Nallett, a clerk at that time in the Post Office.

The said Samuel Wattsons being on his deathbed, makes the above as his dying statement. Signed: *Samuel Wattsons.*

SEAL.

Ralph drew a long breath of surprise and folded the valuable document with the care its wonderful information deserved, and turned to the next paper. It was brief, and said that at the time Wattsons brought the letter bearing the stamp in question, he noticed its unusual color and called his attention to it. Then, in confidence, Wattsons told him the facts which agree with those of his statement. Signed, *Henry Nallett, London, July 12, 1848.*

When he had read and reread the papers and looked at the stamp to his hearts content, Philatelia said, 'Well Ralph, (she called him by his first name now) what do you think of my legacy?'

"I think you have, as these papers say, the rarest, and therefore the most valuable stamp in existence. What a beauty it is! We must write this up for the philatelic papers: it is only right to let other collectors know of this stamp, even if they cannot hope to own one. I am going to B—— next week and if you will let me I will take your collection of Mauritius with me to show to some of the boys."

"Very well, I put in the other stamps that papa gave me and then my collection will be complete, in fact (in a voice of triumph) it will be the only *complete* collection of Mauritius on earth!"

"That's so. Now that there is a new variety known of which only one exists, there can be only one complete collection. Without doubt your collection is worth ten times more than all the rest of your fathers stock."

At this point it may be well to inform the reader that arrangements had been made to sell the stock of 'Brown & Co.' at auction sale. It was this business which was taking Ralph to B—.

CHAPTER VII.

All evil thoughts and deeds;
 Anger, and lust, and pride;
 The foulest, rankest weeds,
 That choke life's growing tide.
 —Longfellow.



ERE WE must shift the scenes to the back office of George Larry, the popular dealer of B—. Ralph is there in conversation with Larry, surrounded by all the clerks and several philatelists who have "dropped in to see what's new." They are admiring the mighty collection of Mauritius, and especially the one penny green of 1847. The book containing the collection is handed from one one spectator to another and finally returned, closed, to the desk near Ralph. Ten minutes later Ralph picked the album up and turned to the page on

which the rarity was fastened by silk threads, to admire it once more. For a moment he gazed at the vacant page, ——— *the stamp was gone!* Instantly the quick witted Larry ran and locked the shop door, and then summoned all the clerks and others who still remained into the back office, where Ralph still sat gazing at the vacant space. In a few words Larry explained the matter, and asked them, as gentlemen, to submit to being searched, in order to locate the thief.

After some protesting and grumbling they all consented, and with the destness acquired through long practice (for this kind of work not infrequently falls to the lot of a metropolitan dealers Mr. Larry went through their pockets and hats and had them open their mouths. This latter receptacle is not infrequently used by stamp thieves to conceal their plunder.

The search was useless. No one of those in the house had the stamp. Larry and Ralph both apologized for the trouble, and Perkins, the head clerk said, "I'll bet a Millbury that that crip with the snaky eyes who was buying some stuff of me has the stamp. He was one of the last to handle the book. I believe he laid it on the table.

"Thunder, why didnt you say so," roared his employer. "which way did he go?"

"West," briefly replied Perkins.

"Quick, Ralph, we'll get him and recover that stamp yet.

They hurried out and into the cab that was waiting for Ralph and told the driver to hustle to the Union Station, for there they believed the thief had gone to take a train out of the city, which would be decidedly unhealthy for him after his recent act. The cab horse got over the pavement at a good speed, but to Ralph it seemed slower than a walk, and he several times proposed to get out and run. Larry, however, restrained him, and they soon drew up at the station. But the official of whom they inquired when the next train would go south, said, "its starting now."

They hurried through the gate but the train was already moving rapidly, and as they watched it rumble away they saw on the steps of the last car a figure dressed in brown. It was he of the snakey eyes.

Ralph, beside himself with rage, shouted and motioned to him to jump off, but he modestly declined with a shake of his head and had the impudence to put his thumb to his nose and make the sign of derision termed by Sam Weller "taking a grinder."

Sadly they returned to Larrys store after telegraphing the police at N——n to keep a look out for the thief. Ralph vowed he would pursue him on the next train and Larry promised to go with him. That evening Philatelia was surprised by receiving the following note;

B——, Wednesday Noon.

Philatelia; I was so unfortunate as to have your stamp (the rare one) stolen the first thing after getting here. The thief is a slim fellow dressed in brown and has small black snake like eyes. He has gone from here on the B. N. & N. L. R. R. Mr. Larry and I will follow him on the next train. If you wish to communicate with me, direct to the Lytle Hotel at N——n. I will never give up till I recover your property.
Hastily, Ralph.

CHAPTER VIII.

He is not here; but for away
 The noise of life begins again,
 And ghostly thro' the drizzling rain
 On the bald street breaks the blank day.
 —Tennyson.



THAT evening the two philatelists sat smoking in the hotel at N——n when a telegram was handed to Ralph. It contained these words;

'Ralph; Keep your courage up and wait for me at N——n. I know the thief. Philatelia.

Greatly encouraged by t' is Ralph handed it over to Larry. Up to this time not a trace had been found of the thief. The police had met with no one of his description, and being without a clew they could only wait. Thus they were waiting, baffled, when Philatelia's telegram came.

Each asked himself 'how soon can Philatelia get here?' The answer was found in the railroad guide. It would be four hours before she could reach N——n. Oak Burn was only about a hundred miles distant but one traveling at that time of night must wait some time at B—— for a train down.

They determined to meet her at the station with a carriage, and while waiting for it to be time to start each smoked and thought in silence. Ralph wondered how it came that Philatelia should know the thief. Had she recognized him from the brief description contained in the note? It seemed scarcely probable. Well, he could only wait and think. What if they never recovered the precious piece of paper which was without a duplicate in the world? His carelessness would have lost Philatelia's fortune. Three hours yet. How slowly the hands crept over the face of the great clock on the wall. While the precious moments slipped away the thief was doubtless getting farther and farther away. The man in brown had a start of over eight hours, and three more would probably pass before pursuit could be even planned. Where would it all end? Where would the daring man seek a hiding place?

Turning these thoughts over in his mind Ralph swore (to himself) that he would follow whosoever the thief led him to any city or country—across the continent or around the world. He must have dozed off to sleep, and was awakened by Larry shaking him and saying it was time to go. Ralph slipped on a

heavy mackintosh his friend held ready, for it was raining a steady downpour. Larry bring similarly equipped, they hastened out and down the great stone steps all slippery with the dashing rain, and entered the carriage that stood ready. Larry gave the word and away they went through the darkness.

When they reached the station the train had just arrived and Ralph hurried forward with an umbrella to meet Philatelia, and Larry remained in the carriage. Ralph and his new companion appeared in a minute or two and entered the carriage, shutting out the storm. Ralph introduced Larry to Philatelia and the two examined each other by the light of a lamp swinging from the carriage roof.

"Now," said Ralph, "tell us all you can about the thief; how did you recognize him?" These and a dozen other questions Ralph poured out one after the other.

"Wait till we get to the hotel. It is a long story and I hardly know how to begin.

Arrived at the hotel and seated in a private room with the two philatelists eager to hear her story, Philatelia began; "when I received your note I knew at once that it must be some one who understood stamps and I found a full description in the evening paper. I remembered that papa used to keep a sort of 'Rogues Gallery' in a big book in which was a list and description of most of the philatelic thieves and frauds he had met. There were also photographs of such as he could get. I had the book in my trunk so I got it out and began to look for a slim man with snakey eyes. 'This is what I found.' Here she handed Ralph a small photograph. He gave it one glance and with a cry of delight handed it to Larry.

"By Gum," remarked the dealer, "that's the man, only his younges in this picture than he is now.

"Well, who is he," asked Ralph.

Philatelia smiled. "You shall find out for yourself. Have you the papers, or did snakey eyes get them too?"

"No no, I have them. The question is what good can they do now I have lost the stamp?"

"Look at the one signed by the post office clerk and see what name is there."

More mystified than ever, Ralph obeyed. Opening the paper referred to he read the name, "Henry Nallett."

"That's the name of your thief," said Philatelia.

"What! Henry Nallett? It can't be. This paper was written nearly fifty years ago and the thief isn't over forty."

"Well, that's his name, as you will see on the back of his picture, only *this* is Henry Nallett Jr., and the one who signed the paper was Henry Nallett Sr. The one who has stolen the stamp is the old clerk's son. I learned from the book where I found

the picture that the old man was as great a rascal as his son is and that he his son of the stamp and of the fortune it would bring if he could get it. Nallett came and tried to see it on the pretense of buying. Papa tried to make him believe that no such stamp existed, but he boldly told him who he was. Papa was foolish enough to show it to him and there being no one else in the room, Nallett snatched it and ran with papa after him. At the door he fell and lost his hold on the stamp. In his haste to escape he left the stamp in papa's possession. Instead of having him arrested papa let him go, merely warning his fellow dealers. He learned that Nallett resided in Oberlin, a small town in western ——."

"Then that's the place to look for him. That handsome face of his is in danger when he and meet again," broke in Ralph

"Then," said Larry, looking at his watch, "I move that we adjourn for the night and start for Oberlin in the morning."

The suggestion was adopted and agreeing to meet in the dining room at ten o'clock next morning they all retired.

CHAPTER IX.

As treasures that men seek,
Deep buried in sea-sands,
Vanish if they but speak,
And elude their eager hands.—Longfellow.

MR. Larry entered the dining room at ten o'clock, and found his friends already there. He at once explained the plan he had hatched out, which was that they should take a train to Hartford Junction, where a good detective could be procured. Having received instructions, the detective was to interview Nallett and find out if he had the stamp. Ralph suggested that Philateba might as well return to Oak Burn, while he and Larry proceeded alone. This was finally agreed to and they were soon on their way west. It is a long distance from N—— to Hartford Junction, and it was not till the forenoon of the next day that they reached their destination.

They entered the only hotel the place afforded, where a crowd of loafers sat around the stove and a tall negro leaned idly on the desk. In answer to their inquiry for a room, the negro, who was named Fred, led the way to a chilly hall and up a wide stairway to room number one. It was evidently the 'best'

room. Ralph told Fred they would want to send a message, and slipping a dollar into his ready hand, said he hoped he would keep his own counsel, and if he did, additional dollars would be forthcoming.

Larry turned his attention to writing a note to his old friend Captain Pussley, who had recently moved to Hartford Junction and who "conducted private investigations." The note was sent off by the waiting Fred and in due time was answered in person by Captain Pussley. As briefly as possible they told their story and asked if he would take the case. He replied that such an errand would be delightful and that on the next day he would pay the thief a visit.

It was late in the evening when they finished "pumping the bogus stamp dealer and cramming his head full of information about stamps in general and those of Mauritius in particular.

About ten o'clock the Captain left the hotel with his head filled with ready made philatelic knowledge and his pockets stuffed with catalogues, perforation gauges, and a miscellaneous lot of stamps and approval books.

CHAPTER X.

Linger, until upon my brain
Is stamped an image of the scene.—Longfellow

CAPTAIN Pussley rang the bell of Nallett's residence at nine o'clock next morning, and was requested to walk upstairs.

Mr. Nallett came forward and held out his hand.

"Mr. Tottenham, the stamp dealer of N——, I believe," he said.

"Yes, that's my name. I am out seeing what I can pick up in the way of stamps."

"Perhaps I can help you. I have some nice British Colonials which I— well, purchased, you know' at a recent sale."

"Could I look at them?"

"Certainly." Confident that he was talking to one of his own stripe, Nallett was thrown completely off his guard and at once produced the stamps.

With a professional air the Captain drew out a glass and care-

fully examined them. This done, he proceeded to measure the 'perfs.'

"Ah, very nice— perf. $13\frac{1}{2}$ — hardly as good condition as they should be— but very nice," remarked the Captain.

"Well, what will you give for them?"

"You must set the price," said the Captain, who had no idea what they were worth.

"Well, shall we say thirty dollars?"

"Thirty dollars! I will give you ten!" replied the Captain, feeling very glad that he was not going to give \$10 of his money for the (to him) worthless bits of paper.

After considerable bargaining they agreed on a price and Pussley paid it out of the money Ralph had furnished.

"Is that all you have to sell," asked the Captain.

"Yes, unless you know some one who is looking for something rare— I might say very rare."

"I know the man. What kind of a rarity have you got?"

Nallett locked the door and said "I'm going to show you a stamp that is without a duplicate in the world. I only ran across it a few days ago, and as it was a sort of heirloom, (my father having once held it in his hand) I nabbed it. But your man will have to be liberal if he gets it.

"Well," resumed Pussley, "the man is over at Hartford Junction and not likely to stay long, so if you want to sell you had better come over in the morning."

"All right. Meet me at the depot at nine tomorrow, and we will settle this business, and before the bargain is an hour old I'll be on the way to my old home— London.

PHILATELIA.
CHAPTER XI.

On him alone was the doom of pain,
From the morning of his birth;
On him alone the curse of Cain
Fell, like a flail on the garnered grain,
And struck him to the earth.
—Longfellow.

REACHING the hotel the Captain was informed that his friends were in the dining room. He at once asked to be shown the location of this most desirable and adorable place, as he felt the need of refreshments and could eat and talk at the same time. No carpet covered the floor of this palatial dining room. On the wall hung an oil painting (imitation) of a storm at sea, representing a red ship as about to be dashed to pieces on some blue rocks, surmounted by a pigmy light-house done in green and orange.

While the Captain was gazing at this masterpiece (?) a door fat girl in a greasy, tight fitting dress appeared to take his order. This done, she disappeared through the door by which she had entered.

"Now, then, Captain, you have had time to admire the beauties of this room," said Larry, "will you kindly relieve our anxiety and tell us when we can leave this beastly hole."

"You can leave tomorrow," briefly replied the Captain, busy with his supper which had arrived via the fat girl and the kitchen door. "the thief will be here in the morning. He then gave them an account of his trip and added that in the morning he would meet Nallett and bring him up to their room.

This was agreed to and Ralph and Larry went out for a walk while Captain finished his supper.

Next morning when the train arrived Captain Pussley saw Nallett get off. He stepped forward to meet him.

"Good morning, Captain, I'm on time you see."

"Yes, and my man is waiting."

"Then lets find him at once."

"All right, but first I want to see the stamp again."

"Come behind this car and I'll let you see it."

The Captain looked and pronounced himself satisfied. They proceeded to the hotel and knocked at room number one.

Ralph opened the door and stood behind it while they entered and then quickly shut and locked it. Nallett stood for a moment taken by surprise and then said "ah, I see I have run into a trap."

"Yes, Mr. Nallett," said Ralph, "we have you now. You might as well hand over that stamp."

"Never," replied Nallett, and drawing a pistol, fired at Capt.

Pussley. Then he made for the open window and before he could be prevented, jumped to the street below. But fate was against him at last and he slipped and struck his head on the pavement and lay motionless.

"Quick!" cried Pussley, "follow him and get the stamp; its in his inside pocket in a red envelope."

They rushed out to where Nallett lay. The ever ready Larry pretended to be feeling his heart and drew out the red envelope and slipped it into his own pocket. "I fear the fellow is dead," he said to those who had gathered, "some one call a doctor."

A doctor who was passing stopped and examined him. "His necks broken and he died instantly," was his report.

Captain Pussleys arm, which had been broken was then set.

During the afternoon the coroner arrived and the inquest was held. It was nearly dark when it was over and they were free to return to Oak Burn. They saw the Captain safely home and Ralph having generously rewarded him, they were soon on the way home, preceded by a telegram to Philatelia.

CHAPTER XII.

And the night shall be filled with music,
And the cares that infest the day,
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away. --Longfellow.

AS NO relations of Nallett could be found, it was decided to bury him at Oberlin. It was about ten o'clock at night when the train bearing the body arrived. A hearse was waiting and started at once for the cemetery. It was a beautiful moonlight night, and those who followed him to the grave spoke of the services as the most impressive they ever saw. No mourners followed the ill-fated man—no band played solemn dirges—but only the rumbling wheels and the weird rustling among the fallen leaves made sad music as he was borne to the city of the dead.

* * *

Though it was late at night when Ralph reached home, his mother and Philatelia were waiting to greet him. They sat down in the library to hear his story at the conclusion of which Ralph handed her the envelope containing the stamp. She took it and then quickly handed it back, saying, "I never want

to see it again— it has cost a human life. Take it and sell it for me."

Ralph remonstrated against its being sold but she remained firm. What followed is a matter of philatelic history. Every one remembers Larry's great sale at which a "magnificent collection of Mauritius, including the famous one penny *green*, error, the only one in existence" sold for what to most people would be a princely fortune.

There is little left to tell. Soon after the recovery of the stamp, Philatelia Brown and Ralph Lisson were made one.

We will not give an account here of their happy life, and as our story is now told, we will simply add—

THE END.

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