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# Stamp Hints.

BY

Courtenay Smith.

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First Edition.

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One Shilling.

1911.

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# STAMP HINTS:

A Guide for Beginners, and of Interest  
to all Collectors.

BY

**Courtenay Smith,**

AUTHOR OF

*"The Future of Australian Philately," At one time  
Popular Science Lecturer for the N.S.W. Board  
of Technical Education."*

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**Price One Shilling.**

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New South Wales.

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1911.

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## NOTICE!

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Careful readers will observe that a word is missing on a certain page of "Stamp Hints." It is a word in common use

I will give **Five Pounds** (£5) to the first correct guesser of that missing word!

It will be necessary to cut out this **Notice** and forward it to me with the word guessed, and name and address of the sender, in a sealed envelope, marked "**Missing Word**," enclosed in another envelope addressed and posted to me.

The original draft M.S. sheet containing the missing word is in a sealed envelope in a safe place of custody.

Nine months after the publication of "**Stamp Hints**" the sealed envelopes, including my own, will be opened in the presence of a Committee of Members of the Sydney Philatelic Club.

The writer of the first envelope opened containing the correct word will receive **the Prize**, whatever part of the world he, or she, may be in.

This offer is made as an inducement to Beginners to study Philately

COURTENAY SMITH.

"Rest Haven," Roseville,

Sydney, N.S.W., 1st April, 1911.

## FOREWORD.

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Why do I write these "Hints"? Because there are in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Pacific Islands, and other British Possessions, all over the world, many thousands of people, both old and young, who would gladly take up Stamp Collecting if they only knew how! But the vast distances, sparse populations, and lack of expert advice, and of light and simple philatelic literature, combine to restrict their opportunities and to block their desires in that direction.

At eight years of age I was sent to a large Public School, at which every boy on entrance was supposed to have a knowledge of English Grammar (fancy a little fellow of eight conversant with "Lindley Murray"!), and was at once put into Latin—"Propria qui Maribus," etc.

Now, from what I have seen of works for Beginners in Philately that is precisely the way in which they are treated. They are supposed to know something of stamps before they begin to learn about them. Hence, books that may seem simple enough to experts are heavy reading to novices, who are often frightened off after a cursory glance at the contents of a volume recommended by some experienced philatelist.

Yet, this popular and well-seasoned hobby is of all quiet, home, recreations the most reasonable, the most enduring, and the most fascinating, if intelligently entered upon and persevered in.

It is, therefore, with the object of affording would-be Collectors, often living under isolated conditions, an opportunity of easily acquiring the rudiments of the popular Science of Philately that these elementary "Notes" are published.

The only way to become a proficient, successful, and satisfied Stamp Collector is to "start fair and keep the ball rolling." But

those whose temperament is not conducive to the practice of a modicum of patience and perseverance had better stand out. They will never make good Philatelists. The Natural Law of "the Survival of the Fittest" holds good in Philately as in other pursuits. These "Hints" are intended only for those "fit" to profit by them.

I don't pretend to be an expert, indeed am only a common, or garden, sort of amateur, but I have had a business training, which enables one to look things squarely in the face. So I trust the "Savants" will not criticise me too severely, seeing that I am trying to convert a passing pastime into a life-long pursuit of peculiar fascination, and to vastly increase the numbers of those engaged therein.

Some readers, after a passing glimpse at these pages, may say:—"Oh! I know all about this already!"

"Quite so! I dare say you do, but nine hundred and ninety-nine people out of a thousand don't. Therefore, kindly pass this on to someone of less experience than yourself. And at the same time I would respectfully beg to inquire whether your superior knowledge has been used solely for your own benefit, or whether you have profited thereby to initiate novices into the pleasurable mysteries of the craft? For, by such means, principally and particularly, can the cultivation and advance of Philately be best propagated and propelled!"

These "Hints" are written, naturally, from an Australian standpoint, but I hope they may be found of some little service wherever Philately dwells in the English-speaking world.

COURTENAY SMITH.

Sydney, April, 1911.

## A PHILATELIC NIGHTS' ENTERTAINMENT.

### FIRST NIGHT.—A BEGINNER'S BEGINNING.

The reader is asked to imagine that Mr. Derwent, an old friend, just beginning to take a budding interest in stamp collecting is comfortably reclining in a rocker on the writer's cottage verandah, facing a small bay,—something like a miniature Norwegian Fjord, or New Zealand "Sound,"—in the moon-reflected waters of Middle Harbour, Sydney.

'Tis an ideal spot, and a suitable time for meditative discourse upon such an enthralling theme. All Nature is still, and the smoke from their pipes curls slowly upward in expanding rings as, between lazy puffs, the Stamp talk progresses.

Mr. Derwent began the subject by complaining that, in endeavouring to obtain some rudimentary information about Stamps from two or three experienced Collectors of his acquaintance, he found that, while quite willing—and even anxious—to show him their collections, on which they were ready to expatiate at length in Philatelic phraseology incomprehensible to him, they all seemed too busy, or too lazy, or, at any rate, disinclined, to teach him the A.B.C. of the hobby. So, he asked his host to coach him up, which the latter proceeded to do, as well as he knew how, by slow and gradual stages.

The first question Mr. Derwent asked was—

"What about an album?"

"As far as my experience goes, that is generally

the first thing a beginner buys, and it's one of the last I should think of myself, although I have made seven respectable collections, six of the Australian States, and one of New Zealand."

"You see, it's this way"—(and the speaker's pipe stem is pointed at a house-boat moored near the opposite shore, as when one stares at an object while the mental vision is a thousand miles away),—"but you must understand I speak only as an amateur, of a practical sort, perhaps, but willing to bow with deference to the superior wisdom of experts, whose only fault is the strict way in which many of them carry out the adage that 'Silence is golden!' You take me?"

"Oh, quite so!"

"Well, then, before buying an expensive album, which will be out-of-date in a very few years, and feverishly trying to fill up all the blanks in the shortest possible time, as is the way with a good few of my acquaintance, I would strongly advise you first to learn something practical about stamps, and then come to a decision as to what Country, or State, you intend to go in for, as a start, and work it up methodically to the best of your ability. You will find that quite enough to commence with, I feel convinced."

"Ah! but I want to make a General Collection!"

"Do you? Well, I recommend you to take Punch's advice to those about to marry—'Don't'; and my reasons are these:—In the first place, to make a General Collection of British, British Colonial, and Foreign, mounted in a couple, or more, of large albums, will cost you a terrible lot of money. I don't suppose you are prepared to put £5,000 or £10,000 into stamps! Are you?"



"Good gracious! Why, no!"

"Very well! I ask you merely because a £2,000 General Collection is thought nothing of in England, and there is no fuss made about a £10,000 one. So, if you only mean sinking a small sum in the hobby you had better make the best show you can for your money."

"As how "

"Hold on! Let me first get to my second reason, and that is:—Unless, as I say, you have lots of money to spend in stamps, you will soon get disgusted and disheartened in hunting about for the comparatively few specimens you will have to show among the many thousands of blanks in your immense and expensive albums after two or three years of collecting."

"And bear in mind that, if anything should happen to you, a collection of that description will fetch very little in the market. It takes years of patient toil and expert knowledge, as well as large means, to accumulate a really valuable stamp collection, especially one that may be disposed of to advantage. And that, naturally, is what nearly every large collector hopes, and works, for. He may be a student, but, as a rule, he looks for some practical result from his studies. Mark well what I say!"

"I do, thanks! But, what do you advise?"

"First, as we've wandered a bit off the track, let's get back to your first question—the album!"

"All right,—fire away!"

"You see, it's this way: I believe in a fellow beginning on right lines and going slow but strong all the time. Result,—he'll be a "stayer," and that's what we want in the Philatelic world,—"Stayers."

“So, I recommend you to start with a two shilling ‘Collecting Book,’ which you can get from any dealer. You will find it answer your purpose admirably, for a time at any rate. And if circumstances unfortunately prevent the attainment of your ideal—a complete and perfect collection—and necessitate the disposal of what you have, there will be a saving to you, or yours, of just so much as the cost of expensive albums, for they would count for nothing if your collection be sold to be broken up.”

“The safer you make your hobby, the more you will prize it. Also,—and make a note of it—a small, first-class collection is better, in every way, than an incomplete, large one, scattered through big albums.”

“And, don't be in a hurry to mount stamps in your Collecting Book, either. Get a good few in hand before attempting to show them off, or you may, as a beginner, have a lot of work to go over again, and, perhaps, lose heart at it.”

“The very first thing you should do is to procure a ‘Pocket Collecting Book,’ to contain your stamps as you get them, a pair of tweezers, and an ‘Ideal Perforation Guage.’ These are absolute essentials. Then, a small magnifying glass, and, lastly, a box of best ‘peel-off’ hinges, or ‘mounts,’ as they are called. The whole lot won't cost you more than seven or eight shillings, and you will be then set up with all necessary mechanical aid for the gradual formation of a first-class collection.”

“Ah, yes; of course, you must have a priced, descriptive, catalogue, or two, say, Stanley Gibbons' Part I. and Hagen's, or Nicolle's (Australian). See

that they are of the latest edition. That makes another three and six. Do you follow me?"

"Oh, perfectly! I am to get a Stanley Gibbons' collecting book, a pair of scissors, an 'Ideal' stock gauge, a pocket perforation book, some Hagen's hinges and——"

"For goodness' sake, man, cultivate your memory, or you'll never make a Philatelist. Now, listen carefully while I go through the list again. I'm sure it's short enough." (And the Instructor goes through the items until his pupil retains them in his palpably anxious mind.)

"I see we must go slow, or you'll get bothered, Derwent. Let's fill our pipes again, and have a squint at 'the man in the moon.'" And they start to chew the cud of their reflections and indulge in memories of yore; until a flying fox swoops down on the loquats, with a great rustling of their stiff leaves, and a man in the gramophone on the house-boat sings "The Anchor's Weighed," in a sepulchral voice. And then comes the signal, "Lights Out!"

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## SECOND NIGHT.—POINTS ABOUT A STAMP.

After some selections on the viola, piano, and harmonium by an excellent trio of amateurs, then staying with the Instructor, the stamp talk was resumed.

"Last night, Derwent, if you remember, I said that the first thing for a Beginner to do was to learn something practical about stamps before starting to collect them; but we wandered on to the equipment, which was putting 'the cart before the horse.' However, it really doesn't matter much which comes first. (Good idea for a circus proprietor to train a horse to push a vehicle—like a man with a wheelbarrow. It would look funny, wouldn't it?)"

"So, now, we will go in for a little simple 'philately' (a compound of two Greek words supposed to signify, by a rather far-fetched translation, 'Fondness for Stamps') in order that you may pick up an inkling of what lies before you, straight away."

"Well, don't make it too hard on a fellow. Remember, it's ever so many years since my school days."

"All right, old man, I'll make it as easy for you as falling off a log."

"Now, come inside for a little while, to the lamp-light, and look at this penny New South Wales, one of the commonest stamps we have in Australia. Let us examine it carefully, and learn all we can from it. By that time you will know a thing or two."

"You observe, first, that it is of a reddish color.

The official name given to it is 'carmine.' All stamps of that value, or its equivalent in foreign money, in accordance with the regulations of the Postal Union, whose handsome offices are at Berne, Switzerland, are—or are supposed to be—red. We will, however, leave discussing the color question until later, because there are many controversial points thereon to be gone into and studied."

"You will next notice, by close observation, that the surface is smooth and shiny. It is called 'surfaced' or 'chalky' paper. The stamps are covered with a specially prepared surface to prevent fraud. For, if any attempt is made to obliterate postal, or other, cancellation on this paper, by any known means, it will at once show itself and ruin the stamp."

"Next, you perceive that the Design is neat and clear. It consists of a shield bearing the Southern Cross charged with four stars, one on each arm, and the British Lion in the centre. A royal crown is placed above the shield. The name of the Colony, and 'Postage,' are in two lines beneath the shield, and figures of value are placed in ovals in the lower angles. Ornamental shaded spandrels complete the design, which was selected from a drawing made by one of the officials of the Government Printing Office, in Sydney."

"This stamp forms one of a series of three, which were issued in 1897 to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the reign of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria. The other two are the 2d. and 2½d., both designed by Mr. D. H. Souter, an artist in the employ of Mr. John Sands, Sydney, who was awarded first and second prizes for these designs. The 2½d. was intended by the

designer for the 1d., and the original drawing bore that value, in words. But, for reasons which I have forgotten, the present design was substituted."

"In half the States, viz., Queensland, South Australia, and Victoria, the penny stamp bears the head of Queen Victoria. In the other three, New South Wales bears the design before you, Tasmania, a view of Mount Wellington, and Western Australia, the well-known Swan."

"Further, I want you to take note that this specimen, although 'mint' (a term used to imply that it is in exactly the same condition as issued, or, what the general public call 'new'), it is not perfect."

"How's that? It looks all right!"

"That is because you haven't, yet, the 'philatelistical' (to quote from an official document) eye. It is not 'well-centred'—which means, that the margin is unequal all round; the design is not exactly in the centre. You see, the perforations run into the design on one side, and at the bottom, while at the top and on the other side there is a wide margin. We shall speak again about this."

"Now, we come to the Paper, of best quality, and in substance, medium thin, which is manufactured and supplied by De La Rue and Co., the great London stamp printers, who, in 1862, designed and printed our Queen's Head issue. Since then all our stamps have, I believe, been printed in the Government Printing Office, Sydney. But the Commonwealth uniform stamps will, I suppose, all be printed in Melbourne, thus leaving us out in the cold, although our stamp machinery and workmanship is, I venture to think, the best in Australia."

"All Australian stamps, with the exception of 'Postage Dues' (which are not used for payment of postage, but merely as receipts for dues paid on insufficiently stamped letters), are catalogued in Gibbons' under the different State headings, and as if still issued by them. But, seeing that the stamps of each State have been interchangeable, and in use for all States, since the 13th October, 1910 (in commemoration of the Commonwealth Labor victory), we should now look on them absolutely as a Commonwealth issue. Although, there is bound to be controversy on the subject. (There's a lot of tautology in all this, but it really can't be avoided. The phrasology of philately is but circumscribed, as yet.)"

"Then, there is the Gum, which is of the finest Arabic (with a slight admixture of sugar, to prevent 'curling' of the sheets, so Mr. Basset Hull, one of our experts, has informed me), and with which the N.S.W. paper is covered before exportation. I have been given to understand that the gum at one time used on the South Australian or Victorian paper (or, perhaps, on both) was a product of the S.A. wattle tree, which is said to produce mucilage of fine quality. But I learn that it was found unsuitable. The color, quality, and thickness of the gum are of the highest importance in judging of the genuineness of rare specimens of early issues. The gum is quite a study of itself, even in modern issues, such as those of Papua."

"Next, we come to the watermark, which,—as you see by holding the stamp against a dark surface, with the back facing you,—is a Royal Crown with a single-lined Capital A,—for Australia—underneath. It should really be called 'wire-mark,' as it is produced by raised

letters of metal, or wire, fixed on the wire gauze cloth upon which the soft paper pulp is spread before passing through the rollers, whereby the outlines of the letters, or figures, become thinner in substance than the rest of the paper, and, thus noticeable."

"The watermark is one of the most important points in a stamp. On it hangs the difference as between, say, a penny and a shilling, or, possibly, a pound, in its value. And you will learn to pay great attention to it."

"Before the Commonwealth, and for thirty years previously, the stamps of this State were watermarked with a Crown over N.S.W. In 1907, for a short time (July and August), paper had to be borrowed from Victoria, bearing the Commonwealth watermark (there are two or three varieties) used in that State, Crown over double-lined A. Specimens of the higher values of this printing are rather scarce."

"Watermarks are sometimes very difficult to distinguish. You first hold the stamp up in a strong light—sun, or artificial—with the back towards you. Then, if unsuccessful, place the stamp, face downwards, against, or close to, a dark surface, at every possible angle. Sometimes the watermark will appear quite suddenly and unexpectedly, and disappear in like manner. If both these ways fail, lay the stamp, face downwards, in a black saucer, or on a piece of glass laid on a dark surface, and then soak it with pure benzine, taking care not to use the fluid near a flame."

"If the watermark does not then show up, I conclude there is none. Though, the test is not absolutely infallible. But I know of no better. Occasionally, one discovers only a small fragment of the watermark.



Then it becomes a question of identification, in which the advice of an expert may be needed."

"You have now had all the ordinary points about a stamp, with the exception of the perforations, which, being of a frequently puzzling and debateable character, I have left until the last. But, I think you had better spend another two shillings in a copy of 'Stamps and Stamp Collecting' by Major Edward B. Evans, which you will find most instructive, albeit rather voluminous for a mere novice. It is simple in style, and gives an enormous amount of information about stamps to those possessing the needful patience to read it carefully, and, among the rest, perforations."

"I will merely say, now, what I dare say you know, that the earliest stamps were printed on sheets of unperforated paper (and are called 'imperforate'), and had to be cut off with scissors. Of course, many of these are very valuable, especially in unused condition. About 1848 (I am speaking of British stamps) 'rouletting' was introduced, that is, perforating the margin at intervals by means of a wheel with small points on its circumference. This system was in vogue in some Sydney business establishments, and, I believe, in other Australian cities, in the early days of stamps."

"Then, there came in 'pin-perforating,' whereby the paper was merely pricked, but the holes were not cut out. Specimens of this perforation are found in your own Tasmanian issue of 1867. And in 1858, or thereabout, a more satisfactory machine was brought into use. It is called a single line, or 'guillotine,' machine. In the present day our stamps are perforated on three sides, at one operation, by, what is called, a

comb' machine, while, for the fourth side, generally the bottom row, is used a single line one."

"Various gauges of perforations are in use, measured by the number contained in 2 centimetres (French), which your 'Ideal' perforation gauge card will show you how to find, by laying the stamp, face downwards, on the black dots, and working it up and down until you get the holes, or perforations, at the top of the stamp (called, 'horizontal' perfs.) exactly filled by the dots. The number of perfs. you will see at the side of the scale. Then, do the same sideways (for 'vertical' perfs.), and you will see whether the perfs. are 'simple' or 'compound' (as 11 x 12). A little practice will make you perfect in this easy operation."

"For myself, I fail to see why the question of 'perforations' should enter so largely and importantly into Philately. A friend of mine calls it, 'all Tommy Rot!' But, 'Fashion' is a terrible tyrant. And there you have it."

"A complaint of mine, which I may as well ventilate, right now, is that dealers and experts too often assume that recruits know more than they actually do about stamps. And many of these latter, ashamed of their ignorance, and foolishly hiding it, desert from the ranks immediately after enlistment, before, even, learning the 'goose-step.' And, it is that simple, but very necessary, exercise I am (as I hope, not unsuccessfully) trying to teach you, Derwent!"

"For the rest, you will learn all you want to know in Major Evans' book. Of course, this perforation system has given rise to an enormous number of varieties, very intricate to follow, and at once the delight of 'specialists,' and the bane of 'simple' collectors. But

enough said for this evening. We'll put the peg in!"

"My word, old man! You startle me. I can't remember half you have said. I wish you wouldn't mind jotting it all down at your leisure. I hadn't the least idea there was so much in Stamp Collecting!"

"Oh! You're only getting the rudiments, that every serious Beginner should learn. But I'll put them down for you on paper, with pleasure, when I can find the time."

"What, oh! Coffee? Yes, thanks! We'll have a cup and a whiff, and then turn in, like good boys."

A young lady in the house-boat gramophone here sang, "Put me in my little bed!"

And Mr. Derwent dreamt he was a rd. N.S.W., gummed on a mattrass, and a Fiend Collector was peeling him off, like a porous plaster. Then, the dressing bell rang.

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## THIRD NIGHT.—THE COLOUR QUESTION.

By this time Mr. Derwent, a man of no mean parts, was commencing to take an absorbing interest in these little philatelic studies, and to conceive a hazy notion of vast possibilities in the cult. Every genuine philatelist has that feeling after taking the first few preliminary steps in acquiring an elementary knowledge of its peculiar fascinations.

After thoughtfully picking his teeth, and stargazing for a while in his comfortable deck chair, the Instructor carefully extracted a thread from the lining of his discourse.

“I think we had better, now, return to the Colour Question. But the more consideration I give it the more dubious I am as to the wisdom of attempting to go at all fully into it with you, in your present role of beginner. It is one of the most puzzling and complicated points about Philately. Discussions, arguments, and even disputes as to colours and shades are of frequent occurrence in the science. The matter is a highly important one, as upon correct description of the colour, or even the shade of colour, of a stamp large money may depend.”

“Occasionally, something in the way of a new shade or colour is brought to light which has passed unnoticed through forty or fifty years of studious Philatelic research. For instance, among the penny Sydney Views are a few (I have seen some myself) of a distinct ripe gooseberry shade. I do not remember to

have observed this variety in any descriptive catalogue. Yet it has been known for eight or ten years, at least."

"Colour schemes have been devised, works have been published on the subject. But we have no absolutely infallible guide thereon. Some years ago I obtained from the "Corticelli Silk Co.," of Canada, sample cards of very beautiful colours, with innumerable minute shadings of those colours, in silk. But, then, as no descriptive names were given the result was valueless from a Philatelic standpoint."

"In the leading catalogues of the world you will frequently find different names given to the colour of a certain stamp. But the question arises, 'are those copies of that particular stamp exactly alike?' One copy may have suffered while being soaked off the paper, another may have faded through exposure to the sun, and so on."

"The only fair test is to place those stamps together and submit them to collective examination. And that, in most cases of importance, would be a very difficult job, as the owners may live a hemisphere apart, and be disinclined to risk the transit and handling of their treasures. Even the passage through the circuit of an Exchange book tends to injure a stamp of delicate colour."

"I refer more particularly to 'used' stamps, which, except in the more recent small issues, are by far the most plentiful. In 'mint' condition, that is, as issued by the P.O., there is, of course, not so much difficulty in deciding the colour."

"I am not an oculist, and I give you my opinion merely for what it is worth. But I believe that, as no two human eyes are precisely alike, so no two pairs

of human eyes, however perfect, are exactly the same. I also think that after, say, forty years of age, the power of the eye begins to weaken, and that the use of glasses, so common among Philatelists, tends to slightly affect the discrimination of colours, or, at least, shades."

"And, again, in many cases a colour will bear a different hue by artificial light to that when looked at by sunlight. For instance, a shade of green may look to an observer blue in the gaslight, or vice versa. Hence, it is not wise for everyone to choose stamps at night-time. It would be interesting, once in a while, to have a 'colour test' at Philatelic meetings. I imagine that the results would be somewhat surprising. And I am not at all sure that my suggestion would be very enthusiastically received."

"Therefore, under the circumstances, we will confine our Colour lesson to just one example, and I will leave you to work out the whole question, yourself, by the light of practical experience, which, after all, is the best school."

"Come inside, and we will have a look at these six current penny stamps of the Commonwealth:—First, we have our friend the New South Welshman. In my catalogue it is described as rose-carmine, scarlet, rose-pink, to 1905, and as carmine to date. Well, now, here is a carmine, 'artist's colour.' Compare the two!"

"Why, the artist's colour is much the deeper. The stamp, which is what you call 'mint,' is quite pale beside it. I would call it red, with a shade of carmine in it."

"Quite so! say, carmine-red, and you have it."



"Now, then, secondly, take this Queenslander. They call it vermilion. Here is a packet of true vermilion pigment. What do you make of it?"

"The colour of the stamp is much lighter—looks as if it had been well watered down. Yet it is still on the paper and seems quite fresh."

"Yes! We'll call it vermilion-red."

"Next, we come to this South Australian, described as rosine. What about that?"

"After some hesitation, Mr. Derwent said, I would call it rose-red."

"Right! Let it go at that."

"Now, look at this Tasmanian and this Victorian. Place them together—So! They are both put down as rose-red."

"Why, they are quite dissimilar. One can see that at the first glance. The first is certainly like a dull rose-red. But the Victorian has some carmine and no rose in it. Call it pale reddish carmine."

"Very well. Be it so!"

"But, here we have another Victorian, on the paper and quite fresh. What do you call it?"

"Rose-pink, to a certainty!"

"And so it is!"

"Lastly, we have this Westralian, marked, carmine-rose. What do you say to that?"

After a long examination, Mr. Derwent admitted that he could give it no other name.

"Very good, then," said the Instructor, "we will let the Westralian stand as catalogued."

"Allowing for the very trifling difference we find in the Tasmanian we make five out of the seven stamps differ in shade from the catalogue description. I don't

say that our verdict is absolutely correct; but, anyway, our eyesight is, probably, as good as that of most people, and our decision is, at all events, worthy of respectful attention."

"Just one more example. Here is a 1d. New Zealand, current, described as carmine. Now, compare it with our 1d. N.S.W."

"There is a very marked dissimilarity. The New Zealander has a purplish, or lake, shade in it. Is, in fact, of a much richer colour. It's impossible that they can both be carmine. Altogether, it seems to me that Beginners must be greatly puzzled at all this, if they give any attention to the colour question."

"Exactly so! And I am not, myself, expert enough to suggest a practical solution of the difficulty. If anyone can do so he would be hailed as a benefactor to Philately."

"But, what I want you to notice particularly is that if differences can be so easily observed in the description of colours, or, rather, shades, in everyday stamps, what about those that occur with regard to rarities, the value of which depends, to a large extent, on a comparatively slight variation in colour appearance?"

"The fact is the whole colour question is often most difficult—at times impossible—to settle to everyone's satisfaction. All I can advise you about it is this:—If you are satisfied that your eyesight is good and your discernment clear and reliable, use your own judgment to some extent, and do not be entirely guided by that of others—possibly not altogether impartial—in purchasing stamps about which there is the slightest doubt as to colour. And if you can't come to a clear

decision better leave the stamp alone, especially if it runs into money. More than that I cannot say. Nevertheless, we have got a step 'forrarder' on the Philatelic path."

"Yes! we have so! But I reckon one needs to be very shrewd and to exercise great caution in accumulating a collection."

"Exactly! And that is why I say, 'go slow!' You will find quite a number of stamps of the early issues differing only slightly in shade but considerably so in price. Be cautious in dealing with them or you may suffer in pocket."

The entertainment was cut short by an animated discussion, in the bay, between a large kingfish and a shark as to whether the flesh of the former was nutritious. The shark won. Then, a basso profundo in the gramophone sang: "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep."

That night Mr. Derwent imagined himself to be in the carmine interior of a whale, trying to work his way out through the blubber with the aid of a pair of stamp tweezers. This so tickled the monster that it violently deposited him on a mud bank near the house-boat anchorage. He fell with a heavy thud—and found himself on the floor of his bedroom.

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## FOURTH NIGHT.—CHOOSING A STAMP.

On resuming their Philatelic studies the Instructor and his pupil, finding there was a drizzling rain outside, remained indoors, where they were joined by "the trio," who became interested listeners in, and spectators of, the object lesson for that night.

They were all, however, much harassed by the frenzied and persistent efforts of the gramophone, which shed copious tears, and frantically laughed, in the Scotch language, at their studious endeavours, until they wished it at Jericho.

If there be any sign of incoherency in this section, therefore, the reader will kindly set it down to the above cause, added to the Christmas Cheer, partaken of but yesterday, and to the state of the thermometer, which registers 104 on the aforesaid verandah at this present time of writing.

"Now" commenced the Instructor, depositing a cigar box on the table, "you have learnt most of the points about a stamp. It is time for a practical lesson with a logical issue. This box contains a lot of Australian stamps—common varieties it is true, but good enough for our purpose, which is to know how to choose a stamp when you have some placed before you for selection."

"You cannot do better, as a start, than follow the lead of the dealers. Some of those in Australia and New Zealand publish lists of prices paid for recent and current issues of used Australian postage stamps. The

prices quoted are for perfect copies; damaged, torn, or heavily post-marked copies are of no value. Pen-marked, or Fiscally Cancelled, stamps (that is, those that have been used for Revenue, and not Postal purposes) are only one-fourth of Post-marked prices, unless specially mentioned."

"You see, you have, here, a clear and simple guide in choosing stamps to put in your Pocket Collecting Book. And, now, we turn out this lot of about a couple of thousand on the table—so!"

"You at once notice what a number of heavily post-marked (or cancelled) copies there are. Let us take a casual handful and sort out as we go. (And, now you observe how useful these little Tweezers are). There are about 200 in this lot, both on and off the paper, meaning that some have been floated on, or immersed in, water, and the stamps removed."

"Well, just for curiosity's sake we will divide them into small heaps. First, then, the heavily cancelled; what a lot there are! Who'd have thought it? Nearly a hundred and fifty, I declare! That knocks out three-fourths, right away. Then, you see these torn ones. Even if only one perforation is missing they are no good; so you must use your eyes well. And these from which the colour has run. We throw them all out. And that makes three heaps of rubbish! Though, of course, one would suffice. I merely wanted to show you the different kinds of damaged stamps. There don't happen to be any dirty ones in this lot; but you will find plenty in sorting out miscellaneous parcels, such as are carefully collected by school children."

"And, it is just this kind of, so-called, 'collecting' that I would like to see an end of. There is no system,

or knowledge, displayed in it. People, both old and young, hear, or read, about large sums being paid for stamps, and ignorantly imagine that, consequently, anything in the shape of a stamp, secured by them, no matter if torn, dirty, or damaged, must be of value. Several lady friends of mine were in the habit, for years, of sending me 'stuff' of that sort, fondly believing it was of value, until very politely requested to discontinue the practice, at the risk of giving personal offence."

"A gentleman of my acquaintance, an astute member of a learned profession, who possesses a collection he is pleased to value at £200 (which I estimated as being worth £50, at the outside) told me that, 'stamps are always going up in price!' I had to explain to him that the expression, "A Stamp's a Stamp," needed qualifying, as the majority of used stamps are 'rubbish,' and it is only the finer sorts carefully selected by experts, that go up in value, and not even then, 'always.' But I'm afraid he didn't altogether believe me."

"It would be a very good thing if boys and girls—yes, and older children, too,—could be got to understand that common stamps should be saved up with discrimination, the useless ones being at once rejected and destroyed. It would save them much time and disappointment, and the dealers, who are asked to buy them, much trouble. A little simple, technical, education in that way would enormously help along 'stamp-collecting' in the right direction."

"Don't you think you are likely to scare a good many off from collecting?"

"No, I don't, Derwent! That is, not those of the right stamp (no pun intended). Any who might be

frightened off on account of the preliminary cautions I give would, in all probability, not be of the stuff of which true collectors are made. So, none of your pessimism, old man!"

"Very well, then, go ahead!"

"As a rule, most stamps, on the paper, can be soaked off in cold water (never use warm, or hot!), but some, which have been printed in what are called, 'fugitive' inks, require more attention and should be carefully 'floated' on the surface of the water, only, and removed, with the tweezers, when the paper is sufficiently damp. Aniline colours, in which many issues are printed, are especially soluble in water. In 'Stamps and Stamp Collecting' a list is given of such, but many additions have been made thereto since that useful work was published."

"So, you see, after going through this little lot of 200, we find only 12 copies of good appearance. Now, you will remember that, the night before last, I pointed out that the 1d. N.S.W., we were then discussing, though 'mint,' and otherwise a good stamp, was not 'perfect' because 'badly centred,' and I explained how."

"This, while often over-looked by amateurs, has of late years become a most important point in 'choosing a stamp.' For, the growing demand for 'condition' exacts that stamps, to suit the requirements of the fastidious collector of to-day, should, among other things, be well-centred. Thus, again, our choice is narrowed down, for such copies are more difficult to obtain than might be supposed."

"Here, I have parts of two sheets of, 1890, Queensland,  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. mint, catalogued at 6d. each, which I am

using for ordinary postal purposes, because they do not fill the bill, and have been rejected by collectors, even at 1d. each."

"Therefore, we examine these 12 remaining copies and find that 10 of them are not well-centred. And, thus, we have only 2 left out of the 200 which may be called 'perfect!' And, I daresay some hyper-critical friends in the cult might turn up their noses even at these. And, now you can see clearly why 'perfect' copies fetch such high prices, while those in what is called 'poor condition,' are to be had, often, for a mere song."

"Is that so with all issues?" asked Mr. Derwent.

"No! The choice is greatly circumscribed in the case of old and rare stamps, when it becomes difficult—sometimes almost impossible—to pick up perfect copies."

"I have here, in this collecting book of mine, several copies of rarities by no means well-centred, though, otherwise, in fine condition. They are worth two-thirds of Stanley Gibbons' catalogue prices, which is saying a good deal. Were they 'perfect' they would fetch more than the full catalogue rates."

"Not wanting to bother you with too many details, as to which Experience is the best teacher, I must, however, now call your attention to the stamps in this little box, the like of which I advise you to be very cautious in buying. They are offered in the market as 'unused without gum.' These consist, you see, principally of Tasmanians and Queenslanders, of old issues, and look clean enough. But the 'bloom' is off them."

"In the old days of stamp collecting the gum used often to be soaked off 'mint' copies because of its



stickiness in a hot and moist climate or on account of its becoming cracked through dry heat and age, and thus damaging the appearance of the face. I have had a good many such. That fact has been taken advantage of to a large extent."

"One of my inmates here, some years ago, informed me that he had been employed by a business man for quite a long time, in removing, by a chemical process, the penmarks from thousands of old V.D.L's. (Tasmanians), which were afterwards disposed of all over the world as 'unused without gum.' I was foolish enough to buy some myself in the 'calf' days of my collecting, and had to, practically, give them away, afterwards."

"Not long ago, a large number of Queensland, part of the estate of a deceased stamp speculator, which had been thus treated, came into my hands for disposal. I had to get rid of them at the price of 'fiscally cancelled,' which, as a matter of fact, they actually were. So, you perceive, how very careful a novice has to be."

"Some years ago I received from England, for sale on commission, two or three consignments of what were described as fine copies of early and rare Australians, mostly unused, at prices averaging about half Gibbons. With the 'used' copies I had no difficulty. They sold well enough. But with the so-called 'mint,' and 'n.g.' (no gum), many of them marked 'very fine,' 'superb,' 'unique,' etc., I had trouble."

"I sent some of them—of course, in perfect good faith,—to a large and experienced collector, believing he would be interested in them. And he was. So much so that he had them photographed, and the prints

enlarged. By that means every stamp was shown to have been 'cleaned,' the remains of the original ink-marks being quite distinct in most cases."

"The stamps were returned to me; and naturally, I had to apologise. But, I gave the consignor 'what for,' in strong English, I can assure you. Here again, you see how necessary it is to obtain the opinion of experts—if possible—on high-priced specimens. And, if there be any doubt, and one is not in a position to get proper advice, it is better to leave them alone, however tempting they may appear, or, at least, to obtain a written guarantee from the seller, if he be a responsible party. A prosecution for a fraud of this description took place in Melbourne many years ago, the delinquent receiving a term of imprisonment. So, Beware of 'cleaned stamps!'

"Then, there are countless 'Fakes' and Forgeries, which need several volumes to describe in detail. But, a book called 'Album Weeds,' of which there have been several editions, written by the Rev. R. B. Earee, is a work that may be said to be an absolute necessity to the careful Philatelist. I advise you to obtain a copy. In the library of the Sydney Philatelic Club we have a Collection of Forgeries, which is not only valuable but very useful."

"As to 'Fakes,' I will briefly refer to one—the 'Japanese dodge,' I call it. Some years ago, several N.S.W. 'Lauriates,' or 'Diadems'—I forget which, with a hitherto unknown watermark, were put on the market. A Sydney firm was among those victimised. But, discovery soon followed. It was found that the stamps had been split in two, and another watermark also split from other stamps had been cleverly fastened

on the back, so as to deceive even an expert. However, the 'Jap' was bowled out, and (I believe) made to pay a penalty."

"But, you must not allow these apparently pessimistic remarks to dishearten you in the least. Bank officials, for example, have to keep a sharp lookout for forgeries, both of notes and cheques, yet the existence of these does not prevent financial business from being transacted. And it is the same in every walk of life."

"My object in telling you all this is that you may use due caution and exercise sound judgment in choosing stamps for your collection, and so render it 'a thing of beauty and a joy forever.' And it lies within your power to attain that ideal."

"Well, all I can say is that if I can follow out your instructions—and they seem simple enough—I reckon I will be able to make a decent collection, anyway."

"I quite believe it, and wish you good luck in your charming undertaking."

"But, there is one more subject to which I must briefly refer before closing our rather long talk to-night, and that is the important question of prices. 'What ought one to pay for one's specimens?' 'What is the guide for one's purchases?' It is a very difficult—if not impossible—matter to advise upon accurately and impartially. I can but give you a few practical hints."

"First, then, take this axiom to heart. 'A stamp is worth just as much as it will fetch, and no more!' That is true for both buyers and sellers. A collector's own valuation as a rule is of no practical use to him. He generally over-values his stamps, because they are worth more to him than to anyone else, unless he be

a very shrewd man who has bought in the cheapest and sells in the dearest market. And there are but few of these among legitimate collectors. When they arrive at that stage they become dealers."

"Throughout the British Dominions one catalogue, that of Stanley Gibbons, is generally accepted as the standard, both as to description and values. As to the former it is admirable. While it is true that we in Australia complain of many omissions of varieties of our own stamps (some of which were referred to in my little work, 'The Future of Australian Philately'), nevertheless we admit that the descriptive qualities of the S. G. catalogues are extremely good, as a whole, and to be commended."

"But, with regard to values and prices one has to hesitate in giving an opinion, for the matter is a very complicated one. Let me call your attention to what S. G. themselves say:—'Our catalogue prices are for stamps in fine condition. Inferior copies can be sold at much lower rates.' This, of course, opens up an unlimited downward range of prices. They also, take pains to make it clear that their prices 'are in every case based upon stock in hand at the time of going to press.'"

"You will particularly notice that they do not admit fractions of a penny in their priced catalogue, and they say 'we must acknowledge that in the lowest priced stamps this presses rather hardly on a large number of young collectors.' (I would add, 'practically on all.') To counteract this they offer to supply the commoner stamps at a reduction per 100."

"There are other English priced catalogues, such as Bright and Son's, and Whitfield King and Co's.,

which it would be worth your while to obtain. But, you will find that reputable Australasian dealers' prices are, generally speaking, as fair as can reasonably be expected."

"Of course, you can get a lot of the commoner sorts of Australian and New Zealand, and other British Colonial stamps for nothing, or next to nothing. And in Exchange Books (of which more anon) you will find plenty of medium sorts to suit your purpose at low enough rates. However, in this, as in other respects remember my advice—'Go Slow!' 'Chi va piano va sano!'"

"Well now, as that wretched instrument over there, has given out its last gasp for to-night, we had better take the hint."

For some time after retiring Mr. Derwent lay awake thinking over the possibilities resultant on his initiation into the cult of Philately. In due course he found himself studying a long row of Catalogues and an enormous Exchange Book. After consulting with himself for some time as to whether, or no, he would invest in Sydney Views at a penny each he finally decided to take a hundred at that figure, and was about to transfer them to his Pocket Collecting Book when the shriek of a steamer Siren disturbed him, and on again resuming the subject he found the stamps had disappeared in a sudden and mysterious fashion.

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## FIFTH NIGHT.—FORMING A COLLECTION.

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On this—a Friday—night the house-boat people were up in town, with their launch, getting provisions—or what not. So, the Cottage fraternity enjoyed a blessed peace—known only to those who gain a short respite from the fearful utterances of a crazy, second-hand, gramophone for a week on end.

Thus, the Instructor got a fair show, and began his exordium in quietude:—

“We have now,” said he, “arrived by slow degrees at a stage which most Beginners consider to be the first step, that is, the forming, or making, a Collection.”

“The subject is a delicate one to handle, and very debateable. Some, of course, will disagree with me as to the plan I recommend. But what I am now telling you I would write for the common herd, if I may not be deemed impolite in thus speaking of the general body of Collectors, of which I rank as a unit.”

“You have often noticed children delightedly amusing themselves in making mud pies in the gutter! They are really happier than are some of their elders—though not better—engaged in attempting to save the country by, metaphorically, flinging the same compound at one another, when in Parliament assembled.”

“The simile may, perhaps, not be quite a happy one, as I don’t want to infer that Philatelists are mud slingers. Their weapons are of finer material and more delicately tempered. But what I want to say is,

that, whereas the scientists in the cult may discuss and dispute as to some intricate, but not fundamental point, 99 per cent. of the rank and file don't care a fig about the matter. And, it is for the one hundred, bar one,—such as you and I—for whose information and guidance one would like to make these simple suggestions."

"Nevertheless, while I really do venture to think that valuable time is sometimes wasted on what appear to most of us rather trivial questions, immense benefit has been rendered to the cause of Philately by the minute and painstaking labours of some of our high-class experts—an example of which I shall presently bring before your notice, as affecting yourself, personally. All honour, I say, to these giants in the science."

"Of course, a sixth-form boy looks down with the greatest contempt on the puerile amusements of the small boy in the first-form, and calls them 'rot,' quite forgetting that only just recently he was there himself. So, the seasoned Philatelist may look down upon my humble efforts to instruct and interest you, my friend. But, never mind! You will soon be out of the first form, and up into the sixth, if you carefully note the real points in this little discourse."

"Now, regarding the forming of a collection, there are two broad ways, each capable of subdivision, of going about it. I call them the 'Simple' and the 'Boater' systems, the latter being a pseudonym given to Collectors who go in for many copies of a stamp. I plead guilty to being one myself, in a small way. In this category come also the Specialists, whose object is perfectly obvious."

"I think the matter, from a 'Simple' collector's point of view has been put very practically in a paper published in the 'Stamp Collectors' Fortnightly,' which I will now read to you. But, I should add that a well-known expert, Mr. M. P. Castle, the owner of the No. 3 collection referred to, sent a reply to the same journal giving very good reasons, from a Specialist's point of view, for accumulating so many copies of one stamp":—

### "WHAT IS COLLECTING?"

"By E. T. Phillips.

**"A Ten-Minute Paper read before the Northampton Philatelic Society, October 26th, 1910.**

"Speaking as a 'junior' in the fascinating hobby of 'Philately,' I am often in a quandary as to whether I should keep all the stamps of each kind that I can get, or only keep one of each kind, viz., such as spaces are provided for in the latest albums.

"When I commenced collecting, I assumed that I had to fill all the spaces in the album of the various countries that I was interested in, and if I obtained more than one copy of any particular kind, these stamps were termed 'duplicates,' and that it was the usual practice to try and dispose of them in order to get others that I required.

"After collecting on these lines for some time, and helping to get the bulk of the spaces filled by the exchange of most of my duplicates, I found, by reading the reports of the various stamp exhibitions, that the disposal of duplicates for others seemed to be entirely wrong, and that, instead of parting with them, I ought to have hoarded them up by the hundred, as the critics' opinions of collections containing only a single copy of each stamp were far from being complimentary; and it seemed that unless an exhibitor had quantities of the same stamp, the collection was a mere nothing.

"In order to further explain what I mean, I will quote you some criticisms on the various exhibits at one of the recent stamp exhibitions:—



'A nice collection of single copies, but no attention paid to plating the early issues.'

'This collection, unfortunately, does not contain the rare errors, but the later issues are very good in blocks and full sheets.'

'In order to show the strength of this small collection, there are no less than 217 copies of the rare lithographs, so one can understand how it is these have become rare.'

"Now, after reading such comments as these, you can imagine the feelings of a junior collector, and his despair when he thinks of his collection of single copies. What should he do?"

"Another question that crosses his mind is, 'When is a stamp a duplicate?'"

"Here one person is hoarding up 217 copies of some rare stamp. Are these duplicates, and is this 'collecting,' 'accumulating,' or 'hoarding up'?"

"These and many other queries cross the mind of the junior.

"If he has bought, say, a Gibbons 'Imperial' of his favourite countries, the only alternative now seems to be to buy a blank album and endeavour to obtain a hundred or so of each copy, in order to get what would be termed a good representative collection.

"A short time ago, one of the Journals asked what became of all the duplicates, and also stated that there must be thousands of duplicate stamps of medium rarity in collectors' hands.

"I always thought that the collecting of anything meant getting together as many different kinds of the article collected as possible, and not accumulating, say, a hundred of each kind.

"Would a collector of natural history specimens keep all the specimens of each species that he could obtain?"

"From a stamp collectors' point of view, he would be quite justified in doing so.

"In conclusion, I wish to remark that owing to the quantities of each stamp shown in some specialised collections I have seen, the displays seemed to me very monotonous, as sheets or pages of each stamp was shown. I felt that I should have been more interested in a good collection of single copies, where the variety of types and colours tends to attract and interest even the non-collector; collections of this kind would help to eliminate that savour of monotony, and feeling of despair, that might, perhaps,

help to lose the junior collector, or keep the waverer from taking up our Hobby."

"Now, I am, as you know, a believer in—and practice—the 'Simple Life,' greatly to my bodily and mental comfort. And I strongly recommend you to commence with a 'Simple' collection. That is—to mount only single copies, or pairs, of the later issues. Of the early—well, if you can afford it, and can secure really fine copies at reasonable prices, you might advantageously go in for more—blocks, if you can get them. Because, by and by, you may desire to study your stamps as a Specialist."

"But, I wish to add to my previous words of caution another two: 'Begin Small!' If your means will allow it, I would secure both used and 'mini' specimens, at least of the later and current issues—because the latter display the colour and design to full advantage, and become valuable if unexpectedly withdrawn from issue. Take the Tasmania, £1, as an example! But, mind you select well-centred specimens, and otherwise in fine condition, and await your chance till you get them."

"There is one little matter I must draw your attention to,—for, though apparently insignificant, it is really most important,—and that is, the use of the 'hinges,' or 'mounts.' They should be of the best quality, that peel off without injuring the back of the stamp ('skining' it), or the gum, if unused. Fold the hinge so that one third only is on the stamp, and affix it exactly so that it comes just to the upper edge of the perforations (or margin, if imperforate), neither above nor beneath. Thus, you can turn the stamp over, flat on its face, and examine the back thoroughly

without creasing any part of it. Bear this in mind when mounting!"

"Also, note that greasy fingers are detrimental to stamp handling. The hands should be kept perfectly clean in this delicate job, in fact always so when engaged in your hobby. Sounds rather like a sanitary lecture, doesn't it?"

"Well! I reckon myself to be a tolerably clean man, and after, say, partaking of buttered toast, I'll take care to do my part in making a dividend for Somebody's Soap shares before lingering those beautiful bits of paper you are so cleverly egging me on to go in for!"

"Very good! And now, we come to another important—a very important—point, and that is:—"What are you going to collect?" You know you must make up your mind about this before you start, or you'll soon get into a

"Yes! That's the very thing I was going to ask you. In your book you said that a Beginner should stick to one State, or not more than say, a decade of all States, as a start!"

"I did! And now I say that, as you are a Tasmanian, you should first collect, and make a study of, the stamps of your own State, beginning with the current issue, and working backwards. I don't think the early issues will increase in price, to any extent, for the next year or two, and so you'll have time to work up a fair collection. Though, you mayn't have a first-class one for some years, unless you are willing to pay top prices, which I by no means advise."

"And, here I come to the example of painstaking philatelic, literary, effort I alluded to which you ought

to take a special interest in. It is a work entitled: 'The Stamps of Tasmania,' and contains a history of the Postage Stamps, Envelopes, Post Cards, adhesive and embossed Revenue, and Excise Stamps of Tasmania, with autotype illustrations."

"It was compiled by Mr. A. H. Basset Hull, then of Hobart, but now of Sydney, a well-known expert, a Vice-President—and former President—of the Sydney Philatelic Club, and was published in 1890 by the Philatelic Society, of London, now the Royal Philatelic Society, of which His Majesty, King George V. is Patron, as he also is of the S.P.C."

"This work, dealing with your Stamps from the first issue, 1853, to that of 1889, is of a most valuable and instructive character, and it exhibits great patience and accuracy on the part of the author. There is a copy in the library of the Sydney Philatelic Club, and I advise you, during your stay in Sydney, to have a good look through it as a help in your philatelic studies."

"In the early days of postage stamps in Tasmania, and before all the country offices—of which Mr. Hull gives a list of 57 were supplied with obliterating stamps, also at times when the country postmaster ran short of the special ink supplied, stamps were often cancelled by being pen-marked with the name or number of the office, and the date."

"This latter form of cancellation is often mistaken by collectors for an obliteration denoting fiscal use; but as there was no Stamp Duty Act until October, 1863, there is no reason for any such conclusion. Consequently, all pen and ink cancellations previous to that date were genuine postal ones."

"Other cancellations to be found are, 'N. Norfolk,'

and date in two lines in black; 'Macquarie Plains,' in two lines, in small black letters, generally accompanied by the date in pen and ink; 'Camp Town,' and date in oblong frame in black, from New Norfolk, Macquarie Plains, and Campbelltown, respectively. (These items are from Mr. Hull's Book.)"

"Now, it would be a very interesting occupation for you to make as large a Collection as possible of your Stamps, so used. They can be procured at fairly low prices, for there is no demand for them, not being the orthodox thing. By special order of the P.M.G. many of them, especially of the 4d., were pen-marked with a diagonal 'criss-cross,' of 3 vertical and 3 horizontal bars, not infrequently accompanied by the official number."

"Say, old man! Have you a stock of these? and are you trying to plant them on me?" queried Mr. Derwent.

"No! Mr. Cynic, I haven't. In fact I only possess a strip of 3, which I will make you a present of to start your 'pen-marked postal cancellation' Collection with."

"I don't hold a brief for Tasmania, and merely amplify thereon, slightly, as it is your own State; and, as I say, Australians usually go in, first, for the stamps of their own State, and quite naturally, too. My own personal predilection is for 'Islands,' viz:—Papua, Solomons, New Hebrides, and Gilbert and Sullivan—I beg pardon! I mean Ellice; I was so amused at these little groups having an issue all to themselves."

"In the whole Protectorate, exclusive of Ocean Island, which contains 110 whites, the total white population is only 125. And in the Ellice Group—the

District Magistrate writes me—there are only 4, including his wife and himself! So, there is something of the Comic Opera element about it, you see. Why can't they have a uniform set for all these islands? (Excepting, of course, the 'New Hebrides Condominium,' in which there is a strange mixture of Comedy and Tragedy, whereby interesting developments may soon be expected.)"

"I suppose the 'Gilbert and Ellice,' first issue, is the most remarkable of all British Colonials of modern times for several reasons; (1) It was probably the smallest (for I have reason to believe the total value did not exceed £,500); (2) It was (said to be) sold only for postal purposes; (3) It was the last of the Surcharges; and (4) both used and unused copies were valuable from the very first. In fact, I should not be surprised if the higher values fetched phenomenal prices, eventually."

"This is the first notable instance of the far-reaching effects of Lord Crewe's celebrated circular, prohibiting the post-marking of stamps to order, the supplying of dealers, etc. I expect this little issue will be scattered among the general body of collectors, like the 1907 one of the 'British Solomon Islands,' with this difference, that 'surcharged Gilberts' will be even harder to obtain for one's collection."

"I go in for 'Islands' because they not only form an interesting study, but, also, because a good Collection can be made at quite moderate cost. Early issues of Australia and New Zealand would interest me if I could afford to collect them. However, each one to his, or her, own taste. In these Southern lands there is a huge choice for philatelists. The main

thing is to obtain 'the right sort at the right price.' And there you are!"

"There is one little matter I ought to mention—and that is 'Abbreviations' in description. As you will have to learn them, I cannot do better than advise you to study their meanings as given at the commencement of the 'S. G.' catalogue. They may, at first sight, seem a little mystifying to a Beginner, but you will soon get into the way of it; and, not long hence, I daresay you'll be talking 'Stamps' as glibly as any experienced Collector."

"You will find in 'S. G.' two mystic letters, which have lately come into vogue, 'O,' and 'C,' meaning 'ordinary,' and 'chalky' (or 'surfaced') paper. As in used copies, they are often very hard to distinguish, and sometimes afford ground for disputes, I would recommend you to give them 'the cold shoulder' and leave them to the Specialists, who delight in details of that description. I don't worry about them myself. And, before they are much older, a good many Collectors will wish they hadn't spent time, patience, and money over them. Though, in the case of 'mint' copies there is more sense in the distinction."

"There is one phase in 'Stamps' as to which I want to caution you impressively. True, it has as yet not affected us much in Australia—but it is coming. This is the habit of giving long credit for the sake of getting rid of undesirable stamps or of inducing speculation on the part of people who understand little or nothing of the market, past, present, or future. It is a system that has taken firm root in Europe, and is, in my opinion as an old and experienced business man, most pernicious. Many young men, imbued

with the notion that 'stamps must go up,' sooner or later, forgetting, or ignorant of, the fact that this is the case only with certain kinds, are induced to enter into engagements which cause them trouble and anxiety when 'pay-day' approaches. Do not be led away into buying parcels because they are, or seem to be, 'cheap.' Only experienced dealers can handle such with profit."

"The whole thing is, generally speaking, a delusion and a snare for young and foolish collectors. I am quite aware that this statement will bring down on my devoted head the anathemas of many interested parties. However, I am not giving you these 'Hints' for my own personal benefit but for your own good, and (if published) for the best welfare of the thousands of unsophisticated collectors who have no one to tender them sound advice in such matters. But I am sure the better class of dealers will quite uphold me in my views, knowing full well that 'the contented collector is their best customer.' Note, that I qualify this denunciation with the words, 'generally speaking.' There are, of course, exceptional cases when you may safely invest. But, be sure you buy from 'an honest dealer!'"

"Well, we've had a nice, quiet, evening, for a wonder. We'll have a cup of coffee, and one more pipe, and then to roost!"

During the silent hours Mr. Derwent accumulated an Enormous Collection, mounted in 140 albums, which he sold to the King of Utopia for £250,000, a cheque for which His Majesty handed him in person. This he secreted in the harmonium, for safety. But, in the morning he could not find it! "Sic transit gloria mundi!"



## SIXTH NIGHT.—THE DISPOSAL OF DUPLICATES AND OTHER CONUNDRUMS.

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On this, the last night of the entertainment, it being a Saturday, the little bay was crowded with a flotilla of motor launches, sailing craft, rowing boats, and fishing punts, which, with Chinese lanterns, musical parties, and the general hilarity of the occupants, made up a fairyland scene, reminding one somewhat of "Regatta Week" at Henley on Thames, with wild mountain scenery as a background.

But, an untoward, yet unregrettable event now occurred. A belated sailing cutter, beating up to an anchorage in the vicinity, missed stays close to the house-boat. Her jibboom butted through the side of the sitting-room, right into the megaphone, during one of the wildest efforts of Mr. Harry Lauder, silencing for ever its gramaphonic utterings.

The quintette at the Cottage sang a poean of praise, the musical trio performed a Requiem in great style, and all settled down contentedly for the final lesson in Philately. For, by this time, the trio were as interested in the subject as Mr. Derwent himself.

Said the Instructor:—

"We are now going to turn our attention to the Disposal of Duplicates, and other Conundrums, a subject we shall find very interesting, and which could be greatly amplified. We must, however, content ourselves with a brief review only."

"What to do with our Duplicates? is a serious

question with most collectors, more particularly the undesirable sorts (not of Collectors but of Duplicates;—though, is not the other way of reading it equally true?) Of course,—to get right at the root of the matter,—one may say: ‘Don’t buy them!’ That may be all very well in theory, but in practice, Beginners,—and, indeed, most older collectors,—sooner or later, find themselves hung up with a number, more or less considerable, of stamps, which they—in philatelic language—‘are not interested in.’ ”

“Hence these tears!” For the recollection of the vast accumulation of ‘rubbish’ I found myself the unhappy possessor of in the early days of my collecting makes one lachrymose, even at this present time. ‘*Nemo mortalium omnibus horis sapit,*’ which I take the liberty of translating into, ‘we are all fools at times.’ ”

“And even the wisest and shrewdest collectors, at times, cannot help acquiring what they don’t want. In this way. It often happens that a man is offered, at a tempting figure, a job lot of stamps which contains several specimens he would like to possess, and others that he doesn’t want at any price. But the owner will only sell the lot, or none. So the buyer takes it for the sake of the few he requires, and the balance remains on his hands,—dead stock. Or, he may buy a collection, in which there will, naturally, be a large number of copies he does not require.”

“Now, we will assume that you, like most of us, have somehow or other, accumulated a quantity of duplicates, and don’t know what to do with them. But, we must first put to ourselves the question: ‘When is a stamp a Duplicate?’ and we must answer that, at

least to our own satisfaction, before we proceed further."

"Well, then, seeing that you are—as I suggest, and suppose—going to be, at least for the present, a 'simple' collector, it is evident that, in your case, every copy you possess beyond the single specimens, or pairs, mounted (after careful selection) in your album, must be classed as a 'duplicate,' to be got rid of to the best advantage."

"In the old country there are swarms (I may be permitted to use the word, for even the much-belauded, little busy bee 'swarms') of Stamp Dealers, Stamp Auctioneers, Stamp Exchange Clubs, and Collector-Dealers (as distinguished from those recognised as in 'the Trade'), always eager to 'deal.' Therefore, an English collector has a large market in which to get rid of his surplus copies at not too heavy a loss."

"These mediums for the disposal of duplicates have gradually evolved out of very small beginnings. I remember that in my youthful days, in the fifties, when I collected stamps at school in Germany, there were no dealers at all, nor was there any recognised method of Exchange. To the best of my recollection stamp-collecting began in that country. At all events, when I returned home at the end of that decade there was but very little interest taken in stamps, in England. And my collection of about 750 (all imperforate and largely consisting of British Colonials) was thought nothing of. Consequently, I put it on one side, and eventually gave it away."

"Then, on my return from India about 1863 (or, was it when I came back from Cuba, two years later?) I found that there was a 'Stamp Boom' on, of a very

crude and immature character, however. Still, that was the practical commencement, I take it, of Philately, in England. Anything in the way of a Stamp was eagerly collared by the youngsters, who, at that time, with very few exceptions, alone took an interest in the hobby. An 'Open Stamp Exchange' was held every day in Lombard Street, during the lunch hour, and after 4 p.m. It was an amusing sight to watch hundreds of boys wildly exchanging, say, 'Thurn and Taxis' for 'Saxony,' or 'French' for 'Spanish,' the only basis, as far as I remember, being face value."

"But, I was a man then (in my own estimation), and looked with contempt on these vagaries of 'mere kids.' The craze soon died out; but it left its mark in the shape of a few hundreds, possibly thousands, of serious collectors. And, to supply their needs, professional dealers began to make their appearance, as well as philatelic publications, 'the Stamp Collectors' Magazine,' for instance. By and by, individual collectors started small Exchange Clubs among their friends and acquaintances, and Philatelic Societies were formed; until we now see, fully developed, a fascinating and valuable hobby, and a large industry, with varied and complicated interests reaching round the world."

"But, in these Southern lands we have not progressed as they have in the Northern. Our collectors—that is, those who are 'serious' in the science—number less than 750, throughout Australasia. Our dealers form but a very small body; of Stamp Auctioneers we have none; nor have we any private Exchange Clubs. There are only four Philatelic Societies in Australia and one in New Zealand; though all are of excellent standing."

“To enjoy the advantages of the Australasian Exchange System (which is as good as any I know of, though still capable of some improvement), you must become a member of a particular Society. Some collectors belong to several. I will jot down the names for you:—

- The Philatelic Society of New Zealand.
- The Philatelic Society of South Australia.
- The Philatelic Society of Victoria.
- The Prahan Philatelic Society (Victoria).
- and last, but not least,
- The Sydney Philatelic Club.”

“I am not going to make any invidious distinction or recommend any particular Society to you. They are all perfectly safe, and eminently respectable. So, you must just suit your own convenience in your choice. As a rule, the individual collector favours the Society existing in his own State or Dominion. But, as there is none in yours, the best plan would be to write to the Honorary Secretary of each for a copy of Rules and of the last Annual Report.”

“Speaking of Honorary Secretaries reminds me that I ought to say a word on behalf of these hard-worked and painstaking gentlemen, whose labours of love are not understood nor half appreciated by the general body of members. They have to spend a considerable amount of time, trouble, and thought in the exercise of their onerous duties; and to them we owe, principally, the solid success of Philately in **Australia**. I am, personally, of opinion that the office should be a paid one and be combined with that of Exchange Superintendent. The labourer is worthy of his hire!”

"I don't think that even our dealers—business men as they are—sufficiently appreciate the true position. Were I in 'the trade' regularly, I would willingly contribute £25 or £50 a year, towards the recognition of the efforts of 'those who sow while others reap.' I hav'nt now time to express myself as fully as I would wish on Australasian Philatelic Societies and their Exchange System, but will pen some notes for you by and by, on that interesting and important subject."

"And, now, to return to our Duplicates. I would, before everything, be very careful not to buy any undesirable copies, unless, as it were, compelled to do so, say, in the way just now indicated. That would reduce one's troubles very considerably. Then, I would sort out the decent copies of each State, and if I had a sufficient number, and having duly joined its Society, would make use of the Exchange sheets thereof for its own stamps, on the principle that the great body of our collectors out here, go in for their own issues, first and foremost. Of course, the prices would have to be low, or there would be no sales."

"And then on the other hand, I should have the opportunity of selecting specimens for my own collection, also at low rates, on the principle of 'quid pro quo.' And after my stamps had run the gauntlet of the Exchange circuit, I would put those unsold into the open market and let them go for what they would fetch, and thus get quit of the burden."

"Any left over I would mount in a 3d. Exercise Book and give to some intelligent lad, or lass, of my acquaintance, not—mark you!—as a gift of value, but as an elementary 'stamp guide,' with the advice to obtain better specimens, when possible, and so construct

a good collection. Thus, I would try to initiate another novice into the pleasures and mysteries of the craft. How does that strike you?"

"Oh! I daresay you would go to the trouble, and that the result would be beneficial to the cause of Philately. But would many other collectors follow your example?"

"No, certainly not! That is just where the shoe pinches. I'm very sorry to say there is too much indifference, on the part of many collectors, to the thoughts and feelings and pleasures of others, especially Beginners. There is too little 'Camaraderie' in Philately. What we want—and want badly—is a spirit of kindness, patience, and tolerance towards those who show, or seem likely to show, an interest in our hobby."

"I admit that Time is requisite for this, and most of our fraternity are busy people. But even only half an hour a week devoted to some budding collector would meet with its reward. For it is a pleasurable feeling to know that some good and praiseworthy collection, or other contribution to Philately, is really the result of our own teaching. Just as a schoolmaster takes pride in the advancement of the brightest among his scholars."

"Growing out of this there crops up another question of a more general—and withal, financial—character: 'What becomes of all the duplicates?' Well, of course, as has been lately remarked by a writer, 'there must be thousands of duplicate stamps of medium rarity in collectors' hands.' These gentlemen are of the 'Bloater' variety, to which I referred, and as long as they hold those duplicates in great numbers the

price of them keeps up, and 'simple' collectors suffer accordingly by having to pay more than they ought for their single copies. But when these accumulations are unloaded, down goes the market value, and a mild 'slump' ensues. The unloading of large parcels of stamps needs very careful handling, and only business experts should undertake such transactions."

"But, say some, 'financial questions, trading ventures, etc., should not enter into Stamp Collecting!' That's all nonsense! What we have to do with is not what should be, but what is! As a matter of fact—well enough known to all insiders—there is a very large amount of private trading done in Stamps, of which one cannot fail to take note. So much so that I am thinking of writing a pamphlet on the subject; for there are thousands deeply interested in the £. s. d. of stamps, from the highest to the lowest. And why not?"

"Two stamp men were, one day, chatting together on the business in general, and on European collectors in particular. One of them was speaking of many well-known collectors he had met, what they went in for, and so on. Coming to a particular name, he naively remarked: 'But then, he doesn't go in for making money out of it!' And that gave away the whole show. I freely admit, and very cheerfully, that there are many collectors who indulge in the hobby for pure love of it, and with whom the financial side of the question is a secondary consideration. But I take leave to express my conviction that the great majority like to make money out of it—if they can. And—when you come to think of it—who can rightly blame them?"

"For myself, I sympathise with the dealers, at all



events, with those of my acquaintance in Australasia, for I do not know any in Europe, personally. They put capital into their business, pay heavy rents, employ assistants at a living wage, give often long credit, have their full share of bad debts, get loaded up with heaps of rubbish they are compelled to take, and then have to compete with private collectors, who have no such responsibilities, but, having obtained good stock, at first cost, which afterwards goes up, are able to undersell them easily. Of course, I have been a competitor myself, in a small way. But then they know my object was to help a good but financially unprofitable work, which age and ill-health are causing me gradually to relinquish."

"It is certainly hard on the dealers to have private competition on all sides. Yet, it cannot be helped, or avoided. There is no law, moral or civil, against it. Therefore, the wise course is to face the trouble squarely and make the best of it. It is just the same in every trade. The manufacturer at one time used to supply only wholesale houses; now he serves the retailer direct, and often retails himself. It is merely the case of the 'survival of the fittest,' once again."

"There is one thing many collectors are fond of boasting about, of which I hope you will never be guilty, and that is the despoiling of 'mugs,' or getting stamps for a song at the expense of some ignorant person. I have known of widows and orphans having to suffer thereby. My experience, in a pretty long career, is that, eventually, 'the biter is bit,' in some way or another."

"People sometimes laugh at me for 'moralising.' I can stand it. I am by no means immaculate myself.

But, when such collectors get to my age many of them will feel more pleasure in the knowledge of having benefitted others than of having themselves benefitted at the unfair expense of unsophisticated innocents. It's a mean gratification anyhow. And for myself, I regret ever having indulged in it."

"A few words, finally, as to Catalogues and Anomalies:—I mentioned that Gibbons' catalogue was accepted as a basis for values throughout the British Possessions. This is probably because of the great amount of labor expended on it, the extensive way in which it has been brought before the notice of collectors, and the high standing of the Firm. There are, however, as I said before, other reliable catalogues. But 'Gibbons' has 'the name,' and that is everything. Still, 'a simple catalogue for a simple collector,' say I!"

"Nevertheless, you must not be entirely guided as to real values, by that, or any other, catalogue. When it comes to serious business it is just as well to have two or three at hand, and, better still, to study things for oneself. By so doing one often comes across Anomalies. As I am interested more particularly in Pacific Islands, I will give you a few examples:—

"The New Hebrides  $\frac{1}{2}$ d., first issue, multiple Crown and C.A., is catalogued at 2/6, unused, that is, 60 times the face value; the 2d., single C.A., is 1/-, or 6 times face; and the 2½d., 8d., or 3 times face. They are, of course, all obsolete. Of the  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. (deducting 2880, the estimated number of single C.A., the market price of which, at present, is only 4/- or 5/- each) there were 40,340 issued; of the 2d., 39,360 (actually, a smaller number); and of the 2½d., only 30,000. You see the remarkable disparity in price!"

"Of the 1d., multiple C.A. (same watermark as the  $\frac{1}{2}$ d.), 73,188, or considerably less than double the number of the  $\frac{1}{2}$ d., were issued; yet the price is only 6d., or one-fifth that of the  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Here, also, is a strange anomaly. Again:—The issue of the 5d. and 6d. was 19,200, each; yet the former is priced at 2/-, while the latter is 4/6. As regards the 1/-, single C.A., which is not priced, the number issued is pure guesswork. No official record was kept. But it was certainly not half that of the  $\frac{1}{2}$ d., C.A., probably not more than a quarter. I place it at 720, a figure based on private information received."

"These are things 'no fellah can understand'; and there are many more such inconsistencies. Therefore, I advise you to study the statistics of the small, early, Australasian issues, when you can get them, and of the modern, small, Islands issues, which are very popular. Then, you will be in a position to form your own judgment. The great body of collectors seem to me like a flock of sheep, in the East, blindly following the shepherd (in this case, the cataloguer), who is as liable to err as any other human being. I take it that in these particular cases the compiler was rather hasty."

"Of course, I very willingly admit that in the compilation of voluminous catalogues mistakes must crop up, now and again. It really is wonderful to contemplate what labor it all involves. Still, I say again, use your own judgment, if you can obtain the means to study things out for yourself, or, else, be very wary in your purchases."

"Well, Derwent, in these six nights we have travelled along the Philatelic path from discussing a common New South Wales, current, penny stamp to

the world-wide Stamp Collecting and enormous Stamp Business of to-day, which have, practically, evolved out of a boyish fancy of 'the fifties.' We haven't had time to go very studiously into matters Philatelic, nor was it my intention to venture into deep water with you. We have merely splashed about in the shallows."

"But, I hope you have learnt—and will remember—enough to show you something, at any rate, of the A.B.C. of Philately, its pitfalls, its possibilities, and its fascination. I intend to write you on the subject of 'Finance and Exchange' in connection with the hobby, cult, science, or whatever you please to call it, which you are now taking up, I trust, for your lifetime."

"One last word I will give you:—Be careful to make your Collection such that those nearest and dearest to you will never have cause to regret your pursuit of the hobby!"

"Many thanks, old chap, for spending so much time and trouble on my unworthy self. You have made things clear enough, and I have taken many notes wherewith to refresh my memory, when in doubt. I hope, when you pay me your long-promised visit next year, to be able to show you at least the nucleus of a 'first-chop,' A.I., Tasmanian Collection. And I shall not forget those pen-marked postal cancellations of our State that you have so interested me in."

This being the conclusion of the "Philatelic Nights' Entertainment," a special collation was served in honor of the occasion, and all hands did full justice thereto. A vote of thanks to the Instructor was proposed by his pupil, and carried by acclamation. Thus ended Mr. Derwent's lessons as A Beginner.

After retiring to his somewhat uneasy couch he

gradually became aware of the presence of a benevolent-looking, elderly, gentleman, in a red suit, who introduced himself as Mr. O'See—at any rate, it sounded like that (query, "O.C."?)—and succeeded in persuading him to purchase 4 millions of "Gilbert and Sullivan,"  $\frac{1}{2}$ d., stamps, at  $2/6$  each, as a good commercial speculation. On conveying them to London, in a cigar-box, per house-boat, he discovered that the market price was 8d. per dozen. He found himself an utterly ruined man, with his wife and children condemned to starvation.

At this awful climax—he awoke—to exclaim, in fervent gratitude:—"Thank Goodness, 'twas only a dream!—and the oysters!"

THE END.

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## APPENDIX.

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### A LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR.

**My dear Derwent,**

You will see by this that I have turned our little "Stamp Talks" into cold print. How critical philatelists will look on the venture I don't know. But I am in hopes that Beginners—at least those living "far from the busy haunts of men"—will learn enough thereby to give them a real interest in, and a liking, if not a zest, for, our pleasant hobby.

And, talking of Beginners, I am reminded, by an observation made in a letter (as to this—then proposed—publication) from a well-known London dealer, by which he inferred that the little work was intended only for juveniles, that I ought to say a word thereon.

My intention, as stated in the Preface, was to publish these "Hints" for the benefit of both old and young people desirous of becoming Stamp Collectors. But, on reflection, I fear that much of the matter herein may prove a little above the heads of many boys and girls whose entrance into our ranks I very much desire. And I am afraid that I do not possess that peculiar and valuable faculty of catching and retaining the attention of, and of teaching and training, very young people in an entertaining way.

Still, one can but try! And I would ask you to put your hand in your pocket occasionally, for the sake of "the Cause," and give away a copy of "Stamp Hints" (you know, it's only a "bob!") to any likely

boy or girl of your acquaintance. It might be the means of "fetching them in." Let's hope so!

Since finishing the M.S. I have been looking through a small pamphlet kindly sent me the other day by Mr. W. H. Robinson, of Brisbane. It is entitled, "Our Young Philatelists and their Prospects," by J. E. Heginbottom, B.A., and deals with many ways of interesting young people in "Stamps." Some of them are to be found in the section headed, "Practical Suggestions," etc., in my little work, "The Future of Australian Philately," of which I now wish I had brought out a shilling edition, so numerous have been the complimentary remarks thereon sent me from far and near, and for which I hereby tender my most grateful acknowledgments.

However, possibly, the means may eventuate of my being placed in a position to give very young aspirants to Philately some simpler educational hints, even, than those I have had the pleasure of passing on to your good self.

The remarks I desired to make on philatelic Finance and Exchange there is no space for, here; nor will the heavy printing charges, due to the industrial revolution out here, permit of their appearing between the covers of this booklet. Nevertheless, I hope soon to place them before the philatelic world, or at least the Antipodal portion thereof.

I am looking forward to a sight of your Tasmanian collection, and with all best Philatelic wishes,

Believe me,

yours sincerely,

Courtenay Smith.

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