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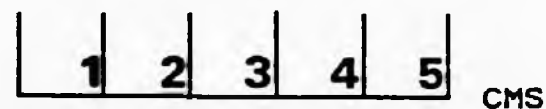
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Stamp Hunting

BY LEWIS ROBIE.



Chicago:

DONOHUE, HENNEBERRY & CO.,

407-420 Dearborn St.

M. C. BERLEPSCH,
GT. BARRINGTON, MASS.

STAMP HUNTING

BY

LEWIS ROBIE,

AUTHOR OF "ACROSS WYOMING ON HORSEBACK."

1898:
DONOHUE, HENNEBERRY & CO.,
CHICAGO, U. S. A.

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BY
T. S. ROBIE.

PREFACE.

THIS book is written for the money hoped to be made out of its sale. If it does not sell, in the opinion of the author, it is a monumental failure, no matter what favorable criticism may be said of it. On the other hand, if it sells to any extent and is widely circulated, it is a great success, no matter what adverse criticism may be said of it. I hope that my many friends among the stamp collectors and dealers, fellow traveling men and druggists of the United States, to whom and of whom this book is written, will not be in any way offended at personalities expressed. Nothing is said or written except in the kindest spirit towards everyone.

LEWIS ROBIE.

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CHAPTER I.

SOMETHING ABOUT "STAMP FIENDS."

"I thought you were traveling for Seabury and Johnson."

"So I was, Doc, the last time I was through here, but I made a change some time ago, and I am now with J. Ellwood Lee Co. of Conshohocken, Pa."

"Conso—what?"

"Conshohocken."

"How do you spell it?"

"C-O-N-S-H-O-H-O-C-K-E-N; Conshohocken."

"If I were you I would have your firm change the name of their roosting place. It would act as a hoodoo with me if I was on the road, but I know of your house. Their sponge tents and catheter stuff blow in here once in a while from the jobbing houses, but I never bought any of their goods direct. They don't make plasters do they?"

"I should say we did. We are right up to snuff on everything in that line."

“But S. and J. are the people on plasters. I won't have anything else but their belladonna goods, and Mead's adhesive plaster in my drug store.”

“That's all right, Doctor, goods of their manufacture are of the best quality possible and well known, but where quality and name are certainly essential, it is not everything necessary to sell goods now-a-days. Prices must play a factor. Now Lee's quality is of the highest, and first to be considered, but their discounts and prices are more liberal. The only thing you can say against our stuff is, that our plasters are not so well known out here, but we more than make up for it in the price, and judging from the gait we are now at, every druggist, not only in this country, but in all foreign countries, will know of J. Ellwood Lee, as they do now of Seabury and Johnson, and Johnson and Johnson. Besides, we are parent people on hundreds of things these houses do not touch to any great extent; like ligatures, hypodermic syringes and needles; Lee's patent solid end catheters, stethoscopes and many surgical and hospital specialties.”

“ Yes, and I know they are all right on those goods, and on plasters too for all I know, but I am positive of S. and J's. goods. Competition is pretty lively in plasters just now. How about Bauer and Black? They are pushing things hard through here, too.”

“ Bauer and Black? Oh, they are a farm outfit up here in Chicago, doing a two by four ten cent business. They take turns as to who milks the cows in the morning, and in the afternoon one of them builds the fire in the stove and fills the kettle full of dope, while the other goes down town and buys the cloth in a dry goods store. They then spread their stuff on the cloth with a stick, and punch the holes in their plasters through with a gimlet. But no joking, Doc., Bauer and Black are all right. They are doing a rapidly increasing large business, and they are fearless competitors. S. & J. are no competition out here in Illinois now at all, but in the plaster line, along this road particularly, Bauer and Black are much more so than any one else, not excepting Johnson and Johnson, who, at present, probably do the largest business in plasters in the West. Their man Spear through here is a stem winder and is giv-

ing J. & J's. men, Cook and Brown, a hard chase."

"But I thought S. & J., and J. & J., were the same."

"You don't tell me so? Why I have explained the difference a thousand times, and yet I believe one-half the doctors in the country, and many druggists still think that they are all of the same house, or of the same breed of pups. The fact is, some years ago R. W. Johnson pulled out of Seabury and Johnson, which firm consisted of him and George J. Seabury. He took his brother with him and started in competition under the name of Johnson and Johnson, while Seabury, who is really the whole push of S. & J., still clings to the old name, Seabury and Johnson. It is unfortunate for Seabury, because Johnson and Johnson's goods are really about the same, and most of the trade, and the physicians, would not throw up their hands for the difference between the two, and J. & J., selling at a little better inducement, give them the advantage. Besides, S. & J., antagonize the jobbers, which trade pushes out Johnson and Johnson's goods, on account of their more liberal policy with them.

“That accounts for my getting so many of J. & J’s. goods from the jobbers. You speak of Spear being a stem-winder for Bauer and Black. How about their man Wilson who used to be with Seabury and Johnson?”

“I know him. Smokes a pipe and is always busted.”

“Yes, that’s the fellow. Not so windy and not half so much of a liar as you are, either, I reckon, but as you say, he is always busted. I had to let him have \$2 to enable him to get out of town when he was here last, but it was returned all right.”

“Yes, it certainly would be. I would rather he would owe me \$500 than \$5, and he is awful handy to have around if you are busted yourself. If you want a dollar and he hasn’t it, he will borrow \$2 from some one else and give you half. He is a salesman too, but a mystery to most of us how he sells anything at all. He doesn’t say much, and when he does speak he talks in such a low tone you have to guess at half what he does say. He is so slow and indifferent that if a house fell on him he wouldn’t be surprised or would he move any quicker. Start us all out at the same time

and at the same gait, we'll fall all over him the first two or three days, but in a stretch of ten days or so, he will bring in more business than any one in the bunch. He is a determined sort of a cuss, too. I used to work with him for S. & J. around Chicago with an open buckboard. One day it was cold enough to freeze the ears off from a jack rabbit, and I was beefing to pull in and quit, but he was determined to get in his average number of orders, and he kept at it long after dark, till he finally landed his man. It was after nine o'clock though, before we got thawed out, and had something to eat. But speaking of Seabury and Johnson reminds me of the old revenue stamp they used on their Benson's plasters years ago. Have you any of them, Doc.? or any old perfumery bottles, pills, face powders or patent medicines with the stamps on?"

"I don't believe I have. I used to have a lot of old stuff but I got so tired seeing it lying around here so long, that last fall I made a big cart load of it and dumped the whole shooting match into the river. Most of it had stamps, too."

"You probably threw away several hundred

dollars worth of old stamps, Doctor. Between you and me, there is a value put on these old revenue stamps."

"Is that so? I didn't know that. Who pays any money for them? You can't use 'em for postage, and the government won't redeem them, as I tried to have them do so, myself, several years ago."

"No, but collectors demand them, and the comparative scarcity of these medicine stamps now fixes a price, and some of them are worth more than you ever dreamed of, such as the six cent orange proprietary used on Osgood's Indian Chologog, Wilhoft's Fever and Ague Cure, and a few other dollar and a half remedies. There were so few issued, finding one is like finding thirty dollars in cash."

"You're joking. Do you mean to tell me that there's any old revenue stamp worth thirty dollars? You're crazy."

"Dig one up here, and see if I am. And then take Seabury and Johnson's stamp. I will give you five dollars apiece for all you will trot out, of a certain kind."

"You don't mean it. Well, come to think of

it, I believe I have an old box of these plasters and I'll just call your five dollars. Let us step back into the back room and find out. Yes, sir, here you are; one, two, four, yes, eight of them. Trot out your forty dollars, old man."

"But they are not the right color, Doc. The rare ones are a lake, sort of reddish brown color. These are black and are only catalogued five cents. The other is catalogued eighteen dollars, and worth it, because of so few known. In fact, outside of a few in the leading collections, I only know of a dozen or so copies scattered through the country. None of the stamp dealers have any that I know of. You see, the law was repealed before many of these were used, but thousands and thousands of the black ones were issued, and are comparatively common. Another thing, here are three of the lot different from the rest. Do you see any difference?"

"No."

"Look again. See the word 'porous' erased or obliterated on these and not on those. That was done because the Alcock people finally obtained through the courts the exclusive right to the words 'porous,' compelling Seabury and John-

son to erase the words from their stamps. First it was done with a pen, which fact made that stamp more valuable than the latter method of a die being used like these."

"Well, I want to know; and people pay money for these old stamps. I can understand how one can become interested in coins, as there is value in them, but I thought this stamp fad was confined to 'kids' and postage stamps, and had died out long ago. Tell me who collects them, what class of people, etc. You may have these. Bring up your chair and sit down. It is stormy outside, and my clerk will watch the front. I'll give you an order for a few things; but tell me more about these stamp fiends—you call 'em. The retail drug business is so confining that here in a small country town we never hear of what other people are doing, outside of the newspapers."

"Stamp collectors, Doctor Bailey, are made up of all kinds of people in all parts of the world. It is a hobby once fastened can never entirely be shaken off. You may lose interest for awhile, perhaps altogether, but there will come a time when you will be back again, more enthusiastic than ever. I received a letter from one of Min-

nesota's leading business men the other day, who said: 'A few years ago I had a very fine collection of foreign and United States stamps, but the large number of new issues, and other varieties, induced me to part with it, and stop collecting. For awhile I had nothing to do with stamps, or collecting them, but the old craze again took hold of me and I made a specialty of United States. Again the minor varieties, etc., induced me to stop and sell out. For two or three years I made good my resolve not to collect stamps again, but at last the hobby has come back in full force, and I am at it now worse than ever.'

"I know many of my boyhood friends, who collected stamps twenty years ago, dropped it as they entered business life, but lately have had the mania come back, and are now collecting and as enthusiastic as when they were school boys. You would be surprised to know of the prominent men collecting stamps, and stamp enthusiasts. The Czar of Russia is a stamp collector. The Duke of York has one of the largest and best collections known, valued at several hundred thousand dollars. Other members of the nobility of all foreign countries are ardent lovers of stamps,

and in this country, many of the wealthy and prominent people in public and business life, of all vocations, sexes and ages are stamp collectors. It is hard, however, to educate an interest in them. Stamp fiends are generally born, not made, though of course many have become interested by seeing others interested, but they probably had the inward hobby or inclination toward it beforehand, and like a smouldering log, it needed only a fan to start the flame. I have a friend, a leading dry goods merchant in Highland, a little town near St. Louis, in this state, who has a very fine collection of stamps, especially in United States revenues, and is a very enthusiastic collector, but, try as he will, he cannot get his young son interested in them at all, and he calls his father an "old chump," collecting old stamps. Not far from him is another business man, who has no use at all for stamps or stamp collectors, but has a boy who is as crazy over stamps as his business competitor, and his father thinks he has 'wheels.'

"We all have our hobbies, and what seems foolish and ridiculous to one, may be the very life and existence of another; and collecting some-

thing is all the rage in the present day. There are collectors of monograms, jewels, autographs, old china, candle-sticks, medals, coins, armor, etc. Nothing could be queerer than the articles which some of these individuals make it the object of their lives to accumulate. A fellow up here in the northern part of Illinois is making a collection of rooster's spurs. The druggist telling me about him said I was no better paying good money for old labels, costing about thirty cents a thousand. He thought I was a big chump. If he only knew I got six dollars for the stamps I paid him forty cents for, he wouldn't think I was so chump-like.

"There is a certain traveler of means who is getting up all the tattooed human heads he can find. Another person is collecting cigar butts, while the poster craze among the more fashionable and better element of society is quite the fad now. Another collecting mania is for bills of fare from as many different hotels as possible. Patti papers the walls of her private sitting room with opera programs from all over the world, in which she has participated. But after all, stamp collecting takes the lead."

“In 1860 there were only about 500 stamps in existence, and were of no account, but since that time the mania for collecting them has grown to such an extent, that a rare stamp now is almost current funds in every quarter of the globe. But, gee whiz! Doc, it is half past eleven. I must go. I'll tell you more about stamps, etc., when I get round again in about ninety days. What plasters and dressings can you stand? Give me a trial order and see how our stuff opens up.”

“All right, I will do it. Put down—

- 2 boxes of belladonna plasters,
- 1 box strengthening plasters,
- 1 box belladonna and capsicum,
- 25 lbs. cotton in lbs.,
- 10 lbs. cotton in $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.,
- 10 lbs. cotton in $\frac{1}{4}$ lbs.,
- 5 lbs. cotton in oz.

How does your gauze come, in glass or boxes?”

“Both.”

“Well, I prefer glass. Don't dry out so quick.

- 5—5 yds. corrosive sublimate 1-2000,
- 10—1 yds. corrosive sublimate 1-1000,
- 3—5 yds. 5 per cent. iodoform,

2—5 yds. 10 per cent. iodoform,

5—1 yds. 5 per cent. iodoform,

3—1 yds. 10 per cent. iodoform,

1 gross 3-piece silk court plaster, and you might add a half a gross of those commercial catheters, assorted sizes, 6 to 12."

"How about oiled muslin or oiled silk?"

"Don't sell much. Have all I want anyway."

"Lee's sulphur torches, fifty cents a dozen?"

"Yes, put in three dozen of them. And a half a dozen rolls of white silk isinglass plaster. That's all this time. That will make a freight shipment, and I'll see how the stuff compares with your competitors. I have been much interested in your stamp people, and I'll look through my cellar before you come again. Maybe I'll find a six cent orange proprietary stamp you say is worth thirty dollars."

"I hope you will. I am much obliged to you for the order. If the goods are not up to the standard, jump on me."

CHAPTER II.

STAMP COLLECTING IN 1875.

“Say, you red-whiskered stamp fiend, you fake plaster man, your iodoform gauze ain’t worth a sou.”

“What is the matter with you Doc.? You’re talking through your suspenders now. Who is telling you Lee’s iodoform gauze isn’t all right?”

“It came back on me from Dr. Henry across the street. He said it was no good, and he couldn’t get any results out of it; said it wasn’t anywhere near ten per cent. and it didn’t look yellow enough.”

“You tell Dr. Henry he doesn’t know anything about iodoform gauze. I defy any one to tell by the color how much iodoform there is in it. Make him a proposition, or rather I’ll make you a proposition. Buy J. Ellwood Lee’s gauze on the market and give it a laboratory test, and if there isn’t the percentage of iodoform printed on

the label in the goods, I'll pay for the gauze. If it does stand the test, you pay for it."

"But, perhaps as you say, he didn't know anything about it. I see the young man sold it again to a doctor out of town, and he didn't kick any. Put me down for five more yards in glass, and a dozen one yards in glass,—but where have you been since you were last here? You left me so interested in stamps that I have hauled over everything I had, and found quite a few. I ran across a couple of Palmer's old perfumery bottles with thirty-two cents in stamps on each one of them. How do you account for that? My predecessor, whom I bought out here ten years ago, had the bottles in stock then."

"That's explained, Doctor. The selling price of the goods must have been eight dollars, as it required a one cent stamp or one cent tax for every twenty-five cents. That is, a dollar article had to have a four cent stamp, and so on, but the reason so many were put on these Solon Palmer's perfumery bottles was that the double tax was necessary—that is, Palmer slapped on sixteen cents in stamps, getting four dollars for the pound bottle, but the druggists sold it out generally at fifty

cents an ounce, or eight dollars by the bottle, and that necessitated sixteen cents more in stamps. It was a long time before the government found out about this, and that is the reason why I have found sometimes sixteen cents in stamps on them, and other times thirty-two cents. Here in Illinois and the West, I have found to date one hundred and thirty-six ten cent green stamps, worth at wholesale now about sixty or seventy-five cents each, and eight or ten of the ten cent blues worth seven dollars and a half or so, each, and hundreds of sixes, worth from five to twenty cents each, and most all found on Solon Palmer's pound bottles of perfumery with glass labels. Palmer must have used at least ten thousand of these ten cent stamps, as it was only on perfumery bottles of this character and cans of opium that this denomination was used."

"Is that so? But it makes me feel very tired indeed, to know all this now. I had thousands of these medicine stamps at one time. Why didn't you come round six or eight years ago and tell me about it then?"

"But I didn't know it myself at that time, and if everyone knew of it and saved their stamps

they wouldn't be scarce, and therefore of little value. It's their scarcity and the increased demand that places the price on them. There are more collectors for this class of stamps every year, and fewer stamps. From the natural law of supply and demand, match and medicine stamps of the United States must, therefore, necessarily continue to advance in price."

"But suppose collectors should take a notion to quit collecting and put all the stamps on the market; wouldn't the price tumble?"

"Certainly, but such a thing, generally speaking, is impossible; as I told you when I last called on you, it is a hobby you can't altogether throw off. Take away the postoffices, the railroads, telegraph and all signs of advanced civilization, place us once more where Columbus found us, and you won't find any stamp collectors. But stamp collecting nowadays is different from what it was twenty years ago, when I was a boy. I first started collecting stamps when I was twelve years old, in 1875. In those days a dollar paid for any kind of a stamp was an enormous sum, as it looked then. I remember paying seventy-five cents for a six cent United States envelope of 1857.

issue, and my mother calling me a crazy boy for spending so much money on one stamp. 'Why don't you buy one of those packets containing one hundred varieties for the same money and get so many more for your collection,' she said. To-day this six cent stamp is worth fifty dollars and the one hundred, although advanced considerably too, are not worth more than ten dollars."

"Isn't that strange; to think that in twenty years a little piece of paper could increase in value fifty times. I could have had a fine collection of these stamps myself, if I had thought they would be worth anything. A young fellow offered me his collection for ten dollars; I think it was along about 1880, and he had a great album full of them too, but I wouldn't have given a dollar for anything of that kind then."

"You missed it, Doc.; but my old time collection including this rare stamp and nearly 1500 other different kinds was stolen from me and never recovered."

"Is that so? That is too bad. How did it happen?"

"It was in this way. In 1883 I was in the employ of Marshall Field & Co., in Chicago,

having started with that firm three years before when it was Field, Leiter & Co. Three dollars a week was the munificent stipend offered me at the start. I was given a mallet and a hatchet and directed to knock the covers off from a hundred print boxes. By night time, I reasoned out as I dragged myself to my room that I had well earned fifty cents. Along about two months afterward, the head of the department came round and said I was getting along first rate, and they had concluded that I was worth more money to them, and had raised my salary to four dollars a week, and the first of January they would give me five. The first of the year came and on my receiving the five dollars, I swung clear of past help from home, and vowed I would stand upon my own resources. After paying board and clothes, and necessary expenses, the end of the week did not find me with a very large roll for spending money, but I knuckled down to it, and for five months lived and kept myself on five dollars a week. By that time I had so mastered the duties expected of me as stock boy, that I reached out to sell goods. I would light onto everybody roaming through the stock loose, and in this way

caught onto a number of customers and soon had quite a little trade worked up. But I didn't get any special credit for it. Only department salesmen received credit for sales, and all goods I sold, or any other stock boy sold, went in only as general credit to the department. I kept track, however, of the sales I made as near as I could judge, and tabbed the total amounts each day on a shingle. One day I reasoned out to myself that it was only fair that I should get credit, and a special book or record kept of what I did in the office, like the salesmen, so that after a while Mr. Marshall Field would know my name, and what I was doing. I concluded to interview Mr. Field, himself on the subject, and immediately sought him out in his private office. It was some little time before I could get by the outer guards, and private secretaries, but finally reached him, with the shingle of sales in my hand. I opened up that I was tired selling goods and receiving no credit or pay for it, and that I wanted to be a salesman known to the firm as well as to myself. Besides, five dollars a week salary was not enough to even live on.

“ Mr. Field is a very affable man, but answers

questions by asking them. He has a peculiar way of bowing and twisting his head when talking.

“ ‘What is your name?’ he said. I told him, and he asks, ‘How long have you been here?’

“ ‘A little over a year,’ I says. ‘He-he-ah-ah-oh-oh,’ in his peculiar drawl. ‘You are getting now more than I got when I was your age.’

“ ‘That may be, Mr. Field, but you may not have been worth any more than that then.’

“ ‘Ah-ah-hum-hum—we can get plenty of boys in here whose fathers would be glad to have them learn the business without pay. You must realize you are in a business school. Where do you spend your evenings?’

“ ‘Mr. Field, when I get through with paying my board and washing, there is not enough left of your five dollars to pay street car fare to a park concert. Besides, I am so tired out after hustling and sweating here all day, I haven’t any inclination to go any where, but to bed.’

“ ‘Ha-ha,—he-he,—um-um,—I’ll see about it. I’ll call the head of the dress goods department and find out what he says about you,’ bowing me out.

“ ‘Later in the day, Mr. Ray, the department

manager, said that I had a good deal of nerve to talk to Mr. Field that way, but he raised my salary to eight dollars a week.

“When pay day came round, however, the same ten dollar bill for two weeks work was in my envelope, and nothing else. Mr. Ray said it must have been a mistake—to see the paymaster about it. I did so, but he did not know anything about any change in my pay.

“‘Well, I’ll see Mr. Field. I say he raised my salary a week ago to eight dollars a week.’

“‘But he has sailed for Europe. See Mr. Fair about it.’

“Mr. Fair did not know anything about it, and he called Mr. Ray, and was advised that I must wait till Mr. Field returned, and then the back pay would be given me.

“‘That’s all right,’ I said, ‘but I am depending on it to live on, and must have it.’

“Finally one of Mr. Field’s private secretaries was seen, and the memo authorizing the advance was found, and I was happy. But I am getting off my subject, Doctor. I was going to tell you about losing my stamp collection. Well, I stayed in Marshall Field’s for three years; my salary

was advanced several times, but my health, from a lung trouble, finally gave out, and I was obliged to seek ranch life in Wyoming. I was out there for a year, living and sleeping in the open air. Of course I had my stamps with me, although since entering business in 1880 I had not touched them, and there wasn't, therefore, any stamps in the collection issued since that date. Late that Fall I was in the valley of the Big Horn in northern Wyoming, one hundred and sixty miles from the nearest railroad, working on a horse ranch. The residents of Big Horn City, our nearest postoffice, got up a fair, the first ever held in Wyoming Territory. I thought of my old stamp collection as being something to exhibit, and when the diplomas were passed round after the show, I received first prize for a collection of stamps from all over the world. The reason I came first, I think, rested in the fact that mine was the only one exhibited. Anyhow, to-day, Doctor, the collection would catalogue many hundreds of dollars. Soon after the fair I returned to Chicago in charge of six hundred head of beeves, leaving six head of horses I owned, and my trunk, containing all my personal effects, as well as the stamp album.

I expected to have returned to the ranch, but friends advised me to stay East during the winter, and I concluded to do so. I sent back word to forward trunk by freight, but I got no answer, and after investigating, found that the ranchman had sold my trunk for a song to a freighter, who had skipped with my horses and other property entrusted to him, headed towards Montana.

“I tried every way, Doc., to get some trace of my property, especially the contents of the old trunk, but without success, and my treasured stamps were probably dumped into the creek with other papers, etc., as being of no apparent value.”

CHAPTER III.

STAMP COLLECTING AT THE PRESENT TIME.

“You look down in the gills. What is the matter with you? J. & J. and Bauer & Black selling all the plasters?”

“No, Doc. Business is all right. I am having a good trade, but I am in hard luck. I lost two hundred dollars last week.”

“Well, that’s too bad. How did it happen? Playing up against a little poker game?”

“Not on your life. When I left you three months ago, I worked down the Big Four, and while in Olney discovered sixty boxes of Humphrey’s pills, each having a two cent rouletted proprietary cataloguing five dollars apiece. The druggist seemed satisfied with an exchange of a dozen porous plasters for the stamps, but I was in a hurry to get my train for St. Louis and only took time to sponge off a half a dozen of them, leaving the balance. Well, I swung around there last week on purpose to get the stamps and found my friend, the druggist, much elated over the

fact that while he was out one day lately a fellow came in and bought from the clerk the whole lot of them, paying the full retail price of fifty cents apiece, pills and all."

"By Gorry, that was too bad. Who was it, Gurley?"

"No, it wasn't Gurley. He doesn't have to buy old pills and medicines just to get the stamps. His limit for a lot is about twenty-five cents. Sometimes on a large number of rare stamps I have known him to go as high as fifty cents, but it isn't often. I think it was a chap that travels for a New York cloak house. He is a medicine stamp fiend of the most rabid kind. He skates into drug stores and calls off a list of old medicines and pills, and if the druggist has them, the stamp, if found in good condition, is worth a great deal more than the article. He then makes an offer for the lot, takes the stamps off and makes the druggist a present of his medicine back again. He got one on me in Decatur last summer in West's drug store, opposite the St. Nicholas Hotel. I thought I had swiped everything off of any account, but this fellow found three dozen old porous plasters with the Demas

Barnes stamp cataloguing a dollar and a quarter, and bought the old plasters at ten cents each. I therefore think this was the same chap. Anyhow, I am not losing so much. This druggist in Olney took pity on me and dug up a half dozen boxes of M. A. Simmon's pills of Iuka, Miss., each having a strip of four stamps cataloguing two dollars a stamp, and we swapped even stamps for corn plasters."

"So I see; your two hundred dollars you lost is not so bad after all. What else have you found? any six cent orange proprietaries?"

"Not yet, Doctor, but I am on the lookout all the time. I'll land one some day."

"I hope so, but I am getting stuck on this stamp collecting myself. I sent for a Scott's catalogue the other day, and a mixed revenue packet, and have them in an old scrap book till I know what kind of an album to get. Your speaking of this druggist in Olney getting fooled by your stamp fiends so, reminds me of one on me, a good cigar story, but this was a dead open and shut swindle and I only tell it to show you how the best of us will get taken in once in a while.

"Well, along last fall a fellow came along here

and came into my drug store and introduced himself as a lawyer on his way to California to spend the winter. He was faultlessly dressed, wore an expensive silk lined overcoat, a diamond pin on an immaculate shirt front, tan colored gloves, plug hat, etc. Altogether he was the sprucest looking duck that ever came down the pike and, like you, was an amusing kind of a cuss. I like a good smoke as well as anyone, and when he offered me one of his fragrant Havanas, I readily accepted it. 'Now,' he says, 'I am not selling anything, but I am placed in a rather peculiar position. To make a long story short, I am assignee for Smith and Jones, manufacturers of fine cigars, who failed some time ago in Philadelphia. Previous to their failure, they had consigned to themselves to a number of cities throughout the West, from five to ten thousand of the same kind of cigars that we are now smoking. The court, however, ruled that they belonged to me for the benefit of the creditors. As a matter of fact there are ten thousand of these cigars down to the freight depot here in Punkville—at least I understand so, but it is possible that the cigars may be an inferior grade and not

worth anything to speak of, still, I don't want to re-ship them around the country and would like to have you make some kind of an offer for them.' Ten thousand fine cigars would last me over two years, and I didn't think I could use so many at any price. 'Anyhow,' said the fellow, 'let me have them wheeled in here and we will open them up and see what they look like. There may be some fake about it and, as I say, may not be worth anything to you or anybody else.' He went out and in a half hour's time returned with an expressman with the case of cigars. We knocked the lid off and the box he picked out and opened were the same kind that we were smoking and worth at least sixty dollars a thousand. He wished that I would take them off his hands as he did not want to re-ship and truck them around the country. I asked him his price and terms and he replied: 'I tell you what I'll do; I've got money enough—you give me a note for \$250 for the ten thousand cigars, \$25 a thousand, for one year; and I'll make an agreement with you to take back all unsold at full purchase price at the end of that time.' I accepted the proposition and started to make out the note when the chap commenced

to tell me how he would get for me and my family railroad passes to California and back, etc., etc., and I became a little suspicious. I excused myself a minute and directed my clerk to take an unopened box in the case over to a cigar factory across the street and get their opinion on what it was worth. In the meantime I busied myself with a prescription. The boy soon returned and pronounced the cigars worth about \$8 a thousand, and I could see myself that they were made of the cheapest kind of tobacco possible. My friend was out in front, but I decided not to let on about it. I simply said to him that I could not go into the deal, that I found I had more cigars than I thought I had. He must have suspected that I had tumbled to the fake, but he did not show it. He was sorry that I should pass such a rare cigar bargain. He nailed up the case and said he would send an expressman around for the box. Well, sir, would you believe me; that fellow took those cigars back to the depot, went into the druggist's on the corner, gave them the same song and dance and his worthless contract, and came out with their note for \$250, for which the bank gave him \$225 in cash, skipped out on the first

train over \$125 ahead, and my neighbors now have to pay \$250 for a lot of truck cigars that they won't get \$100 out of if they ever sell them at all."

"Pretty tough on your neighbors, but I have heard of that fellow before. He has worked the same game in a number of places through Illinois. I heard of him last in Paris, in the western part of the state, but the druggist suspected something wrong in time. It is funny, Doc., how that note act is still worked all over the country. Your story reminds me of a case that happened up here near Dixon, early last spring. A wealthy farmer living not far from town was rounding up his stock one night, when he heard a great noise and hulabaloo out in the street opposite the house. Investigating, he found a couple of fellows seemingly stalled in the mud, with a big piano looking box in the wagon. One of them asked the farmer if he could pull in and leave their piano in his barn till the roads were better; so they could get through to a certain party three miles distant. 'Certainly,' replied the farmer, 'wheel her in. The roads are worse over the hill and you're welcome to leave it here till they dry up.'

“It was a pre-arranged scheme. They put the piano in the barn all right, had supper with the old man, and were ready to drive back to Dixon four miles, when one of the fellows said, ‘Now Mr. Farmer, we appreciate your kindness, and we have no doubt of your honesty, but in case anything happens to us, we want our firm to have something to show where their property is. You, of course, don’t object to signing a little receipt, stating you have it?’

“‘No, certainly not,’ replied the farmer, and he readily signed what seemed to be a receipt for a piano valued at two hundred and fifty dollars. The men drove away, and three months after, the Dixon National Bank notified our friend that his note for two hundred and fifty dollars would fall due the following week, for a piano which proved to be a rattle trap of an affair worth not more than fifty dollars. I should think, Doctor, that people would tumble to such schemes, but we hear of them every day. They say that a new fool is born every minute.”

“I guess that’s right. We get them in here every day with some fake or another. But, to return to stamps, what would you advise me to col-

lect? As you have said there are so many new issues coming up all the time in postage stamps, and shades and varieties of shades, etc., I am a little at sea just where to draw the line."

"I should say start in on the United States revenues including the document varieties, and when you get those practically complete, take up Canadian revenues. These latter stamps are very beautiful and interesting and will constantly increase in value, particularly the Canada bill stamps. These were issued in the early sixties when Canada was young and of little importance. Few of these stamps were issued and as new collections are coming in every day their price is bound to advance. Start in on the cheapest match and medicine stamps. Confine your collection at first to only one paper of a kind, and gradually increase it as they come your way by exchanging with other collectors, buying and finding them. Aside from the great pleasure you will soon find in collecting, you couldn't invest your money better than in this class of stamps. They will constantly increase in value. They don't take up much room and there are no taxes to pay on them. Be careful, though, in getting

only perfect specimens. A slightly torn or in any way damaged stamp, unless it is very rare indeed, as I have told you before, is of no market value, and it is a great deal better to pay more for an evenly centered perfect stamp, for if you ever want to sell your collection, damaged or imperfect stamps hurt the value of it. Better pay full catalogue price for a perfect stamp than one quarter catalogue for a damaged one. Years ago condition wasn't hardly considered; anything went. If a stamp was a little torn or discolored or heavily cancelled, its value wasn't so much hurt by it. Collectors took them in, but nowadays, condition is everything. You say you sent for Scott's catalogue. That is the standard, and although it has its defects and imperfections, it reflects the actual condition of the market value of the stamps, allowing about fifty per cent. off on the average.

“Of course there are many stamps that cannot be obtained at full listed price, but there are many also that are catalogued too high, and are slow sellers even at half catalogue. Fashion changes in stamp collecting as in everything else, and where it may be at this time all the rage to collect the Spanish West Indies, Philippine Islands,

revenue and match and medicine stamps, another season may see some other countries more in favor. Therefore, the prices listed in the catalogue are bound to fluctuate, and that is the reason why you see all dealers advertise stamps at various discounts, from 10 to 60 per cent. The makers of Scott catalogue receive all manner of criticisms, more or less harsh, as to the prices they compile from year to year, but when one considers how impossible it is to anticipate what the demand for certain stamps will be, the possible large finds of some rare stamps, or remainders in postoffices showing up, etc., it is surprising to me that there are no more mistakes and errors than there really are. As Mr. Luff, the leading compiler of the catalogue says, 'Criticism is so much easier than productions. The man who never raises any crops of his own has usually a well-developed talent for leaning over the garden gate and pointing out the small potatoes in his neighbor's harvest.' Like the student who said it was easy enough to make Proverbs like Solomon did: 'Quite right, Mr. Student, but just make a few.'

"Yes, it is like the successful business man in the community. The unsuccessful always rise up

to find criticism and fault. It would seem that most people know how to run every other business but their own."

"That is about right, Doctor, and it is a hard world to satisfy. Like the story of the jackass, the old man and the little boy; you can't please yourself and everybody else. For getting his hair cut Samson got into trouble, and for not getting it cut Absalom got into trouble too, but you will never get into trouble collecting stamps, Doc. In fact your troubles and worries of life will then be forgotten."

"I hope so; I need something to compensate for the ceaseless drudging and dissatisfaction of the drug business."

CHAPTER IV.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MATCH AND MEDICINE STAMP.

“You were going to tell me more about the history of these medicine and proprietary stamps when you got round again. I am not busy to-day and I am now a full-fledged stamp fiend, and want to know all I can about stamps, especially the United States-revenues. By the way, there was a fellow along here last week representing Humiston, Keeling & Co., of Chicago. Says you bought thousands of stamps of them, but you had to take the pills in order to get the stamps. How did you take them, internally?”

“Not all at once, Doc., but that was a deal I didn't make very much on, although I didn't lose anything. This firm makes it a business of buying up and trading for old pills and patent medicine, and in this way gather a lot of old stuff having stamps. I looked over the lot they had in stock and made an offer of taking everything at one cent apiece, just as they come, but I would

never have made it if I had known Mr. Keeling had a Scott's catalogue in his desk, and a son a stamp fiend. The rarities, of course, were all taken out beforehand; still, a number of good things escaped, for I found quite a few rouletted proprietaries and a one cent inverted medallion of the 1871 issue, worth about fifteen dollars. This is a very rare stamp in good condition.

“But going back to the history of the stamps. In September, 1862, the first adhesive stamp tax became a law. Under its provisions any manufacturer of playing cards or patent medicines, or anything containing a secret or private formula, could have their own design or die made for the revenue stamp, to be used by them exclusively, provided the design was approved by the government and at the manufacturer's expense. At first there were not many that took advantage of it. The great civil strife had by this time nearly paralyzed the main industries of the country, and many preferred to buy the regular issue and surcharge them, or write or stamp their name or trade mark over the stamp. The thirty-eighth Congress on June 30th, 1864, passed another internal revenue act, to be in force from August 1st of that year.

This law increased some of the duties, abolished others and made many minor changes. The tax on medicines remained the same as in the original act, which was:

Where the retail price was 25c or less . . .	1c.
Over 25c and not more than 50c	2c.
Over 50c and not more than 75c	3c.
Over 75c and not more than \$1	4c.
For every 50c or fractional part thereof, over and above \$1	2c.

“There was besides this an addition covering matches, requiring on any package containing one hundred matches or less, a one cent stamp, and for every additional one hundred matches or less, one cent. The special die privileges were also extended to the match manufacturers, and by this time the many firms, seeing a permanent and prominent advertisement in their special stamps, took advantage of it. The income from this source, with all the other internal revenue taxation, was enormous, the government collecting for the year ending June 30th, 1866, over three hundred million dollars. During that year there was a change in the schedule, where playing cards,

which heretofore were taxed according to their selling price, now had a uniform stamp of five cents per pack.

“An addition was also made at this time taxing canned goods, but was not in operation long, owing to the difficulty in collecting it. Kensett & Co., canners, of Baltimore, were the only firm taking advantage of the special die privileges, and that is the reason, Dr. Bailey, you find that stamp worth fully the price the Scott Stamp & Coin Co. catalogue it, fifteen dollars.

“Use of specified paper in the manufacture of stamps commenced in 1876. The first distinct variety, other than various minor kinds of thin hard paper, catalogued as “old paper,” was silk paper, containing silken threads similar to our paper money. Early in the year 1877 a wove paper of pink color was experimented with, but not with the apparent success that was claimed for it, for in 1878 the department adopted another white paper, this time water marked, the capital letters U. S. I. R., ingrained into the texture of the paper. There was therefore, four distinct papers used: old paper consisting of a thin hard paper, silken, pinked and water marked, and you can

readily see why some stamps of the same appearance to one not knowing or interested, are at variance with each other as to their value; the pink being more rare than the others as a rule, owing to fewer issues of that particular paper. On July 1st, 1883, an act went into effect abolishing the tax on all duties for which the private stamps were issued.

“As every manufacturer having his own special stamp wanted to be different from anyone else, either in design, color or size, a collection of these stamps must therefore, afford a very interesting study. Patriotism at that time was rampant and many of the stamps had designs of the flag, the stars and stripes, Liberty, American eagle, the clasping hands, etc. The pine tree of the Orono Match Co., of Orono, Maine; the volcano on the Pierce Match Co.; the rooster on the Eisenhart matches; the bear on the Thos. Allen issues, and the deer on those of W. D. Curtis, of Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and many others are more or less unique and historical.

“The original dies of all these stamps have been destroyed, and you can therefore readily understand, with the constant decreasing supply

and increase in collectors, that the stamps are bound to steadily go up in price, more particularly the match stamps. Stamped medicines and pills, as you can see Doc., are still kept in many drug stores for possible calls, but I never have found but very few matches stamped, the latter being used up and not carried from year to year as dead stock in the store. But there will come a time when all the old medicine stamps caused by the great civil strife will have disappeared from the drug stores, and you and me and other collectors having them will be the only sources where they can be found. So I am digging through the drug stocks in my travels as fast as I can for these old stamps—can you wonder at it?"

"No, and you have an exceptionally good opportunity of finding them, and with no expense getting round. Which is the rarest of all the private proprietaries? You said the six cent orange proprietary was worth thirty-five dollars. Is any match or medicine stamp worth more than that?"

"Yes, I should say so. There are many worth many times that. The Caterson Brotz & Co., five cent playing card stamp is probably the rarest, and, though unpriced by Scott it is safe to

put down its value at two hundred and fifty dollars. There are only two known, and I doubt if this sum would buy one of them. This firm ordered their special die just before the repeal of the act, and several thousand of the stamps were struck off, but they did not use them and were all destroyed save two. The Thos. E. Wilson four cent black is also a rare stamp. Scott catalogues it at two hundred dollars, but cannot supply it at that price. I never saw but one copy of it, in the Vanderlip collection in Boston, and it is the only one known, although it is not certain but that there are a few more. The reason the stamp is so rare, Dr. Wilson's partner objected to it, and a quarrel between the two partners resulted. The doctor, in a fit of anger, went to the safe and thrust all the stamps into the stove, and not more than half a dozen copies escaped.

“The Rock Island stamp of the American Match Company is a very rare, probably the rarest, of all the match stamps, not over eight copies of it being accounted for. My friend, Mr. J. A. Pierce, one of the old-time dealers of Chicago, obtained one of these stamps for a cent. Years ago a fellow came into his place of busi-

ness with an album containing a general collection, and said he wanted to sell a sheet of revenues in the back part of the book. Mr. Pierce was busy at the time, too busy to pay particular attention to the stamps, but asked him what he wanted for them, to which the boy replied 'a dollar.' The dealer wasn't long in plunking the 'wheel,' though he did not discover till after the boy had gone that the lot of one hundred stamps not only contained this rare match stamp, but others worth a great deal of money. Many of these match and medicine stamps are listed altogether too high, but there are more catalogued too low. In my opinion, all stamps on pink paper are worth more in comparison to their listed price than the other papers. Only about fifteen copies of the F. Brown on pink are known, and as there are thousands of collectors after it, its price should be more than thirty-five dollars. The J. J. Macklin match stamp is catalogued sixty dollars, but no dealer can supply it. I doubt if more than ten copies of this stamp exists. The four cent J. C. Ayer red is a stamp unpriced by Scott, but worth seventy-five dollars. There is also a four cent lilac of this stamp, also

a four cent green; but many doubt the genuineness of the color, though the lilac shade is no doubt genuine, and well worth the price a Mr. Phelps paid for it, one hundred dollars.

“Mr. Farnsworth of Portland, Maine, has the eight cent James Swain uncut on silk, uncatalogued and the only one known, and also has many others, not listed by Scott. The Powell match wrapper, entire, is a very rare stamp, and its catalogued price, fifty dollars, cannot procure it. This stamp wrapper has been seen in two different sizes, but both are among the rarest of the private proprietaries, particularly when complete and not cut to shape. I am told the four cent J. B. Kelly and Company exists perforated, as well as the one and six cent Schencks' on pink paper. The Woodworth one cent perfumery stamp on silk paper exists unperforated, and there are also unperforated copies of the one cent Herick's plasters on old as well as water marked paper.

“Mr. E. B. Sterling, for years the leading authority on these stamps, listed a one cent blue, Young, Ladd & Coffin perfumery stamp, but Scott fails to do so. There is such a stamp, however. The Bousfield & Poole match stamp comes in two

distinct shades. Only about three of the one cent red Ayer exists; Mr. Jonas D. Rice has one of them and the other two probably rest in the Deats and Adenaw collections. The R. V. Pierce, on old paper, is only catalogued \$5, but is worth many times the price. Many doubt its existence, as it is impossible to find a copy at the present time. Mr. Sterling catalogued it and is positive it was issued. The two cent rose on water marked paper is another doubtful stamp and should be catalogued twenty-five times the price. Mr. Adenaw said he had a copy of the four cent Hiscox & Co., on water marked paper and it is probably the only copy known as no one else has ever seen one.

“Up to 1895 the Standard catalogue listed a one cent red Jock & Wilner match stamp. No such firm ever was in business and was a fake issue foisted onto collectors by a New York engraving outfit, who issued only a few copies and sold them at very high prices. There have been one or two counterfeits of match stamps, one in particular was an imitation of B. & H. D. Howard. The government soon discovered a falling off in the Howard orders and investigating,

they discovered a counterfeit plate in the hands of the Howard company. The stamp manufacturers were arrested on the charge of counterfeiting government securities, but the stamp is so much scarcer 'than the original, that a copy is more valuable than the genuine.'

"A complete history of these stamps as well as of the regular proprietary and document varieties is in preparation by a committee appointed by the Boston Philatelic Society, consisting of Mr. George L. Toppan of Boston, Mr. Alexander Holland of Brooklyn, N. Y., and Mr. H. E. Deats of Flemington, N. J., three well known philatelists who have given the subject careful study and are thoroughly posted. Some years ago Mr. Deats purchased of Butler & Carpenter, the contractors for all stamp work from 1862 to 1875, all of their office records, thus acquiring the material for a very elaborate and exhaustive treatise on this subject.

"A copy of this book should be in the hands of every collector, Doc., who appreciates the historical and artistic side of philately."

"All right, when you get round again, if the work is out, bring in a copy and I'll take it."

CHAPTER V.

THE STAMP DEALER.

“How are you making it dealing in stamps? I notice your ads. in the Philatelic Era I subscribed for the other day. They sound like you, and ought to bring business.”

“So they do, Doc. They are written to sell stamps and they do sell stamps. It's as much as I can do to take care of the mail they bring.”

“Who are the leading dealers in stamps for collections in the country? I suppose the Scott Stamp & Coin Co. take the lead?”

“Yes, they are the largest and best known in this country. In fact, their total sales are probably three times greater than any other dealer in the United States, and now aggregate an annual business of nearly a quarter of a million dollars. It seems almost incredible that a such a business could be created and maintained out of stamps and coins; but Stanley Gibbons, Ltd., of London, England, the largest in the world, exceeds even this amount. The best proof that stamp collect-

ing is universal and is constantly spreading, is found in the enormous increase of those making a living and making money in dealing in stamps. They are to be found in all parts of the world."

"The first dealer in the United States was a fellow named John Bailey. Along in the year 1860 he opened up in a corner of City Hall Park in New York. Albums, approval books and cards, stock books, catalogues, etc., were unknown in those days, and the number of varieties of stamps could be put in your vest pocket. His method of display and sale, was to nail them or tack them to boards; one board would be two for a cent, another one one cent a piece, and the highest at that time could be got for a quarter. Stamps that to-day cannot be bought for twenty-five dollars cash.

"About the same time Mr. William Brown and J. W. Scott opened up in New York as dealers in stamps. They were keen business men, and to-day you will find them doing a large and very profitable business in the sale of stamps. The J. W. Scott Co., as it is now, is capitalized for over twenty thousand dollars, and its stockholders include many of the leading collectors of the coun-

try. During the thirty-five years that Mr. Scott has been in the stamp business, he has had many interesting stamp experiences. One day in the early seventies a fellow came into his place of business with a very fair collection of stamps to sell. Mr. Scott offered him four hundred dollars for it, but the owner would not take it and went out. A year afterward he came back and wanted an offer for the same collection. Mr. Scott took him as a complete stranger, but as his stock was largely increased and business very dull at the time, he only offered two hundred dollars for it, which was indignantly refused. A year later in came the fellow with the same collection for another offer for it. By this time the stamps were more in demand and there were some in the lot that Mr. Scott was anxious to get. Simply as a joke he offered him one hundred dollars for the collection, expecting to hear all kinds of language in reply. To his great surprise the stranger did not say a word, but held out his hand for the money and went away seemingly satisfied.

“Mr. William Brown is full of amusing and interesting stamp stories, gathered during his nearly

forty years experience in stamps. Some other time, Doctor, I'll tell you more about this veteran dealer. He first sold stamps from a street stall for a few pennies, and you can readily see how philately has advanced when you compare the way things were in the early sixties with the condition of things at the present time."

"Yes, I should say there was an improvement. But speaking of New York dealers, I noticed an advertisement of a Mr. E. T. Parker and have got quite a number of stamps from him at good discounts. Do you know him?"

"Yes, I know him very well. When last in New York I had the pleasure of going through his immense stock of stamps, and was surprised at the quantity, as well as the quality of what he had, particularly in the match and medicine stamps. Many of the dealers who advertise very largely, myself not excluded, carry their stocks around in their pockets, or can confine it to one or two small stock books, but there are no ifs nor ands about Mr. Parker's stock. He has the stamps—not only his desk and show cases full, but three mammoth safes, as well as a heavy reserve stock stored away in safety deposit vaults.

But you can say the same of a number of other large New York dealers, as it is in this city you find the center of philatelic interest in this country, and more stamps and more stamp dealers than in all the rest of the large cities put together, excluding Boston.

“J. C. Morgenthau & Co. on Nassau street, have a very extensive stock, especially in gilt edge foreign and under the management of my former Chicago friend, Mr. E. B. Power, do a large business in stamps. They recently acquired the large stock of the late Henry Gremmel.

“Mr. Krassa does one of the largest counter trades in New York, and makes a specialty of dealing in rarities.

“The Bogert & Durbin Co. are reliable and well known dealers, and figure prominently in auction sales, their catalogues going all over the world.

“My friend, Mr. M. C. Berlepsch, is a rising, up-to-date dealer in New York, doing business at No. 2 West 14th Street. Up to a few years ago his specialty centered on the old German states, and only let up when there was nothing more to collect. His collection now consists of postage

M. C. BERLEPSCH,
GT. BARRINGTON,
MASS.

and revenue stamps in an unused condition, and is equalled only by a few either in this county or abroad. As a dealer in stamps, he is widely known and an extensive advertiser, and an authority on United States revenues, especially the match and medicine varieties. His stock of these stamps ranks among the very first and when you have failed to find what you want in this line elsewhere, Doc., try him. I would also advise you to get one of his albums for the reception of these stamps as soon as he gets it out. It is prepared especially and exclusively for the match and medicine varieties, and is something very much needed. I am waiting for one."

"All right; I am glad you told me about it. I was going to ask you if there was any special album for these stamps on the market. I suppose the dealers get all kinds of amusing and cranky letters from peculiar people in this business, both in wanting to sell common stamps at a high price, and in wanting to buy rare stamps at a cheap price, and all sorts of foolish questions?"

"Yes, Doctor, I should say so. Most of my business is done by mail, in fact all of it, and unlike writing my drug friends, I hardly know who

I am corresponding with in the stamp business. Like the yellow fever, this stamp disease hits all kinds of people. I wrote one lame duck the other day to ante up or I would draw on him. The return mail brought most of the money and a great whine and howl not to arrest him, that the balance would come in a few days, evidently thinking my draft would draw him into jail. I have been telling one of my regular customers to 'hustle while he had the legs,' and I found out last week it was a young lady I have been telling to hustle.

“One day I was in my office at 208 Randolph Street, Chicago, when a ‘Gazaba’ looking kind of a chap came in, with an air like one whom the the world owes a favor for living, and just demanded five dollars for the commonest kind of one and two cent postage stamps and a few odds and ends in envelope stuff, worth at a casual glance about five cents. I offered him fifty cents, so as not to hurt his feelings, and he went away thinking I was a stingy cuss, because his sister got five dollars for one stamp. Well, after he had gone I looked over the stuff, and was about to throw it in the waste basket, when I discovered

three wide die, 1853, worth about six dollars each. I will now gladly give my friend the difference desired, four dollars and a half, if he ever shows up again.

“One day a fellow came in with a far-away, vacant look in his eye, and a breath that would bore a hole through Washington Monument. He proved to be a cheap, ten cent customer of mine from a town out in Iowa, and said he was shy five dollars in the necessary railway fare back to spend Thanksgiving with his family. I dug up a five spot and he went away with joy depicted in his countenance and happiness in his gait, saying he would return me the money immediately on his arrival home. I neglected to ask the gentleman what road he would go over, and possibly he went via the Klondike, or round by the Cape of Good Hope. Perhaps he meant next Thanksgiving. Anyhow, Doc., my mail up to this time has failed to reveal anything that looks like five dollars from the gentleman. Still, like the little dog with his tail cut short, when the small boy came along with a tin can and string attached, I have something to be thankful for. He might have touched me for ten dollars.”

“Yes, I suppose you would have given him twenty if he had kicked hard enough for it. So the drug business is not the only line that is worked by these traveling buncoes? I was hit only last week for five dollars myself, by a cock and bull story, similar to yours. Who are the other leading stamp dealers in the country, now that you are on the subject?”

“In Chicago, P. M. Wolseiffer and F. N. Massoth, Doc., are the the two best known, and do the largest business. You have already had stamp relations with Mr. Wolseiffer. There are other dealers who have larger stocks, and make larger sales in the East, but there are none more prompt and square in business dealings than he. His auction sales at the Great Northern hotel have been one of the features of stamp life in Chicago. In this special business, he probably takes the lead over all others, and it is no uncommon thing for one of his auctions to realize thousands of dollars to the owner of the stamps. His patented blank album and approval cards have an enormous sale, and are the best yet known to the stamp collecting public. There is only one thing peculiar about him. Up to a few weeks ago I

never could understand his great antipathy for certain brands of well known soap. When he goes East to the conventions, or traveling anywhere, he always carries his own private soap, fearing he might strike some hotel with no other but these special brands. Recently, I accidentally discovered the cause of it. Years ago, a young son of this Chicago millionaire soap maker came into his office and wanted thirty dollars worth of stamps on credit. Mr. Wolseiffer gave them to him, but failed to get more than ten dollars out of the boy. Finally he wrote his father the circumstances, and the reply read something like this: 'I can do nothing for you; my son is a minor, but he had no authority from me to buy your stamps.'

"Mr. Massoth does a general stamp business reaching all over the world, and carries a very large stock of all kinds. No matter what you bring in to him to sell in the way of stamps, whether it is a thousand dollar collection, or a bushel basket full of the commonest kind, he is ready with the cash to buy anything that may be offered, provided the price is right. He has connections where he can dispose of anything in the stamp line.

“Mr. J. A. Pierce is one of the old timers still in business in Chicago. When he first went into selling stamps in the early seventies, the United States departments were almost as common as the Columbian stamps are now. Ten cents was all he asked for a full set of used treasury, now catalogued nearly seventeen dollars. A set of executive now is worth about thirty or forty dollars. Fifteen years ago Mr. Pierce bought all he wanted at seventy cents a set, and could practically corner the market on these stamps. A son of the private secretary of President Grant had secured the majority of them and wrote the stamp dealer from Dixon, Ill., that he could have the lot for a very low price, but Mr. Pierce was afraid to buy over one hundred sets, which he secured for seventy dollars, now cataloguing six thousand dollars.

“C. F. Rothfuchs, now in the stamp business in Boston, ranks far front as a leading dealer in stamps for collections. There is no question but that he has the largest stock of departments in the world. Till recently his stamp business was located in Washington. He well anticipated the great rise to follow in all kinds of the United

States varieties and years ago laid in an immense stock at a very low price, and has become rich from his far-sightedness. Generally it does not take much of a wagon to move a stock of stamps, but when he transferred his business to Boston, you would think he was moving a stock of dry goods or boots and shoes. Trunk after trunk and box after box full of nothing but stamps, were piled up onto a big dray, and still it had to go back for more. There is no telling what he has in his possession, but when a collector is in doubt who to send to for a certain stamp, the answer invariably is, 'try Rothfuchs.'

"The New England Stamp Co. is another firm in Boston doing an immense business. That they have unlimited resources for handling valuable lots of stamps was proven a short time ago when the celebrated collection of Mr. N. C. Nash, of Boston, was placed on the market for sale. Mr. A. W. Bachelder, the executive head of the company, closed the deal under which he paid Mr. Nash fifty thousand dollars, spot cash, for it, the largest sum of money ever paid by an American dealer for a stamp collection.

"But I must go, Doc., and will only add a

word about my friend, D. W. Osgood of Pueblo, Colorado, although there are many other dealers in various parts of the United States I would like to tell you about if I had time. This Mr. Osgood is very reliable and one of the characters in the stamp business. "His Pumpkin Colored Stamp Man," as he calls it, a stamp paper published by him every month, reflects the good nature and humorous characteristics of the man."

"Yes, I read what he said about you in one of his write-ups about 'eminent men,' and came to the conclusion that like you, he is built on pretty much the same lines, especially on the inside."

"I don't know about that, Doc., but he is certainly very clever, and stamp collectors look forward to the coming of his 'Stamp Man' as an essential part of their existence."

CHAPTER VI.

THE STAMP SPECULATOR.

“ Well, here you are again I see. What’s new now ? Found a six cent orange proprietary ? ”

“ Not yet, Doc., but I am digging for it all the time. How are you getting along with your stamp collection ? ”

“ Fine, but my wife can’t understand what has got into me lately. I was thumbing and hinging a lot of stamps I purchased from Wolseiffer into my album last night, and she declared that I must be in my second childhood, as it was twelve o’clock before I turned in. I must have had the disease in a dormant state for some time, and it only needed some chap like you, in the last stages of the mania, to come along and stir it up in me, till now I have it pretty nearly as bad as you have. I am determined now to get a fine collection of the United States revenues, and match and medicine stamps first, and then go into Canadian revenues. I find a good deal of pleasure in it too. It diverts my mind from the annoyances and hardships of the drug business. ”

“Yes, that is one of the great pleasures I find in stamps myself, is the diversion it gives me from business cares. Many judge by my advertisements that I am purely a speculator in stamps, and am interested in the hobby for the possible financial gain only. Where that of course is a pleasant thought to know or feel your stamps are increasing in value all the time, my ‘Stamp Hunting’ and collecting and dealing in them is a recreation and solace well worth the time and trouble spent, even if at the end of the year the books show no profit. But there are a class of people that speculate and gamble in stamps, as they would do in anything else. There are even stamps made for speculative purposes. The Hamilton Bank Note Co., of New York, of whom Mr. Seebeck is the head, has for some years received the contracts from South and Central America Republics to print their stamps, not for postal purposes exclusively, but more especially for sale to collectors at large profits. The Island of Trinidad, situated in the South Atlantic, does not possess a single human inhabitant, and is almost inaccessible, being nothing more than a mass of rugged rocks, about three miles long and two

miles wide, the central peak rising up over two thousand feet above the level of the sea. Sea gulls are the only sign of life that ever existed or ever could exist on this barren place. In 1894 a fellow by the name of Hinckley landed in New York, and styled himself 'Prince James I., Ruler of the Island.' He succeeded in having printed seven varieties of labels, from five centimes to five francs; these he called 'postage stamps for the Principality of Trinidad,' and they were very attractive, with a design representing a sea view of this populous and fertile island. How many of these stamps got into the hands of collectors is not known, but there were thousands ready to buy them at ten per cent. above face.

"Another swindle on the stamp collecting public was a year later when a fellow issued a lot of labels, bearing a face value of five cents, and an eagle and 'Clipperton Island' engraved thereon. I have yet to discover where this island is, but it is said to belong to the United States, which fact would stamp it as a fraud, as it could not have legally issued a stamp at all.

"An ex-officer of the French navy titled himself 'King Marie the I. of the Sedangs,' a tribe

of half civilized people inhabiting a small district on the borders of the French Colony of Annam; he had printed a set of seven stamps, and placed them on sale in Paris as genuine postage stamps of the French Colony. They of course, never saw postal duty; the French government tumbled to it, and put a stop to his proceedings. But these instances are open frauds and swindles.

“The business of Mr. Seebeck, or the Hamilton Bank Note Co., was legitimate and above board, but their methods of manufacturing stamps threw onto collectors each year hundreds of varieties of stamps that were perfectly needless issues, and were printed primarily to sell to collectors. Representing the company, Seebeck would bind himself for a period of years to supply small governments with postage stamps free of charge, changing the design every year. In return the governments would cede to the company any surplus stock remaining, and the Seebeck Co., retaining the dies and plates, could re-print stamps as they chose, for sale to collectors.”

“But I don't collect that class of stuff. I suppose there is no danger of United States revenues being reprinted and issued is there?”

“No, the dies and plates of these stamps were all destroyed and the forger would have to show his hand to duplicate anything but the original stamps.”

“Your speaking of stamps made this way, reminds me of the old ‘Sprinkle’ dollar, a specimen of which I have kept as a curiosity, although I do not collect coins. Do you know what I mean?”

“No, Doc., I don’t think I do.”

“Well, they were called the ‘Sprinkle’ dollars from the name given them by the maker, Josiah Sprinkle, who once owned a silver mine in the West. One day, along in the thirties, he appeared in Washington, his old home, then a thriving town near Peoria, with a buckskin pouch full of silver dollars made by his own hand. They were not counterfeits, but had on one side the stamp of an owl, and on the other side a six-pointed star. They were pure silver, weighed more than the regular dollar, and really worth more than one hundred cents. He had no difficulty in passing his coin, but the government found it out one day and caused his arrest for counterfeiting. He was set free, however, as his money in no way imitated Uncle Sam’s and besides, was worth more.”

“I never heard of that story before, and I should think, Doc., you had a rare coin there.”

“Yes, it is. A coin man offered me twenty-five dollars for it.”

“That reminds me of a postage stamp that made more noise and comment in the world than any other ever made, although it was a legitimate issue and not speculative in any way. In 1860, Mr. Charles Connell was Postmaster General of the British Colony of New Brunswick. Soon after his entry into office the currency was changed from ‘pence’ to ‘cents.’ A new series of postage stamps then became necessary. Brother Connell wasn’t very pretty, but he reasoned out that his ‘phiz’ would look first rate on one of the stamps, the five cent variety, and a half a million of these stamps bearing his portrait were struck off by the American Bank Note Co., and delivered to the New Brunswick authorities. No sooner had the stamps arrived than his political opponents came together, and decided that Charlie was too ambitious, the same trouble that brought our Roman friend, Caesar, to grief; that he wanted to be king of the realm. So they marched in a body to his residence and with a

'Marcus Brutus' style of argument, gently jumped astraddle of the Postmaster General, and off went his head, at least from the stamps. A new design of the Queen was substituted and the 500,000 bewhiskered stamps were destroyed. Only a few were saved, and that is the reason why you find that stamp, Doc., hard to get at full catalogue price of one hundred and forty dollars.

“During the civil war in this country, postage stamps came into unusual use. In 1862 small change had almost entirely disappeared from circulation, and postage stamps were forced into use as currency. They were put up first in small envelopes, stating amount enclosed, with the name and advertisement of the firm that issued the envelope. The plan worked so well that later in the year a Mr. Gault patented a brass receptacle, circular in form, and faced with mica, about the thickness of a silver quarter. The case contained a stamp the value of which could be plainly seen through the mica, varying in denomination from one cent to ninety cents. These stamp-coins passed readily as government currency and are of great interest, appealing to the coin collectors as well as to stamp people. This makeshift

money was not long in operation. The government soon issued a series of small bank notes known as 'postal currency.' The notes were of the value of five, ten, twenty-five and fifty cents, and bore the inscription, 'postage currency, furnished only by the assistant treasurers and designated depositories of the United States.' The five and ten cent had representations of the postage stamps then in use of the same denomination, engraved in the center. The twenty-five cent note had five five cent stamps, and the fifty cent note five ten cent stamps engraved in a row, overlapping each other.

“The Columbian issues of the United States show many sad failures of speculation in philately. Hundreds of persons, yes, thousands, saved and hoarded these stamps, both in a used as well as an unused state, thinking they would rapidly advance in value, and prove a great financial investment. Parties having no knowledge of stamps at all, or any love for them either, bought full sets of these stamps, thinking that they could double their money or more in two years. One party in the East anticipated a profit of fifteen thousand dollars by trying to corner the fifty cent and two

dollar Columbian stamps. They obtained the exact number issued from the government and immediately put the American Express Company and other express companies in touch with every postoffice in the United States, advancing money to buy all the stamps of these denominations remaining. They then advertised in all the stamp papers offering, in some instances, seventy-five cents for fifty cent stamps and four dollars for the two dollar ones. I sold the party a lot of fifties myself at that price, but it wasn't two weeks afterward when the attempted corner fell through, and he was glad to sell them back to me at a loss of twenty per cent. He spent thousands of dollars for the stamps, but the collapse came, like Leiter's wheat deal, and he was obliged to unload at a loss, and to-day these unused stamps are selling at from five to fifteen per cent. less than their face value. The only denomination that did not collapse altogether was the one dollar issue, and this tumbled fifty per cent., but a leading firm in New York anticipated that this stamp would be the best, and succeeded from the start in obtaining the greater part of them. One of the speculators in these stamps died a short time ago, after invest-

ing his entire fortune in them, and now his widow has thousands of dollars worth of the high value World's Fair stamps, that cannot be sold for the money paid for them.

“But I must run down with my stamp wind for this time, Doctor, and hustle. I want to earn my salary. What have you got for me in surgical dressings this time? You look a little shy on mustard plasters.”

“Yes, put down a dozen boxes; also—

2 lbs. lamb's wool in ounces,

$\frac{1}{4}$ doz. catgut ligatures,

$\frac{1}{4}$ doz. silk ligatures,

A box of Lee's kidney plasters—I am pushing that plaster—I believe it is a good one; also give me—

10 lbs. cotton in lbs.,

5 lbs. cotton in ozs.

“I guess that's all. I am not selling much gauze lately. My leading physician has gone to Europe for the summer. You might give me about one dozen boxes of plain gauze in yards. We sell that once in a while to our general run of trade. That's all. When you get round again I hope to have a larger order for you.”

CHAPTER VII.

STAMP COLLECTING AS A PASTIME.

“I don’t notice that infernal odor of creosote about you that used to be so noticeable. Have you quit using it?”

“Yes, Doc., I had to. I have taken so much of it that I perspired the blamed stuff; my friends shunned me; my folks drove me out of the house, and even the hotels turned me away. But it was a good thing for my throat trouble. I had it down to a regular system, and worked it up till I could take twelve drops without turning a hair. I even got so I liked the stuff, and the odor was never disagreeable to me, though unbearable to many people. I carried it in a little vial in my vest pocket, and after finishing my meal would call for a glass of milk and drop the stuff into it. You ought to see the dining room girls look at the glass after I left. They would carry it out as if it were going to bite, and many a traveling man would exclaim as I went out, ‘What to h—l

is the matter with that feller?' The day clerk at the Union Hotel, Galesburg, is very sensitive to anything of the kind. I had hardly registered the last time there when he cried out, 'Whew! what smells so? For mercy's sake, porter, see if the gas isn't leaking somewhere.'

"I didn't say a word, but after bursting a bottle of it in my pocket in the next town, and being obliged to stay in bed a day or two while my clothes were being renovated, I concluded it was time to quit using the stuff.

"Years ago I was in the moth ball business in Boston, and all I had to do to secure a seat in a crowded car was to carry my pockets full of the balls. I don't know what my sensitive and cultured Boston friends would do if I walked into the street cars now, perspiring creosote. The conductor would probably give me the car.

"But speaking of those moth balls as killing moths, it may drive them away, but it will only be temporary. They will gather up their sisters and their cousins and their aunts and come back to the feast. To prove moths grow well on it, I put a nice fat one, a piece of woollen carpet about

two inches square and the loudest smelling moth ball in the barrel into the safe one day and forgot all about it for thirty days. I then happened to think of it and opened the box, and what do you think I found, Doc !”

“I don’t know; a large family of moths, I suppose.”

“A large family? I should say so. In the first place there was no carpet and no moth ball, only the odor of it left, and moths! well, the reason there wasn’t any more was because the box wasn’ bigger.”

“I sell a lot of it here in my drug store, but how they do kick when they take their goods out in the fall. I sold a lot of the same kind in flake form to our military company here, to store away their overcoats. They had considerable trouble with moths before, and they must have shoveled this stuff in. Last week they turned out at a funeral of one of our prominent men. It was cold and rainy and they donned their overcoats for the first time since they were stored away. Well, talk about your odor of creosote; you ought to have been to our church when those fellows came in out of the rain! But how about

stamps? I am more interested in them now than I am in anything. Have you made many big strikes lately?"

"Not to speak of since I was last here, Doc., except one find out here in the western part of the state. The druggist had been in the same location for fifty years. Years ago he was in the wholesale business, but I never could get him to put any price on his stamps, or even to let me look over his store at all. Last summer a young fellow came into the store and asked for a few old medicines, a number of which the druggist had with the stamps on. I don't know what they were, but he gave the druggist \$3.00 for the stamps only, and when I asked him last week about his stamps, for I knew he had a lot of them, he seemed interested and wanted to know what I gave. I said I would give him as much as anyone else, but I would have to see the stamps first. He then told me of this fellow paying him three dollars for six stamps, and I replied that I would give him three dollars apiece for certain stamps."

"'Are any stamps worth so much as that?' says the old fellow. He then was very willing for me

to look for a six cent orange stamp with Washington's head and the word 'proprietary' on it. I didn't find any, but before I got through, my offer of ten dollars for what I wanted elated him very much. I didn't get so many rare stamps, but there were forty-eight Wilder's vermilion, cataloguing four dollars each, and enough other cheaper stamps to reach a catalogue value of over three hundred dollars.

"One of the most unexpected and strange finds in rare stamps was accidentally made a few years ago by Mr. Edward B. Sterling of Trenton, N. J., the authority on match and medicine stamps I was telling you about, Doc. Mr. Sterling, in years gone by, has probably done more to accurately fix a value and a market for this class of stamps than anyone else, and the stamp world owes much to him for bringing out these heretofore despised varieties. Aside from philately, Mr. Sterling is interested in collecting other things, more especially old autograph letters of value. Early in May, 1892, the valuable collection of autographs belonging to the estate of Dr. James H. Causten was auctioned off in Philadelphia to the highest bidder. Mr. Sterling attended

the sale, purchased a few things offered at a reasonable price and was about to leave when Lot No. 1435, consisting of eight letters written by Professor Ben Silliman of Yale College were put up by the auctioneer. No one knew of anything Silliman had done that would cause his autograph to be of any interest, and no bids were offered. 'Bid something, gentlemen; how much for the bunch?' said the auctioneer. Everyone laughed, and he was about to throw them aside as worthless, when some fellow cried out, 'A nickel.' They then laughed louder yet, and Mr. Sterling, as a joke, bid ten cents, and without further parley the letters were knocked down to him at that price. He took them home and thought nothing more of it till a month or so later a friend wrote him for a few autographs. He then thought of a Silliman letter as being one of others that he would send, and thoughtlessly looked them over for the first time. Doc., to make a long story short, the last but one in the pile contained an envelope bearing a copy of the very rare five cent red New Haven stamp, the only perfect specimen known. The find made a great furor among stamp people at that time, and it was purchased finally in

Europe, changing hands several times, but netting Mr. Sterling one thousand dollars cash."

"You don't mean it; you must be stretching it a little, old man."

"No, I am not, Doc. New York papers gave an account of it, and the next time round I'll bring a photograph of the stamp and a photograph also of the original letter on which it was found."

"Another lucky strike of a rare stamp was made many years ago by Mr. Francis Foster of Boston, who now has a collection of stamps worth thousands of dollars and second to a very few, if any, in New England. While walking along Washington Street one day, he was accosted by a young boy with a Brattleboro local stamp on the original cover, who wanted seventy-five cents for it. In those days the local postmaster stamps were not particularly desired by the few collectors, and he refused to buy it. The boy followed after him and reduced the price to sixty cents, and seemed very much hurt when he again refused it. Turning the next corner Mr. Foster thought that probably the boy was really in distress for the money and that if he favored him this time he

might, sooner or later, bring round something good in postage stamps. He turned and whistled for the boy to come back, made him happy with the sixty cents, and to-day, Doc., five hundred dollars wouldn't buy the stamp from Mr. Foster. It is one of the great rareities of this country."

"Is that so; that is very singular, and very fortunate too for Mr. Foster. I am glad you got me started in this stamp collecting. I never expect to get a collection of great value or to obtain such stamps as New Havens and Brattleboros, etc., but it is so facinating and interesting. There is always something to do round a drug store, but there are moments when time seems to drag, and my work irksome. It is then my stamp collection comes in as a solace and pastime, the like of which I never have had before."

"That's so, Doc. I know many a business man who enjoys the same relaxation with their stamps as you do. It is the greatest of pastimes. Almost every traveling man has his blue days when on the road from dull business or other causes, but since I have taken up with stamp hunting and collecting I never have a blue day. I am too busy, and it really encourages me in my mak-

ing sales and in my work. A traveling man's life is one fraught with much personal sacrifice at best, and this stamp business is really interesting and diverting, to say nothing of the profit attached to it."

"I guess that's so, and keeps you always good natured too. Well, dig up a six cent orange proprietary on your next trip. I hanker after that stamp like Abraham Lincoln after the girl he finally married. As he told her when they first met at a ball, 'I want to dance with you the worst way,' and after it was over she said it was the worst way."

CHAPTER VIII.

STAMP COLLECTING AS AN INVESTMENT.

“You’re round just in time. I was going to send in an order to your house for plasters and stuff to-day.”

“That’s good news, Doc. What have you got?”

“Put down a half dozen one inch spools of rubber adhesive plaster and a half a dozen two inch; a dozen yards assorted isinglass plaster, half white and a quarter each black and flesh. One dozen round corn plasters thin, and one dozen oval corn plasters thick. I can sell your cotton all right to almost everybody, but there is one of my physicians won’t have anything but Johnson & Johnson’s. He bought some cheap cotton in paper rolls from a supply house, and it was no good—wouldn’t absorb a little bit, and has prejudiced him against any other brand. Anyway give me fifteen pounds in pounds; five pounds in quarters; five pounds in halves, and five pounds in ounces. Also six dozen Lee’s sulphur torches.

I have got quite a run on them and sell a good many. There is quite a little diphtheria in the neighborhood and the doctors prescribe them. Give me also a dozen mustard plasters on paper and about two pounds of lamb's wool in halves—make it one pound. I see I have a pound on hand and it's slow sale. Put down—

A pound of lint in ounces,

6—5 yds. corrosive sublimate gauze,

6—5 yds. iodoform gauze, 5 per cent.,

3—5 yds. iodoform gauze, 10 per cent.,

I guess that's all."

"How about porous plasters?"

"I think I have enough. They are not selling very well lately, but you might give me three dozen more of Lee's kidney plasters. Yes, make it a half gross. I sell them by the half a dozen to a farmer out here in the country, who shingles his roof with 'em after he wears them a while."

"That's a new one on me, Doc. What do you mean?"

"Why, I thought everybody knew that story. He is an odd genius and never destroys anything. By the way, I was thinking the other day he might have some old stamps of value, and drove

out to see him and found about fifty dollars' worth of good stuff that I have traded for match and medicine varieties not in my collection. Years ago, during the war I think it was, he injured his back, and found relief only in the constant use of porous plasters. I don't know how many Alcock's I sold him, till I got him onto Lee's belladonna, and then onto Lee's kidney. Any way it has been hundreds of them. When his roof sprung a leak a year or two ago he patched up the place first rate, the Bergundy pitch in them being impervious to water. And now, as fast as other parts of his roof give way he nails down his used porous plasters in place of shingles."

"That beats, Doc., many of my stamp yarns. I'll have to put that down in my book. I have heard of all kinds of plaster stories, but I never heard of that one before. I know of a case once of a woman sending her son to a drug store for a porous plaster, and the boy took a notion to run off to sea. Many years afterward, when the mother was bowed down with the weight of years, wrinkled and gray, a middle aged stranger knocked at her door and said, 'Mother, I am your long lost son.' 'No, no,' she said, 'it can-

not be; my boy was red-headed.' 'But mother, look,' as he exposed his chest, 'don't you remember sending me for a porous plaster? There it is.'

" 'My son! My son!!'

"But going back to your order, Doc., what else is there? How about hypodermic syringes, catheters, etc.?"

"Have all I can use for some time to come. I don't sell much of that stuff; but you might put me down three dozen Pioneer corn plasters. They are all right for corns. I used it myself with good results. I don't think of anything else, but drop in again before you leave town; something might come up in the meantime. How about your stamp hunts? I am patiently waiting for you to come in with a six cent orange proprietary."

"I am on the lookout all the time, Doctor, but it is a scarce stamp, and not turned up every day."

"Yes, I know it well enough now. I tried nearly all the stamp dealers you were telling me about, and only two had specimens, and one wanted thirty-five dollars, and the other forty.

If I had only known all this years ago. I have sold hundreds of bottles of Wilkoft's fever and ague cure that had this stamp, I am sure."

"Doc., you ought to have been as far sighted as our Hebrew friend, Mr. Solomon, when he hired an Irish wet nurse: 'Vat for you do dat,' asked his friend Isaacs of him one day. 'Vell, I tell you vy,' says Solomon. 'Don't say a vord, I vant my leedle poy Jacob to pegin early in life to make his living off dose shentiles.' You and I ought to have begun earlier, Doc."

"That's right, but I am thankful I have now started, even if it is late. I am gathering up quite a few good stamps from my neighbors, who have tumbled to the fact that I am a stamp crank. An old German woman living not far from my house came in the other night and said that she had heard that stamps coming on old medicines were valuable. The day before she had received a bottle of some cough syrup through the mail. It took six cents in postage to carry it, and these were her medicine stamps she expected me to buy from her. A fellow by the name of Fletcher keeps a cross road country drug store ten miles west of here. I spoke to him the other day

about looking through his stock, and offered him ten dollars for a six cent orange proprietary. Yesterday he drove in especially with two copies of the stamp, as he thought. They were really six cent proprietaries, but black and green, and he couldn't for the life of him see where the color made any difference."

"But we can expect such things, Doc., from those who don't know anything about our hobby, but when a person thinks she has some rare medicine stamps just because the common postage kind were used to send a bottle of medicine through the mails, I have nothing in all my experience to tell that can beat that. The nearest I have to it is a case up in the northern part of the state, in LeRoy. I didn't find much of anything in medicine stamps in the place, but an insurance and loan agent had a lot of old documents and papers with revenue stamps, some of which were unperforated, with large margins. Of course he didn't know the difference, but he wouldn't let me have the higher values perforated, like the fifty cent original process, one dollar inland exchange and two dollar conveyance, unless I paid full face value; but the ten cent certificate

unperforated, two cent express part perforated, and twenty cent foreign exchange, etc.—stamps worth twenty to thirty times the others, he was glad to let me have at the value indicated.

“I put an advertisement a while ago in several country newspapers, worded as follows: ‘Wanted.—Highest cash price paid for old postage and revenue stamps. Send on what you have for our offer, or make your own price, and if satisfactory will remit promptly.’

“Well, Doc., you would laugh to see and read some of the stuff and letters that were sent me. One fellow wrote me from down somewhere in Missouri, enclosing a sheet, with a dozen or so of the commonest stamps sewed to paper, and wrote as follows:

“ ‘Dear sir, i seen your ad. in the paper and thot i would rite you. for agent in my kownty i can get piles of stamps. i send yer samples. The two cent red i can get thousands of and the one cent to. the four cent not so many but that is the rare stamp. i herd tell on sume one getting fife dollars for a ten cent stamp. i hav 2 of them and you may hav them both for fife dollars. rite soon and let me here what you pay.

Yours truly,

Geo. K——.

“ ‘P.S.—Mark what you pay on the shete and send back. if you pay enough ill work for you rite along. Geo.’ ”

“ Another sent in a lot of common stamps by express, charges sixty cents, value seventy-five cents, and wanted eight dollars for them. One or two sent some real good stamps and modestly asked a dollar or anything I would give. Most of them, however, showed as much sense as Pat. He landed in America with the popular belief that money could be picked up in the streets. Accordingly, seeing a tin tobacco tag lying on the sidewalk, he picked it up and went into a saloon and threw it down for a glass of beer. ‘That’s tin,’ says the bartender. ‘Is it?’ says Pat. ‘Have a drink with me—I thought it was a foive.’ ”

“ This stamp hunting and collecting, buying and selling stamps, Doc., brings out all kinds of characters and people, but buying stamps judiciously affords as good an investment as anything I know of.”

“ Yes, I am pretty sure of it now. I am adding to my collection every day.”

“ No better evidence of it can be had than the

immense price rare stamps bring at the stamp auctions, now held regularly during the season. The first auction probably ever held of postage stamps, took place in London in March, 1862. It was a flat failure: few attended and the prices realized were insignificant. The rare local Brattleboro stamp of the United States brought only fifteen dollars at this sale. Three varieties of the five cent St. Louis stamps brought even less than that, and two copies of the twenty cent St. Louis, the rarest of the lot, worth a thousand dollars now, brought less than nine pounds, forty-five dollars. A strip of two of these twenty cent stamps and one five cent on the original letter sold in 1895 for five thousand dollars, and the Brattleboro stamp about the same time for six hundred dollars. Four varieties of the first New South Wales stamps brought, at this first auction, three guineas. Three hundred and fifty dollars could not buy the same stamps now. The thirteen cent Hawaiian stamp of the first issue realized six pounds and ten shillings. Its present value is about seventy-five pounds. Among the greatest rarities are the post office Mauritius stamps. Only about eight specimens of each value are

known to exist. One thousand dollars was paid for an unused pair along in the seventies, but as large as this appears to the ordinary person for two little lots of gummed paper, the same pair sold in 1896 in Paris for forty thousand francs, or close to eight thousand dollars. The one cent provisional issue, 1856, of British Guiana, is, however, Doc., the most valuable piece of paper of its size in existence. Only one specimen is known, and that is owned by Herr P. Von Ferrary, an Italian nobleman living in Paris, who considers it priceless. Only ten specimens of the first issued two cent stamp of this colony are known, and up to two years ago only eight. It was then an old lady living in Georgetown found an unsevered pair of them in some old missionary correspondence. The pastor of the church she belonged to was something of a stamp crank, and she gave the stamps to him, and he, in turn, sold them for more than a whole year's salary, two hundred and five pounds. A month after, a London dealer got hold of them for three thousand dollars, and a wealthy Londoner, the Duke of York, I am told, bought the stamps from him for four thousand dollars. Many of the local

stamps issued by the Confederate postmasters during the war are also very rare and valuable. In 1892 the five cent blue issued by the Livingston, Alabama, postoffice, sold at auction in New York for seven hundred and eighty dollars. The twelve pence Canadian stamp of the first issue is worth about five hundred dollars.

“Years ago when I first became interested in the hobby, this stamp was priced way beyond my reach, but only a fraction of its present value. One of the great rarities is a stamp issued by Spain in 1854; the one real pale blue. Seven hundred dollars is considered a very low price for it now. The presence of an error vastly enhances the value of a stamp, as the numbers of specimens printed and circulated before the mistake was found are comparatively few in number. The two pence Western Australia printed in the color of the six pence is worth a hundred dollars, while the regular color, yellow, of the same stamp, is only catalogued twelve cents. The Saxony half new groschen, in the color of the two new groschen, brought lately at a London auction fifty pounds, and is catalogued by Scott at three hundred dollars, while the regular color gray is

priced at twelve cents used, and four dollars unused.

“I don't know, Doc., what errors there were in my collection I was telling you about, that was stolen from me in Wyoming, but I have no doubt I had many rare stamps. Misstrikes or misprints like what I am telling you, were not thought of in those days. In our own issue of the United States in 1869, the errors cropped out in the fifteen, twenty-four and thirty cent issues. In the two former the central pictures were inverted, and in the thirty cent one the flags were inverted. These stamps were printed in two colors, and all such stamps are liable to errors for the sheet has to pass twice through the press, and parts of the design thus occasionally get inverted. The mistake is soon found however, and very few get out in that condition, and that is the reason why such high value is put on them. In the case of these United States stamps, inverted are catalogued two hundred dollars for the fifteen cent and twenty-four cent ones and six hundred dollars for the thirty cent stamp. Two dollars, seven dollars and four dollars respectively buys the stamps, with pictures straight. The supposition is, Doc.,

we boy collectors in the seventies would have returned the inverted ones if we had noticed them, as being upside down and not exactly right. But we never noticed anything then, where now the advanced collector gets out his microscope and looks for the slightest chance for a variety in paper, cheapness of engraving, color, brilliancy of impression, size of margin, original gum, etc., in unused specimens, and in used stamps the lightness of cancellation, etc.; the finer and more perfect and well centered a stamp is the higher price of course it will bring.

“I have here, Doc., a page taken from ‘The Stamp Collector,’ showing the catalogue prices of twenty different stamps taken at random from all over the world, and showing how they have increased in value since 1869:

NAME OF COUNTRY AND DATE OF ISSUE.	1869	1877	1887	1897
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
Bremen, 1860, 7 pence, black on yellow	0 6	0 6	0 6	18 0
Brunswick 1852, 1 sgr., rose.....	1 6	2 0	3 6	20 0
Canada, 1855, 10 pence, blue.....	1 0	4 0	7 6	35 0
Cape of Good Hope, 1861, printed in Cape Town, 4 pence, blue.....	3 0	3 0	6 0	43 0
Denmark, 1851, 2 rgsbk., blue.....	3 0	4 0	5 0	95 0
Finland, 1856, 5 kopecks, blue.....	1 6	1 0	1 0	25 0
France, 1850, 15 centimes, green.....	0 4	0 9	1 0	10 0
Hanover, 1851, 1 ggr., black on green	1 0	2 0	0 9	7 0
Holland, 1864, 15 cent., orange.....	0 6	1 6	2 0	15 0
Luxemburg, 1852, 1 sgr., rose.....	0 4	0 6	0 9	3 0
Naples, 1858, ½ grano, lake	1 0	1 0	1 0	12 6
Nevis, 1861, 6 pence, gray lilac.....	1 0	1 0	3 0	100 0

NAME OF COUNTRY AND DATE OF ISSUE.	1869	1877	1887	1897
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
New Brunswick, 1851, 8 pence, yellow.....	4 6	4 6	10 0	90 0
Oldenburg, 1852, 1-30 thaler, black on blue.....	1 6	1 6	1 6	40 0
Parma, 1852, 25 cent, black on purple.....	0 4	0 4	0 4	4 6
St. Vincent, 1869, 4 pence, yellow.....	0 8	0 8	1 6	120 0
Saxony, 1850, 3 pfeenige, red.....	1 6	2 6	25 0	140 0
Switzerland, Basle, 1845, 2¼ rap., blue, black and earmine.....	2 6	2 6	5 6	140 0
United States, 1869, 90 cent, carmine and black.	6 0	6 0	10 0	140 0
Virgin Islands, 1867, 1 sh., rose and black.....	2 0	2 0	2 0	110 0

“You can see at a glance what an investment we could have made if we had known of this years ago, especially in the advance noticeable in the last ten years. By the way, if you want a very instructive book on stamps of high literary order, get a copy of this ‘Stamp Collector,’ written by W. J. Hardy and E. D. Bacon, two leading philatelists of London. The main reason, of course, of the marvelous and almost incredible advance in the value of stamps is the rapidly increasing number of collectors, and from necessity these rare stamps, of which only so few were issued, must increase in value. Fashions change in collecting stamps as in anything else, and a large majority of the stamps fluctuate more or less as to price, but as said before, Doc., you make no mistake in collecting the United States and Canada revenues. They afford a better investment for your money than anything I know of.

But I must go, Doctor, if I am to do anything with your competitors. Do you think of anything else in plasters?"

"Did I order any fever thermometers?"

"No."

"Weil, better send me a half dozen like I had last. Where can I get a copy of that 'Stamp Collector' you quote?"

"I don't know, Doc., if it is on sale here or not, but two dollars will bring it to you from Stanley Gibbons, London, England, where I get mine."

CHAPTER IX.

HOW I FIRST BECAME INTERESTED IN MATCH AND MEDICINE STAMPS.

“Can’t you telegraph your house a rush order for gauze? Our boiler factory blew up here yesterday, and quite a number were hurt. It has cleaned us out of that class of stuff.”

“Sure, let us have it, Doctor.”

“Well, put down one hundred pounds cotton and five hundred yards plain gauze, and dozen five yard jars of each corrosive sublimate and ten per cent. iodoform. That’s enough; I have all I want of plasters, except rubber adhesive. You might give me a dozen yard rolls and a half dozen tin spools.”

“All right, Doc., I’ll wire the whole business. That is more than I have done so far this week. I don’t like to hear of anyone being hurt, but if there were no accidents in the country my job wouldn’t last very long in this line, and I would have to depend altogether on my stamp finds.”

“What have you found since you were here last? I am adding to my collection every day. I bought from Wolseiffer’s last auction sale some good match stamps at less than half catalogue. I believe putting money into that class of stamps is about as well invested as to put it into anything, don’t you?”

“Yes, they are much scarcer than the medicine varieties comparatively, and many of them can’t be had at even full catalogue price. As I told you I very seldom find any, but I made a good strike last week down here in Roodhouse, on the Alton road. It is one of the few towns in Illinois where drugs and groceries are combined. I didn’t get much in the drug department, but the proprietor himself asked me if match stamps were any good, that he believed he had a case of matches down stairs that had stamps. I told him that I never found any match stamps that I could pay much for, and that was no lie either, because I never found any that I could pay *anything* for; but I would look at them.

“Well, we went down stairs, and after a good deal of digging, found the case which contained five hundred boxes of Ives & Judd on pink

paper, only catalogued fifteen cents each, but a good stamp and priced too low. I told the druggist I might trade them off for medicine stamps and asked him what he wanted for them. 'Oh, I don't know,' he says. 'The matches are no good. They won't light and I was going to throw them away anyhow. You may have the whole shooting match for two dollars, case and all.'

" 'Give you a dollar and a half.'

" 'But you got to come and get them. I won't deliver them anywhere for that,' he said.

" 'Well, Doc., I sent them by express to Chicago, and forty dollars profit seems to be in sight for me out of the transaction. Have you a copy of the stamp? I'll give you a few, you can trade them off.'

" 'All right, much obliged. I haven't it anyway. What else did you find?'

" 'I found something in a little town on the Mississippi river in Iowa, something that would make you weep. I called at the only drug store in the place, and incidentally, of course, to my selling him plasters, asked him if he had any stuff with the old revenue stamps, to which he replied that he didn't think so, but he had a boy

that was somewhat of a stamp crank. 'Come back here, in the back room,' said he, 'and I will show you something.'

"I went, and over the wash outfit, Doc., pasted on the wall was really a sight to behold. There was a big picture of George Washington, fully three times the natural size, made out of Washington heads cut out of ten cent 1847, catalogued four dollars each. By actual count there were six hundred and eighty-six of them, and the eyes were from the New York stamp, a larger head of Washington. You understand the boy had cut out the little round heads, and pasted them on the wall so it was a perfect big head of Washington. The druggist said his father left the stamps on his old correspondence and his son conceived the idea, which he thought was pretty good. I didn't say anything, and I am keeping the place a secret, but the next time I get there I am going to buy that side of the wall if I have to tear down the drug store. That picture intact will be something that can't be matched at a stamp exhibit."

"That's a fact. You ought to get first prize for oddity. I have heard of papering walls with

cheaper kinds, and I read the other day of a fellow making a big complete map of Europe out of old stamps, taking many thousands of them, but I never heard of so many rare stamps. Fifteen hundred to two thousand dollars' worth used for that purpose!"

"Yes, but he didn't know they were worth anything. If he did he would think his son was not so much of an artist, but more of a damn fool."

"It is funny how many different views the druggists have of this stamp business. Most of them reason with me that the stuff will sell better with the stamps off anyhow, but there is one in Kansas City, a Mr. H. C. Arnold, who, by the way, has the oldest store in the town, who thinks differently. He had a dozen boxes on hand of Harter's old pills, each box bearing four stamps on pink paper, cataloguing one dollar each and worth fifty cents at least. But my argument of the pills selling better stampless did not work. Although they were so old they rattled like shot, and were all dried up, Mr. Arnold said he still had customers for them, and he was afraid if he took the stamps off they would think they were no good or counterfeit. I did not want to pay a dollar a

box for the pills just to get the stamps, but he did not seem anxious to sell for any less. Finally he gave me one for 'my little boy who was making a collection,' and every time I go there I got one on the same plea, till I finally got five, going from one clerk to another. Last month I had the same song and dance, and Mr. Arnold asked me how many 'little boys' I had collecting stamps.

"I was in Cairo, Illinois, a few days afterward, and saw in the showcase of the leading drug store a few rather common but desirable stamps, and sprung the 'little boy' whine on the proprietor, and he replied, 'Oh, I am onto you, and your "little boy" act. You can't roast me as you did the other druggists. I read your ads. in the "Era," and I am somewhat of a stamp crank myself.' So you see, Doc., I don't have pie all the time in my travels."

"But you can't expect to be always lucky. Think of us poor druggists giving you all of this valuable stuff for practically nothing, for your 'little boy,' while their own real little boy can't get enough money out of their daddies' to buy a fish line. Still you do just as any one else would, and are honest enough."

“I wouldn't take an undue advantage of anyone. I don't want something for nothing, but if a druggist says that the stamps didn't cost him anything; you may have them, or for a dollar or fifty cents, or whatever it is, I would be a fool to give him any more.”

“That's so, but you were going to tell me how you got onto hunting through the country for old stamps, and how you first became interested in the match and medicine varieties.”

“Well, Doc., three years ago if I were you or in the drug business myself, and to anybody coming along like I am doing now, asking for old stamps, whether he had a ‘little boy’ or not, I would not hesitate at all to give away what I had.

“I told you I was a very enthusiastic collector of postage stamps along in the seventies, and up to 1884, when my collection was stolen in Wyoming. In those days all revenue stamps were considered as trash and labels, and no one collected them that I knew of, and there was no value placed on them, at least not till many years afterward, when Mr. E. B. Sterling got out his catalogue. In fact, I had lost track of the value of all kinds of stamps and all interest in them, and

if my collection had turned up in 1895, and anyone had offered me fifty dollars for it, I would have taken it in a minute, although the catalogue value at the present time, as I remember, must be nearly two thousand dollars. I had many stamps worth now at least twenty-five dollars to fifty dollars each.

“Well, I was at the National hotel in Peoria one day, three years ago this summer, and one evening a Mr. A. L. Palmer, who represented and still represents Parke, Davis & Co., asked me up into his room to look at some old stamps he had taken from the drug stocks in the city. I wasn't particularly interested, but having nothing to do, went up with him. ‘They are not worth anything,’ says I, as he spread a lot of them on the bed; ‘no one will pay you any money for them.’

“‘I don't know about that,’ he said. ‘There are some of them catalogued five to ten dollars.’

“He handed me Scott's catalogue, that I hadn't seen for fifteen years, and as he called out the stamps I would give the price. At first we thought we had a dozen of Jaynes' uncut on old paper, but we were mistaken, as neither of us

knew what 'die cut' or 'water marked' was. Anyhow, the lot figured up nearly a hundred dollars catalogue, and Palmer said he was going to New York the next week and sell them to Scott. But I became much interested and reasoned out if there was anything in this stamp hunting I was good as he. I turned to the postage and foreign listed in the catalogue, and was astounded to see the prices quoted, some ten to twenty times the prices asked in the seventies. 'You can get another catalogue in New York. Sell me this one,' I says to him, and he does so, and I commenced to study it right away, and decided to collect stamps again. Palmer told me of Mr. Caswell of Hayes & Caswell, druggists in Rockford, Illinois, as being a low-priced dealer in stamps, as well as having a fine collection. I was due in Rockford the next week, and was very cordially received by Dr. Caswell, whom I found very sociable and enthusiastic over stamps of all kinds, but prices seemed so all-fired high on the old issues that I had been familiar with that I decided to go slow, and limited my purchases to a dollar. He was very free with his advice and telling me about what certain medicines, etc., I

could find rare stamps on in my travels around the country, and for such information I owe much of my success in the finds that I have made. I soon accumulated a whole raft of medicine stamps, but unlike the postage, even then, three years ago, they were not in popular demand. I reasoned out, however, a demand could be created for them if persistently advertised, and brought before the stamp collecting public in an original way. With that end in view I gave a yearly contract to 'Jewett's Philatelic Era' of Portland, Maine, the best stamp paper of them all, in my opinion, and in two years' time, Doc., neither myself nor any other dealer could adequately fill the demand. From nothing I soon had several thousand dollars worth of those stamps out on approval all the time, and to-day the business is only decreased for the reason that myself and other stamp hunters since, have exhausted the drug stores of the stamps, and many are not to be had at any price."

"And I am glad you started me into collecting them. I can see now it has been money well spent. As you said, the stamps will never be cheaper, and must become on the contrary, higher

in value, for there are fewer stamps and more collectors for them each year. If we only knew this years ago."

"Yes, but we didn't, and to think, Doc., only so short time ago as three years, I was afraid to go higher than a dollar on my purchases for stamps worth five times that, even by this time."

"Yes, I suppose if Dr. Caswell had offered you a six cent orange proprietary for a dollar, you would probably think you would get stuck on it. I am beginning to think there is no such stamp as that. I hear you say you will find them, and that others have got them, but I want to see one before I believe it. I am getting suspicious."

"But try me once more, Doc. I have an idea I'll run onto these stamps before long."

CHAPTER X.

SOME NOTED STAMP COLLECTIONS.

"I have been looking for you for a week back. Bauer & Black's man, Spear, was in here a few days ago and said you would be along soon. He tells me he worked a *coup de main* on you. How was that?"

"Talk about your diplomacy, Doc.; it is no wonder he draws one of the largest salaries of any traveler in the business. He is not only a stem-winder, but a stem-setter, judging from the way he set me up in St. Louis; but I'll get even with him yet."

"How was it? Got you full, probably?"

"I don't know what you call it, but I lost two days in my calendar. It was this way: I was selling to one of his customers in St. Louis, when he dropped into the store. I had never met the gentleman, and in a friendly conversation he invited me to have something. I am not much in the habit of irrigating to any extent, but being our first acquaintance I concluded to be sociable.

He wanted me to try something new and real good. It tasted first-rate. Then he had one on me, and then the barkeeper wanted us to have one on him. By that time I didn't know whether I was selling porous plasters, swapping stamps or riding horseback. The result of it all was, I didn't know anything for nearly two days. I started for Springfield, as I supposed, that Friday night; but on my arrival at the depot the ticket agent said that that train did not leave on Sundays. He just wanted to get ahead of me, but I am laying for him. The next time we meet for a social round-up something will drop in his glass that will give him a Rip Van Winkle kind of a sleep."

"Yes, that was pretty rough for the first round, for a fact, but I should judge for one to trot with him he would have to drink ten-penny nails. But changing the subject to stamps, you can't get out of town till to-morrow, anyhow, so come up to the house after supper and tell me more about the noted collections of the country. It is my night off."

"All right, I will."

* * * * *

“Speaking of the leading collections and those famous for their great value, no one disputes the fact, Doctor, but that Monsieur P. Von Ferrary of Paris owns the largest and most valuable collection of postage stamps in the world. Its monetary value at this time is conservatively estimated by those better able to judge than I am, at seven hundred thousand dollars. He started in collecting in 1864, since which time his labors to procure every stamp have been persistent and untiring. Not only is he not satisfied in obtaining both a used and unused specimen of each stamp, but the slightest variation in paper, watermark, ink, perforation, etc., constitutes a variety and is considered by him as admissible to his collection. He has spent fortunes for stamps, and dealers in every part of the globe have him for a patron if they are so fortunate as to obtain anything he wants.

“Up to 1882 Judge Philbrick was the leading authority on philatelic matters, and had, no doubt, the best collection of stamps in Great Britain. In November of this year he sold his collection to Von Ferrary for thirty-eight thousand dollars. At this time this sum seemed enormous for a col-

lection of stamps, but to-day the collection is worth fully four times that amount. Monsieur P. Von Ferrary has in his collection the one cent British Guiana of 1856, the only copy known and almost priceless in value; at least ten thousand dollars wouldn't buy it, and is considered by experts as worth even more than that, as the ten cent Baltimore, of which several copies are known, recently sold for over four thousand dollars. He also has at least four of the rare two cent Mauritius, a pair of which was sold in 1896 to a French collector for forty thousand francs, or eight thousand dollars.

“The keeping of such a collection and the care of it, with all the correspondence, etc., it entails, necessitates the employment of several persons, devoting their entire time to it. I have never seen the collection, but those knowing about it say it is superbly arranged on unbound slips of stiff paper, and surely must be a philatelic feast once seen never to be forgotten.

“The late T. K. Tapling, M. P., who died in 1892, bequeathed his magnificent collection to the British Museum, and it can now be safely valued at close to four hundred thousand dollars. His collection

contained fiscal and telegraph stamps as well as stamped envelopes. He never would take a used specimen if it was possible to obtain it unused, or unless in a used state it was of more value than the same stamp unused.

“Mr. W. B. Avery, a manufacturer near London, probably has the finest collection in Great Britain, next to the Tapling collection. Mr. Castle, a Sussex magistrate, has a collection worth a very large sum. In 1894 he sold a portion of it for fifty thousand dollars. One of the Rothschilds has amassed a very valuable collection, and those possessed by the late Mr. Gilbert Harrison, from Afghanistan, Cashmere and Japan alone, are worth close to sixty-five thousand dollars. I could also mention the Duke of York's, Major Evans', Dr. Le Grand's of Paris and many others in Europe, but you are, Doctor, probably more interested—at least I am, in the collections of note in the United States. Without a question of doubt, the most valuable collection on this continent is owned by Mr. H. J. Duveen of Fifth Avenue, New York, but in reality his home is in England, and he should come in as a foreign collector. Mr. F. W. Ayer of Bangor, Maine was

until recently, when he sold a part of his collection for fifty thousand pounds to a London firm, one of the largest stamp collectors of recent years. He only commenced, virtually, in 1892. He made a specialty of United States and British colonies, and bought right and left all over the world, paying out thousands of dollars every week for stamps. His expenditures for the St. Louis provisional stamps are said to have been over twenty thousand dollars. If there were any great rarities lacking in his collection it was for the reason that money could not buy them, or that they were not to be found.

“One of the best collections, and probably the very best in the United States and Hawaii, is owned by Mr. Henry J. Crocker of San Francisco. Those who have carefully looked over his collection in all its details, place a value on it of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. He follows out the European plan of collecting used and unused specimens—that is, one page used and the next unused. Most of the countries are complete, or nearly so, like Brazil, in blocks and pairs; Tobago, Turks Island, British Honduras, unused—New Foundland, etc. His collection in-

cludes nearly all of the great rarities, and many unique and matchless stamps. His Japanese stamps are very rare as he has them, and include all the varieties of shades, perforations, and plate numbers; most of them obtained direct from the imperial Japanese post office. His collection stands among the first in having rarities in errors and uncatalogued varieties, the value of which it is almost impossible to determine.

“My friend, Mr. H. E. Deats of Flemington, N. J., has a wonderful collection of stamps and everything else of a philatelic character. His particular hobby is the postmaster's stamps of both the United States and Confederate States. He has copies of the rare Milbury, the Brattleboro, Vt., local stamp, catalogued at seven hundred and fifty dollars, and full sheets of Providence stamps, but the matchless lot is the thirty copies of the St. Louis stamp, including the first and second plates complete, not one of which but could be sold to-day at auction for two hundred dollars, and from that up to several thousand dollars per stamp. He has two hundred and twenty-five copies of the five cent black New York, worth close to two thousand dollars or ten dollars each,

and entire sheets and blocks of other rare stamps. He accumulates duplicates of good stamps by the barrel, and could start up a dozen dealers with stocks to sell from that couldn't be equaled. He subscribes for every stamp paper published, or about to be published, in any and every part of the globe, and has bought thousands of papers concerning stamps, so that he has an unequaled stock of philatelic literature which he exchanges for others needed to complete his library.

“Mr. John F. Seybold, a dry goods merchant of Syracuse, N. Y., has a collection of stamps almost complete, numbering over thirty-seven thousand varieties. It was started in his early school days, over thirty years ago, and he has never lost interest in it, and has devoted all his spare time and money to its completion. He also is devoted to all publications concerning philately, and his library on stamp matters alone comprises over five hundred volumes. Whatever may be said of the pre-eminence of other stamp collections over his, one thing is certain, his leads them all in the number of rare stamps on the original covers.

“Years ago, dealers laughed at his preferring stamps this way, while others took them off the

cover. But they laugh the best who laugh last, and to-day, especially the rare stamps, are much enhanced in value by being on the original cover.

“Mr. William Thorne, residing in New York, has a collection many say second only to Mr. Duveen’s. At the London Stamp Exhibition a short time ago, he received the first gold medal for the hundred rarest stamps exhibited, which averaged a value of hundreds of dollars each, and included a block of four U. S. 24 cent 1869 inverted medallion, the thirteen cent Hawaiian first issue, the India four anna blue and red with inverted head—one of the very rarest of stamps, and a copy of the rare Brattleboro stamp with the imprint of the engraver attached, probably the only one in existence in that condition.

“Mr. J. M. Andreini, another New Yorker, is a true philatelist, ‘a lover of stamps,’ and considering the short time he has been collecting, can show one of the best collections in the country, particularly in entire sheets of some of the rarest stamps, and in all varieties of shades. At the various stamp meetings he always has something unusual and unheard of to show, no matter what country is desired.

“Mr. Gilbert E. Jones has also a collection of stamps, unique and matchless. Setting aside his fine general collection of fifteen thousand varieties, recently he has made a specialty of collecting nothing but unperforated pairs, that many fail to get any of, but of which he is the proud possessor of over twelve hundred varieties.

“Mr. W. A. Castle, living in Springfield, Massachusetts, confines his collection of stamps to the United States varieties, of which he has nearly everything that it is possible for money to obtain. I could also mention the collections of P. F. Bruner, Alexander Smith, F. W. Hunter, Mr. Foster of Boston, Dr. Bowers of Bridgeport, Connecticut, and Mr. Olney, ex-Mayor of Providence, Rhode Island, and President of the American Philatelic Association and many others, but it is late, Doc., and I must go.”

“Oh, don't be in a hurry, old man. But I can hardly believe but that you're stretching these things a little. Aren't those values you place on these collections fictitious, or made arbitrary by the owner?”

“No, sir. As a matter of fact I have placed conservative values on most of them, prices that

are offered in cash for the collections. Mr. Sellschopp of San Francisco places two hundred thousand dollars the market value of Mr. Crocker's collection, that I say is worth one hundred and fifty thousand. The latter sum, anyway, would not buy it from him, and it is a known fact that four thousand four hundred dollars was paid here in the United States for a ten cent Baltimore provisional issue, that a young fellow stumbled on and picked up in a lawyer's office in Louisville, Kentucky, for nothing."

"Well, well; I am astounded. I think I'll collect postage stamps and keep it up, but you have me started now on the match and medicine varieties. Who has the best collection of these stamps?"

"That is a hard question, Doctor. But unless Mr. Deats is hiding away the best part of his collection, I think Mr. E. C. Farnsworth of Portland, Maine, has the best, and has duplicates of most of the rarities, besides a large number of uncatalogued varieties of great value, including the four cent Ayer green, four cent Jayne & Co. yellow, E. T. Hazeltine unperforated, etc. He has a complete set of the Swaim stamps, and one of

them at least cannot be matched, which he procured from Mr. Vanderlip of Boston. A sheet of the William Swaim was printed with no name in the oval. Mr. V. took the stamp to Mr. James Swaim, then living, and had him write his signature on it. Among other rarities, he owns by far the largest and most complete set of match wrappers, including many that are not catalogued. Mr. Vanderlip has, or did have, the rare Thomas E. Wilson, four cent black, and previous to the breaking up of his collections, possibly ranked first in this department. The two cent Caterson & Brotz playing card stamp, I was telling you about, Doc., rests in Mr. Deats' collection—at least one of them does. The Adenaw collection of match and medicine and revenues that I told you sold for fifteen thousand dollars cash, contained many stamps not found in any other collection. There are fewer collectors of revenue stamps than there are of postage, and that is the reason why so much more value is placed on the rarities of the latter, where only several are known, than on the revenue stamps where only a few exist. It is only in the last few years that match and medicine stamps have come into prom-

inence, and many enthusiastic collectors of these varieties now, wouldn't touch them not so very long ago. Among such philatelists is Mr. Jonas D. Rice, a prominent merchant of Trenton, N. J. He wrote me in February, 1897, to send him as a starter, about twenty-five dollars' worth of these stamps, and post him as to different papers, etc. I did so, and he took them all, ordered more and has been doing so ever since, not only from me, but from every other dealer able to supply him with anything different from what he already had. His collection is now so far advanced that I cannot supply him with anything more, and for condition, is equal or superior to any. Our friend Gurley has a fine lot of these stamps, as well as a fine general collection. So has Dr. Stein of Muscatine, Iowa, Mr. N. H. Withee of LaCrosse, Wisconsin, Dr. James H. Stebbins of New York, J. W. George and many others I could mention, Doc., if I had time. The best collections of these match and medicine stamps, however, are, Mr. E. C. Farnsworth's, Mr. Deats' and Mr. Adenaw's. But before I go, I must just mention the treasures of Mr. J. N. Luff, connected with the Scott Stamp & Coin Company, and, as I told you

before, compiler of the standard catalogue of the day. He is the most cordial and pleasing of men to meet, and no one disputes the position he holds in this country as the leading authority in every thing of a philatelic character. He is a close student of stamps, and his labors have been unremitting to foster and help philately from an artistic and scientific standpoint. He probably is the only one having a large and valuable collection, who knows all his stamps and just what he has. But he hides his light under a bushel. Once in a while his closest friends get a chance to see a portion of his treasures, when their eyes just bulge. His hobby is one of each stamp, then a pair of each stamp, and a pair of each shade. Then blocks of four, the same way, and full sheets when possible to get them, and various side lines of splits, double perforations, freaks, and the various known and unknown counterfeits collected merely for comparison. I don't know what he has in revenues, but there is no doubt his collection stands unique in all the various shadings, watermarks and minor varieties of the postage stamps of the world.

“I could tell you much more while we are on

the subject, Doctor, but will defer it till next trip."

"All right, but I am really surprised that so much value and so much interest could be concentrated in these old stamps. I wish now I had collected thirty years ago, myself. When are you going to be round again?"

"In about ninety days."

"All right, I'll have a large order for you then, but bring in a six cent orange proprietary, and for heaven's sake, get even some way with Spear."

CHAPTER XI.

IN IOWA AND KANSAS.

“Why do you plaster men all get around at the same time? Every house in your line of business has been here this week, but I knew you were coming and the other fellows did not get much. Besides I hope to work you for more medicine stamps for my collection. I am now in this stamp collecting head over heels. What have you found since you were here the last time?”

“I have made more money in the last three months out of stamps than I have made out of plasters, Doc.”

“I am glad to hear it. Sit down and tell me about it. I may be a ‘Stamp Hunter’ myself some of these days, and want to get all the points I can.”

“Well, since I was here three months ago, I have been out among the cross roads and the by-ways of Iowa and Nebraska, and among the Populists and the whiskers of Kansas. In a town near Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the oldest drug store

there was ripe for a good stamp hunt, although some of the old-time medicine had been exchanged or sold to some Chicago house, who makes a business of buying up such stuff. I sprung my usual gag on the proprietor, that I was getting together in my travels all these old stamps 'for my little boy who was making a collection—that I wasn't begging something for nothing, and I would pay him for the stamps.' 'Besides,' I says, 'the goods will sell better with the stamps off, anyhow.' The druggist agreed with me on that, and wanted to know what I would pay for 'em.

" 'I hardly know till I see,' I told him; in the mean time looking over some old stuff in his pill case, and seeing six cent green proprietaries, and some other good stuff. 'I'll tell you what I'll do; my little boy has quite a little business worked up in these stamps. He sells the duplicates to other boys, and gets quite a little money from them, and I'll chance finding some good ones in your store. I'll give you three dollars for all the stamps I find and want, and will take them off the packages without damaging the goods.'

" 'Why, yes, that's all right,' he said. 'It is too much. I don't want to take any money for

these old stamps that ain't worth anything, but if your boy can sell them I suppose you know what you're about, though it is strange to me who would pay any money for these old stamps. Who buys them, anyhow?'

“‘All kinds of people,’ I replied.

“Well, Doctor, I went through his old stock carefully, and after an hour or two's work, found nearly eighty dollars' worth of stamps, catalogue value. Among other good things were three four cent J. B. Rose on silk. Seven Rumford Chemical Works, unperforated. Five Lyons Manufacturing Company, on pink, and seven ten cent black and green proprietaries. The druggist seemed highly pleased at the trade, and I went away just as happy. I reached the depot and was waiting for the train soon due, hoping in my mind that I could have the same luck in the next town. The train was just coming in, when I looked up the street and was surprised to see my drug friend running toward the depot, frantically waving his hands in the air and yelling for me to wait for him. I surmised at once that he had struck a Scott's catalogue, or some one had informed him of the real value of the stamps and I was to be touched for

about ten dollars more, but the unexpected most always happens. He reached me puffing and blowing, just as the train was pulling out, and said: 'I wanted you to get your money's worth. I found three more of those ten cent stamps after you went out.'

"The next town I struck was Waterloo. Here a druggist thought he knew all about stamps. He wouldn't make any price on them. He didn't believe he wanted to sell them, anyway. Finally, he told me I might go through with him and see what he had. Some fourteen one cent 1878 rouletted stamps turned to light first, worth about fifty or sixty cents each, but I didn't say anything. We next turned up a lot of Oliver Crook's stamps, but they were so damaged they were of no value. Next I offered him five cents a piece for ten C. E. Hull, on old paper, cataloguing \$1.50 each, which he accepted. He then took down four bottles of stuff, each having a one cent vermillion Centaur Company attached. 'Now, these are very rare,' he said. 'They have been here twenty years that I can remember, and it will take a dollar a piece to get them.' The stamp is hardly worth three dollars a hundred, cataloguing

only five cents, Doc. However, I told him they were rarely found in drug stores, but if I should give him a dollar a peice for them, he ought to throw in the one cent common ones, referring to the one cent rouletted, worth over seven dollars. 'All right,' he says, 'I'll do it.'

"The next month after, I met another 'stamp hunter,' who asked me, 'Did you pay old man Heywood in Waterloo one dollar each for red Centaur Company stamps? I'll sell you all you want for five cents apiece.' Well, we kept at it, going through everything in the store. The apothecary now had about seven dollars of my money, and I had about thirty of his, or its equivalent, and we were both happy, and still we kept digging. 'Here's a funny one,' says the druggist, as he turned up a two cent black and green inverted medallion, a rarity, cataloguing twenty-five dollars. 'The head is upside down. I suppose this kind is no good.'

"'Oh yes,' I says, 'it is hardly the regular issue, but put it in for a dime. The fellow I sell these stamps to won't know the difference.' And the result, Doc., of this hunt in his store, netted me over fifty dollars."

“But do you know you remind me of the story of Little Willie?”

“No, Doc., who was Little Willie?”

“Little Willie was a little boy who was sitting on the doorstep by the side of Little Annie. Says Little Willie to Little Annie, ‘Your father is my father, but you are not my sister.’ What was Little Willie?”

“Give it up, Doctor. What was he?”

“Little Willie was a liar.”

“But there is no lying about this find, Doc. I’ll give you one of each of the stamps I found to prove it, except the inverted medallion. That has gone East.”

“All right, I’ll believe it now. What else did you find?”

“For a week after I didn’t turn up anything. A fellow traveling through Iowa and this country for a New York house, has hunted for stamps in drug stores for years, and it is only in isolated places where good finds are now reached; though occasionally I have found some stray stamps which he had missed. In Ottawa, Kansas, I made a peculiar strike. In speaking of stamps to the druggist, he said he was looking over his old

papers a while ago and found an old envelope dated 1865, with this inscription: '720 one cent stamps. Put one on each small box of Willis ague pills, sent you last week.' 'I was surprised,' said the druggist, 'and had forgotten all about the stamps. In fact I thought they had been used when they were sent. It came about in this way. The manufacturer of these pills sent me on five gross, but forgot to stamp them. A few days afterward, along came the stamps, and for some reason or other they were laid aside, and the pills were sold without them. Are they worth anything to you?'

"I offered him, Doctor, two dollars for the lot and he seemed as pleased to get the money as I was the stamps, which were common enough, being the one cent issue, red proprietary, but in the condition found, full sheets and in their original gum, brought about twenty-five dollars.

"In a drug store in Hutchinson, of the same state, I struck some old liver pads, with three cent rouletted stamps on the boxes. The druggist, however, insisted that he had no right to take the stamps off, that it was against the law, and he had neither time nor the inclination to go

to jail. There was no way I could get the stamps, except by purchasing the old pads, which I did, and then gave them back to him as a Christmas present. When I went out, I overheard him say to his clerk, 'that fellow must be crazy.' If he knew I made eight dollars on the stamps, he might think he was the one to be put down as crazy.

"But in Kansas, Doctor, the stamped medicines and the like are few and far between. The state is too new, for many old-timers. In Topeka I run onto a good find in old postage stamps. An old-timer was in a drug store, and heard me talking with the proprietor, and asked if stamps on old letters were any good. 'That depends,' I says, 'on what they are. What have you got?' He answered that he had an old box of war correspondence in his cellar at home, and he would bring down the stamps if I would wait. Fearing he would tear or otherwise damage them, I volunteered to go up to his house with him, and look them over. He didn't object to this at all, and for an hour and a half, we pored over old letters and papers that hadn't been touched for thirty years. Unfortunately, however, the bulk

of the stamps were of the common three cent issue, though there were a number of genuine pink shade, and a dozen or more six cent, 1869. Forty or fifty of the two cent, same issue, and one fifteen cent. There was also a lot of envelope stuff, and altogether my five dollar bill, which highly pleased my Populist friend, yielded me a profit of eight hundred per cent.

“I paid out five dollars in Lawrence, however, for which I didn't get over fifty cents back. I was told by a druggist, whose stock was stampless, that an old law firm, whose offices were overhead, never threw anything away, and had piles of old letters and papers. His statement was true, and I found a closet stacked full of thousands of letters, tied in bundles of hundreds, and systematically arranged. Those of late issue came first, and the deeper into the closet the older the stamps were. Unfortunately I did not have time to go through the whole of them, but I thought to myself at once that I had struck a snap. The lawyers accepted my five dollars for what I could find, and I gave the colored man around the building fifty cents to take the letters out, and send me the envelopes with the

stamps on, by express. Along a week afterwards, came a big bundle with ninety cents express charges, and when I returned to Chicago I thought I wouldn't have to travel any more, at least selling plasters. I expected the bundle would contain St. Louis stamps, New York, Brattleboro, and the like. You can judge of my surprise, Doc., when I tell you that the whole outfit didn't contain fifty cents worth of stamps. It was the worst lot of trash I ever received; outside of six or seven, the balance wasn't worth counting.

"I quietly investigated the matter, expecting to find that they had discovered the value of good stamps after I had gone, or the coon had, and had reserved all those of value, but the facts developed that I was about the fourth stamp crank that had dug through that old closet for stamps, and each time, the letters were piled back so as to give the impression from the front that the rear contained great rarities."

"Yes, old man, but you can't expect to find good stuff all the time. But how is it you can do so much in the stamp hunting and selling stamps, and satisfy your house that you are holding their end up?"

“Why, Doc., this stamp business of mine wins customers for my house. It gives me a personality among my trade, and besides, I’ll not allow it to interfere with my regular drug work. All travelers have time forced on their hands, Sundays, evenings, or waiting for trains, etc., and instead of chasing around a billiard table and other things, I prefer to hunt for stamps. I made a good solid customer for Lee’s goods with a druggist in Missouri, who was heretofore a strong Seabury & Johnson man. He had no stamps in his place, but his ten year old son was a very enthusiastic stamp collector. The druggist wouldn’t listen to me with Lee’s plasters, till I brought up the question of stamps, and his boy being in the store I gave him about a dollar’s worth of what I had, which tickled the little fellow hugely. The proprietor was also so pleased that he looked over my samples and gave me an unexpected large order. Now every time I go there, I bring twenty-five cents’ worth of stamps for his kid, and get a twenty-five dollar order for plasters, etc., out of him.”

CHAPTER XII.

THROUGH THE SOUTH FOR STAMPS.

“Where have you been all winter? So long since you have been here, thought possibly you had uncovered a lot of six cent orange proprietaries, and had then dropped dead.”

“No such luck, Doc., but I have not been so slow with good finds, even if the coveted stamp has not been reached as yet. Since Christmas I have been through the South, from Louisville to Mobile, and along the Gulf to New Orleans, and back via Baton Rouge and Memphis. I have been tired picking icicles out of my whiskers every winter, and with your bum hotels here, sleeping side a red hot stove one night, and the next shaking snow and ice off of your bed clothes. So this winter I thought best to make a change to picking oranges, and dallying with the Flora and the Fauna of the Sunny South, particularly with ‘Flora.’”

“Yes, I suppose so, and hugging the shore and various other amusements. It’s a great place

down there in that country in the winter. I was at the Mardi Gras in New Orleans myself several years ago. I suppose you didn't miss that?"

"No, I took that all in, and it took me in, too, and it was a good thing I made some big finds down there in stamps, or I would probably have had to call on my friend Andy Mulford, of Moffit-West Drug Co., St. Louis, for money to get back. By the way, if you ever go to St. Louis, Doc., and get busted, and want a 'five spot' or a 'tenner,' call on him, and give me and Wilson as references. He acts as a private banker for not only us, but anyone onto the act. He has a private roll always on hand to accommodate us, and will cash any kind of a check or draft that is offered him. One day Wilson wrote me from Louisville, enclosing his signed check dated ahead two weeks, the first of the month, at which time his salary would come in to make the check good, and says, 'See Andy, and fill out the check for as much as you think you can touch him for. I have got to have ten dollars in order to get out of town, and they either know me here or they don't know me.' Well, I had just borrowed five dollars from Andy myself, but the check act

seemed like a new deal, and as I was still shy about ten dollars to get me to Kansas City, I filled the check out for twenty dollars, ten for me, and ten for Wilson, and called on him again. 'All you have to do is to hold the check till the first of the month,' I told him. He simply said, 'You fellows make me tired,' but he opened up his roll and handed out the twenty.

"But going back to stamps and hunting them through the South: That country has been worked hard, more especially for the Confederates, and they are suspicious of any northerner prowling around for stamps. I was in a little town in Louisiana and discovered a large number of more or less desirable stamps in a drug store, not high priced, but many not usually found in Illinois and the North, for which I paid the druggist four dollars. While sponging and getting them off the various bottles and containers, a fellow came in and stood eyeing me a while with wonder and curiosity. Finally he said: 'If it is a fair question, Cap., what are you doing with those old stamps?'

"I am a government officer, my friend, from Washington, gathering in all the old revenue

stamps found in the drug stores, and any druggist hereafter selling any patent medicine or anything with a stamp on will be liable to a hundred dollar fine and six months' imprisonment.

“‘Shure, you don't tell me so,’ and he went out, taking it all in, for he told the postmaster about it, and he himself asked me if I was really gathering in old revenue stamps for the government.

“‘In another place I could see real good stamps on some Holliway's pills, the unperforated cataloguing five dollars each, but the apothecary was so thick-headed or suspicious he wouldn't even make a price on them. ‘I don't know, sah, about this stamp business,’ he said, in the low drawl peculiar to the South. ‘I have no right to take the stamp off, and I reckon you really don't want to pay any money for them. You're down here to see if my stock is stamped.’ He thought, too, I was a detective or an officer in the employ of the government. But I got the stamps just the same. There were four boxes of the pills, each with four stamps, total catalogue value eighty dollars. The next day I disguised myself as much as possible and, with a southern air and

dress, went into the store and put down a dollar and asked for a box of Holliday's pills, saying that they were the best pills for earache my wife ever used. The druggist trotted out the pills with great alacrity. I then offered him two dollars for the other three boxes, 'So my wife wouldn't run out,' and he readily accepted it.

"At Memphis I was gloriously left in a find that might have netted me sixty dollars. Dr. Shallenberger's fever pills call for a six cent stamp, and I make it a point to ask for this article in almost every drug store I call on, with the hope of finding it stamped. They usually bear a six cent black and green proprietary, but I found ten boxes in this drug store in Memphis, each with a four cent playing card stamp attached. I offered the clerk five dollars for the lot, which he was about to accept when the proprietor got up from his desk, picked up one of the boxes, and jumped in the air as if he had a fit. 'I guess you will give five dollars for stamps like these, worth over one hundred dollars! By the gods, I didn't know these stamps were there, and here I have been collecting stamps and buying them just like these for over fifteen years. I

didn't know we had any of these goods with stamps on.'

"Anyway, Doc., I made a trade with the old fellow by which I didn't loose anything, and he gave me one of the four cent stamps for informing him of his hidden wealth.

"I spent several weeks of my time in the South at Pass Christian, Miss., a delightful winter resort."

"Yes, I know all about it. I was there two weeks myself a few years ago. It is great sport fishing and crabbing down there. What did you find in old stamps at the Pass? Some good Confederate stuff should be hidden among some of those old families. If I had been interested in stamps at that time I might have done some profitable hunting myself."

"I didn't get a thing there, Doc. I was on the trail of a lot of good stuff from one of the old-time typical southern ladies, an old dame who, with her sister, has kept a boarding place there ever since Jeff Davis honored the town with his presence. In fact, they have had the same families with them winter after winter till they now comprise three generations. But I put my foot

in it. If you ever go down there again, Doctor, for heaven's sake don't bring up the civil war and side with the North. I was indiscreet enough to speak of the great work of Ben Butler in the South to the ladies, and I almost forfeited my head instead of getting any old stamps. They were really almost furious, and my usually taking ways and diplomacy failed to make any impression, and I went away a sadder and wiser man. I understood afterwards that Ben looted their wine cellar, and because they kicked, compelled them to pass under and salute the United States flag."

"I should think you would know better than to bring up the war in that way, and I don't blame them very much for feeling as they do. I guess Butler helped himself to what he wanted and did many other things that New Orleans and that country can never forget."

"But I got an idea there, Doc., how to act in order to get Confederate stamps—that turned to my advantage before I came North. I met, while in the postoffice there, a fellow who had been a stamp crank and used to gather in a lot of them, and sometimes some very good ones in the

following manner: He would have several thousand cheap circulars printed saying he would be at a certain hotel in the place with money in hand to purchase old stamps, particularly Confederate issues. In about two weeks he would return to the town at the time appointed, and generally would find, from the previous distribution of the circulars, quite a large gathering of the natives with all kinds of stamps.

“I made two whirls at it that way myself. One town in Louisiana and one town in Mississippi, and if I had had time might have worked it for an indefinite period with great success. I had a circular printed like this:

CASH.

Prof. R. P. Lewis, representing a foreign syndicate of unlimited capital, will be at the Commercial Hotel for one day only,
March 14, 1897,

with plenty of money to buy old postage and revenue stamps on old letters dated before 1875, and especially Confederate issues. These stamps are desired as mementos of the great civil war to fill the various museums of the old world. Look over your old correspondence and bring the envelopes, bearing the stamp, of no intrinsic value,

but Prof. Lewis will pay you cash for them. Don't forget the date. One day only.

“There is no place in the United States, Doc., where ‘cash’ and ‘plenty of money’ sounds any better than in the old-time parishes of Louisiana and Mississippi and, as I expected, my circular brought in a great crowd. I was careful to see that almost everyone within ten miles, especially the old war veterans, received one of them. On my arrival at the hotel I engaged a parlor, and a room leading out of it, and hired a young, bright fellow to assist me—like these fake doctors who go around the country advertising to be in town at such a hotel and guaranteeing to cure anyone of everything and anything; though instead of posing as a doctor I was a professor, and as Billy, my assistant, had worked before in the same way, he was onto his job.

“Before breakfast the parlor was nearly full, and I could hear Billy saying: ‘Take a seat, lady—the professor will see you in a few minutes;’ and ‘you will have to take your turn, Cap., the professor is busy now,’ etc. Well, I finally got everything arranged, a hundred dollars or so in loose silver and an old catalogue of almost

twelve years back, giving prices about one-quarter of present quotations, in case anyone would spring some knowledge of stamps and prices onto me. I opened the parlor door with: 'Who is the first one?' and Billy said, 'You first, lady,' and a buxom, fairly well dressed person got up with a small parcel in her hand and entered my 'private office.'

" 'I received your letter,' she said, 'and I have brought in all the old stamps I could find,' and she spread out before me a hundred or more letters, each bearing stamps, but out of the whole lot there wasn't any cataloguing over ten or fifteen cents each, and most of them were of no value at all. I asked her how much she expected to get—that it was the higher value stamps I wanted especially. 'I don't know,' she said, 'what are they worth to you?'

" 'One dollar is all I can give you lady,' and I really then, Doctor, offered her more than they were worth. She accepted it with many thanks, and telling her not to tell any of the rest how much she got, she went out.

" 'The next one was a person who knew it all. She was positive she had some stamps that were

worth a great deal of money, and undid a bundle of the most common ones of the Confederate issue, the ten cent greenish blue and the five cent pale blue. 'How much do you want for them?' I asked her.'

" 'Twenty-five dollars.'

" 'I will sell you twice that many for two dollars if you like,' I replied, but 'she didn't care—she wasn't going to sell her stamps for nothing, that I might have them for five dollars, but she would rather keep them than to sell for less.' While she was buzzing away I looked carefully over the lot again and discovered two copies of the milky blue shade, with outer line, cataloguing ten dollars each. 'All right,' I says, 'but it is a good price.'

"The next 'victim' Billy sent in was a hard-looking character, with a half dozen stamps, cataloguing \$38.40, including three five cent blue Mobile. He was so full he could hardly sit down straight, much less stand up. 'What do you want for 'em,' I says.

" 'I—I reckon—you know Cap., wh -- what zhay worth -- to you?'

"I gave him two dollars and he staggered out

full of glee, as well as other things. That afternoon he was run in for being too full.

“The next person who came in said he had only one stamp, but would like to have me make an offer for it. ‘All right, let’s see it,’ and he handed out the rarest of the 5 cent Baton Rouge, worth \$100 on the cover. ‘Two dollars and a half,’ I said. ‘Well, you have come down here with a lot of nerve,’ he replied. ‘Yes, I guess you will pay two dollars and a half for a stamp that sells at auction in New York for eighty-five dollars.’

“‘All right, that’s one on me, my friend. Have a cigar.’ Afterward I found him to be an enthusiastic stamp collector, who knew of me and my advertisements, but he didn’t hurt my purchases any, though he was surprised that so many had really good stamps in his neighborhood.

“The next ‘patient’ was an old colored woman, with a bundle as big as a clothes basket, full of the current one and two cent stamps, not worth counting. She couldn’t read the circular, but ‘some white trash had done gone and told her that some foreign gemmen was coming here to buy old stamps.’ I let her out easy with fifty cents and threw the stamps away afterward.

“The next one was a fellow who had a Confederate stamp I paid him ten dollars for, cataloguing seventy-five dollars, the Macon, Georgia, five cent buff. I thought this was a pretty good purchase, till in trying to sell it I discovered it was a counterfeit, but I got five dollars for it, as I sold it to a wealthy New Yorker, who wanted it because it was counterfeit, simply for comparison.

“My next visitor was ‘Mistress Lacey,’ the widow of the Confederate colonel of that name. She really had some choice stamps both in old postage and revenue, as well as some good Confederates, and she was right up to business, though her knowledge of their present value was limited. Finally I closed a deal with her, paying twenty dollars for stamps worth about seventy-five.

“And so it went, Doc, all day. All kinds of people came in, some who couldn’t read or write; some of the best families of the place, and with all kinds of stamps, and even coins. Many expected two to five times my price, and many were satisfied, and seemed pleased, at anything I might give them. Some had some choice stamps on covers, but torn in opening, so they were about worthless. Others expected quite a sum for the commonest

kind of stamps, and felt hurt if I didn't accept their price, while others would have been satisfied with half what I paid them.

“Among the last of my patients was a lady dressed very poorly and with a thin, pinched face, as if she had seen suffering and had felt the pangs of hunger, and of great sorrow. She tremulously opened her package, which proved to be one of J. W. Scott's old albums and with a very fair collection of stamps, some of them quite rare, such as the thirty and ninety cent 1869 issue, and full sets of the departments, except the rare state and executive. Tears filled her eyes and she could hardly speak as she asked me what I could pay her for the stamps. ‘Lady, do you really want to sell these stamps?’ I said. ‘No, sir, but I must do so if I can get any money for them. I am very poor, but I hesitated before coming here to sell Jimmie's stamps. He was my son and it is the only thing I have left of his to treasure. He so enjoyed collecting them, and it breaks my heart to see them go, but I must have money for the rent, or be turned out.’

“‘How much did you expect to get for the stamps?’ I asked her. ‘Oh, I don't know, sir; I

thought you could give me five dollars or so for them. You will know what they are worth.'

“ ‘I’ll give you ten dollars, madam, for one stamp that I may be able to sell for more than that. If I do, I’ll remit you the difference. Here is my address in Chicago. Keep the collection, but if you wish to sell it at any time, let me know. I’ll give you all I get for it, which should be seventy-five to a hundred dollars.’ ”

CHAPTER XIII.

MY GREAT FIND IN ALABAMA.

“Well, here you are again I see. What makes you so early, you are hardly due yet, are you?”

“I am a little ahead of my time, Doc., but I wanted to get ahead of Spear. He is working over this road, and I have got tired of being behind everybody all the time.”

“Have you evened up on him yet on that St. Louis episode?”

“Not yet, but I am laying for him.”

“I wish you success, but if you get ahead of any deal with him, you will be the first one. By the way, do you know a fellow named Ed. Mal-lory?”

“Yes, I should say I did; travels for Lazell, Dalley & Company’s perfumes; wears a plug hat and a fur-lined overcoat. Looks like an actor.”

“Yes, that sizes him up all right. The first time you see him and hear him bluster and blow you would think he was nothing but a wind-bag full of prune juice, but that’s his way, and you

become accustomed to it after a while, and if you don't hear him cussing everybody and everything, you wonder what's wrong with him."

"He is a salesman too, Doc. No one in the perfume line gets the business he does out of this territory, even if he has an 'I am God' kind of a way about him. He is another one, also, who is handy to have around you if you are busted. He always has the stuff, and ever willing to help any of his fellow travelers in distress. But what did he say about me?"

"Oh, he said that you were the craziest duck that he ever saw; that you would rather stew and fuss over a few old stamps than to play billiards, go to the ball game, or do anything."

"Yes, but while those fellows are wearing out their shoe leather, Doc., and dropping their stuff in such pleasures, I get my pleasure in my stamps. You couldn't hire me to walk round a billiard table hour after hour."

"And you couldn't hire me to either; I would rather fool with stamps too. Besides the pleasure in it, there is more profit. Speaking of Mallory with his plug hat, you probably do business with Morrison, Plummer & Co. Did you ever

see their sundry buyer, Tom Ballard, without a plug hat on?"

"No; and never without a cigar in his mouth, either. There is probably the best posted man in his line in the West. Quick as lightning in his purchases, and knows what he wants in short order. He is a very democratic sort of a fellow, and very approachable, no matter what you have to sell or what you have to say, you can always get an audience with him. Another nice buyer to do business with is Mr. Fred Greene, of Barker & Wheeler Company, of Peoria."

"Yes, I know him. He used to be with Colburn, Birks & Co. I sometimes buy goods of his house. I like them better than anybody I deal with, but freights are against them here."

"Yes, but Mr. Greene is the direct opposite of Tom Ballard in temperament and disposition, though equally as competent. He takes things awful easy and quiet, at the same time gets through with an enormous amount of work, and is found at his labors early and late. In fact, he is the chief executive push of the entire business. You can always get at him no matter how busy he is; and in this respect is unlike many buyers

of the large drug houses who have signs up reading 'No goods bought before 1 P. M.,' or, 'No goods bought on Saturday,' or, 'Only between 10 and 12 A. M. and 2 to 4 P. M.,' etc. To handle Mr. Greene right you must let him have his time, amuse him, tell him a story; but while you're doing it he will turn to his typewriter and dictate a few letters, still listening to you, however; never rattled, never hurried, and always with a pleasant smile. Finally he goes out into the stock room and comes back with a memorandum and, not expecting an order, before you can even get your order book out, he says: 'One gross kidney plasters, three gross bella plasters,' etc., and you go away with a larger order than you expected, and with the impression that he likes you first rate, and that you have found it a pleasure to do business with him. It takes a good deal of tact and business judgment to get round many of these wholesale buyers of large houses. My friend Mr. Medbury, who represents Bauer & Black in the Peoria district, has this talent to a remarkable degree. He came into Mr. Greene's office as a stranger soon after B. & B. started in business, and opened up with a history of his past

life; how many years he had been in the plaster business, the trade he had in Chicago, his delightful family, the merits of his dog, that he was coming to Peoria every sixty days, and the drug trade would know him and would like him, and they would save his orders for him, etc. He talked at such a rate that Mr. Greene put him down as a bore, and when he went away the impression he left was that he was more of a wind-bag than that 'red-whiskered devil that represents Lee.' About sixty days afterward Medbury drops in again, and says: 'You know me this time. When I was here last I gave you an account of myself. Haven't anything to say now except I'll be round Peoria for a couple of days, and will bring you in some business. If you can increase the orders any all right, if not all right. It will be just the same.' It proves he was very politic, and no matter what impression he created at first, he made an impression which turned to his credit afterward, and now he turns in more turnover orders to Barker & Wheeler from Peoria than all the rest of us put together.

“But speaking further of drug buyers: There was a buyer of a wholesale house in Iowa that

every traveling man had it in for. Why this man should act as he did, and slur and turn the boys down so, no one seems to understand. I called on him once, and he asked the price of absorbent cotton in one thousand pound lots. I gave it to him and he said he would have an order if I would come in towards five o'clock. I don't run away from any prospective business, although the train I wanted to catch left about noon. When I got round for my order, he said he found he had everything he wanted, and couldn't give me an order this time. I told him I was disappointed, that I was led to believe he would have some business for me from what he had said, that I had missed my train, etc., to which he made no reply. I found afterward that after I had gone, and that very day, he orders by mail direct to the house, giving my quotations but for less quantity. The next time out there I called at his place of business to wipe up the floor with him, but I was disappointed—he had died the week before."

"It is pretty rough to treat a drummer that way. If it wasn't for you fellows getting round we wouldn't be posted at all in our line; at the

same time we are bored to death sometimes by some cheap outfits that come along here and try to force themselves and their goods onto us. But if there is anything I want I would much prefer to give it to a traveling man than to send it in to the house."

"I think, Doc., that the majority of the trade prefer to do so too. We must expect once in a while, though, to run across a man like this one. The world is made up of all kinds of people. Another unhappy day for a traveling man is to get up at three or four o'clock in the morning in order to make connections with a town, and when you get there, to find one of the two druggists away for a week, and the other, whom you have always sold a good bill to before, say, 'Why weren't you round last week? I needed some goods in your line and Johnson & Johnson's man was here and I gave him an order amounting to about seventy-five dollars' worth.' But salemanship comes into play then, and I generally manage not to get left."

"Yes, I guess you would get some business if anybody could. Almost anyone can get an order out of me if I am in real need of the goods, but it

takes a salesman to sell me when I don't want anything, or only half want anything. A fellow came in here the other day and sold me some chewing gum that I didn't want any more than I wanted so much hay, and it wasn't worth a damn either. He was a smooth one, something like that cigar fellow I was telling you about. His scheme was to introduce his gum by giving a solid silver pitcher with it. You take three dollars and a half's worth of gum, that retails at seven dollars, and he gives away the pitcher, that he said cost him three dollars at wholesale. There it is over there on the soda fountain. Well, his samples looked all right, but you can see the pitcher is one of those fake aluminum ones that department stores sell for sixty-nine cents, and as I say, his gum is rank. I am trying to get rid of it three packages for a nickel, so I won't lose over a dollar and a half on the deal. I don't often get taken in this way, but I believe this fellow was a hypnotist. He sold his blamed old gum and pitcher to every grocery store, restaurant, druggist and confectionery store in town. He even sold it to the saloon trade. Only yesterday one of them was in here with the same gum, want-

ing to sell it for three dollars; that he thought was worth five; and said he bought a ten dollar pitcher for three dollars and a half and the fellow threw in the gum. But you were going to tell me about your great find of stamps in Alabama. I am not busy now, so sit down and tell me about it."

"Well, Doctor, this was one of the best finds that ever came my way, that is in quantity, though the quality wasn't so great."

"No six cent orange proprietaries I suppose, or inverted medallions?"

"Nary a one, but there was some good stuff just the same. A local stamp dealer put me onto it and we divided the proceeds. It came about in this way:

"Several years ago the oldest jobbing drug house in the city decided to go out of the wholesaling of drugs and confine their business exclusively to the manufacture of pharmaceutical preparations. They therefore closed out all of their patent medicines, pills, sundries and the like. The goods in popular demand very soon were sold, but the old timers and uncalled for articles, most of which bore stamps, went slow, and

were on hand when I was down there in February. I knew they had some old stuff in the house, and I also knew that no one could monkey through the stock for stamps, but they were hungry to sell the medicines just the same. My friend the dealer and myself had a council of war over the prospect, and we came to the conclusion that I should go into the store representing myself to be, and in good faith, a buyer from some Chicago house of old patent medicines, and try and make a deal under which I could have the privilege of buying the old stamps separately from the medicine; take a list of the stock and make an offer for it low enough so that they wouldn't take me up. Acting on that plan I entered the store the following morning, and introduced myself as representing the London Chemical & Medicine Co., of New York, London and Chicago and was there to buy up old patents, etc. for cash. That I could buy so I could sell and make a profit. Incidentally I told them this firm also bought, as a separate transaction, the old revenue stamps on such medicines, which were sent to their London office and New York for distribution to collectors.

“Well, they hemmed and hawed around for a while and I was introduced from one to another, till I reached the ‘head push,’ who referred me back to the stock man for him to do with me as he saw fit.

“‘What do you give for old stamps?’ he says, ‘there is a lot of them here.’

“‘That depends on what you have got. The only way I can tell is to see. You give me the freedom of the store, and let me go through with some one and see what there is. I can then tell you just how much I can give you for the stamps, and how much for the medicine.’

“That was satisfactory to him, and we lit a lantern and started in in the basement. Well, the first crack out of the box, Doc., was eighteen boxes of M. A. Simmons’ pills, each having a strip of four of his Iuka, Miss., stamps on, cataloguing two dollars each. There was a catalogue value to start with of one hundred and forty dollars. In fifteen minutes I found scattered through the four floors of the store hundreds and hundreds of dollars worth of stamps, mostly proprietary of the 1871 and 1879 issues of the lower denominations, but a whole lot of sixes and tens

mixed in, though the great bulk of them were the one and two cent 1878, and the one cent proprietary of the first issue, which I did not trouble myself, after the deal was made, to take off. After some parleying, I offered him thirty dollars in cash on the spot for all the old stamps I could find and wanted in the store, and in taking them off I would take a list of the patent medicines, etc., and when through would make a cash offer for them. He accepted it and drew up an agreement and receipt to that effect. I was sharp enough not to specify revenues stamps alone, but made it 'all the old stamps I found or wanted.' I had my eye on a lot of old correspondence on the upper floors, and I wasn't going to let any old Confederate stamps worth one hundred dollars apiece, escape if I could help it.

"Well, sir, I had a job of it for three days. I sweated and sopped and sweated over these old pills and stuff, opening boxes and barrels and old letters and files and receipts and checks for anything and everything that looked like stamps. The boys in the store wondered what in the dickens could I do with so many, but I turned a deaf ear to everybody, and sopped away. At

noon and night I would take a big load of them over to my partner, and he would wash them and sort them over. The third day I reached the roof and ripped open a box of old letters, and the first grab revealed a pair of five cent Nashville on the cover. A colored man was round eyeing me, and I asked him if he wanted to earn a dollar. 'I reckon I do, Cap.,' he said. 'Stay right with me then and help me sort out these old letters.' I was afraid, Doctor, I wouldn't get through, as I had to leave the next day for the North. Well, by five o'clock we had gone through everything in sight, and the result of the whole summed up as follows:

CONFEDERATE AND POSTAGE.

2	pairs on covers, 5c Nashville, cataloguing....	\$ 80.00
180	10c light blue Confederate, general issues....	18.00
154	5c pale blue, " " " catal'g	15.40
2	5c Knoxville, " " "	40.00
107	10c common, "	10.70
7	3c U. S., wide die, 1853, cataloguing..	84.00
87	1853 U. S., die I.	21.75

MEDICINES AND PROPRIETARIES.

5480	2c B. & G. proprietary, on checks.....	548 00
864	4c " "	33.56
280	3c " "	140.00
70	6c " "	105.00
84	10c " "	210.00
26	6c 1878, violet.....	39.00

490	3c 1st issue.....	49.00
644	4c 1st issue.....	98 80
	M A Simmons stamps.....	148.50
90	C. E. Hull, on pink.....	67.50
42	Father Matthew.....	31.56
227	Fleming Brothers, old.....	227.00
18	Seabury & Johnson.....	22.50
160	Holman's liver pad.....	40.00

and a whole raft of Scovilles, Harters, J. F. Henrys, Pierces, Flanders, etc., and other proprietaries and odds and ends making a grand total of \$2,380.00. In fact, I left behind thousands of stamps cataloguing from one to five cents each, that I didn't think it worth my time to bother with. Now dividing this sum by two and deducting the cost to me of fifteen dollars, plus the one dollar paid the coon for helping me, left a net cash profit for the three days' work, figuring the value of the stamps at half catalogue, at close to six hundred dollars. My time of course, being of no value, as the firm I travel for pays for that."

"I guess I'll sell out my drug business and travel on the road. You don't know of anyone fool enough to buy out a drug store at this time do you? If you do, let me know. I'll travel for any house who will pay my expenses, and you

will not be the only one hunting for stamps. I bet I'll land a lot of six cent orange proprietaries in my finds, and give you a hard run for your money. Two hundred dollars a day sopping off stamps; but what did you make out of the patent medicines? Six hundred dollars too?"

“No, Doc., my offer of one hundred dollars for the lot was stubbornly refused, but they had no kick coming. They were thirty dollars ahead anyhow, besides having the honor of doing business with the ‘London Chemical & Medicine Company of London, New York and Chicago.’”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE INDIANA DRUG STORE.

“I haven’t seen you for a long time. You must have been digging for stamps and letting the plaster business slide. Where have you been since you were here last?”

“Down among the hoboes of Indiana, Doc., along the banks of the Wabash, far away, and I have made some rich strikes since I saw you last. The first town I struck after leaving Chicago was Elkhart. A number of local stamp fiends had ransacked the principal stores several times, but they failed to find in the oldest store in town eight boxes of female pills, each having a four cent playing card stamp cataloguing ten dollars. There were a dozen boxes of the pills all told, but four of them had the regulation four cent proprietary, worth about three cents. The custom house had probably run out of the regular stamps, and filled in with the playing card variety, which was only issued in small quantities, and is consequently quite rare. I also found in the same store forty-eight four cent proprietary half perforated, cata-

loguing at three dollars each, but listed too high, it not being worth over fifty cents. Also seven Harter's, on pink, cataloguing one dollar each, and a lot of cheaper stuff, the whole layout worth on the market seventy-five dollars at least. The druggist seemed highly pleased at my magnanimous offer of two dollars for the bunch. He said it was like finding money for *him*, and it was more than he had made that morning. I next struck the town of South Bend. This is a good business place, and I made in one of the corner stores a peculiar and unexpected find. The druggist had some idea of the value of medicine stamps, and I saw at once that I couldn't get thirty-five dollars for one dollar here, but he gave me permission to look over his stock and make him an offer for what I found. Well, I went back that night and dug pretty carefully, but outside of a few six cent green proprietaries, and a half a dozen four cent United States Proprietary Co. there was hardly anything worth taking off. He refused my dollar offer, but wanted to know what I would give for a lot of unused proprietary stamps. He trotted them out and spread before my astonished eyes eighty two cent brown rou-

letted, perfect and original gum, like those I missed, as I told you, in Olney, cataloguing five dollars each, and a good stamp. I thought from what he had previously said that he must have known the value of them, but I wasn't going to anticipate it. I simply replied that I would give him two cents a piece for them, or three dollars for the whole lot, including the medicine stamps. 'All right,' he said 'take them away.' I was knocked nearly off my feet, Doc.; I thought of course, he would say that the stamps were worth fifty times that amount, but he made the mistake many have done, of not knowing the difference between the perforated one, which isn't worth a dollar a hundred, and the rouletted, which is one of the best of all of the regular proprietaries, and in this condition worth fully three dollars and a half. The next town I struck was Fort Wayne, and two ten cent black and green, cataloguing two dollars and a half each, for which I had to pay twenty-five cents, was all this place landed for me. The town was too large. In the cities of this size the druggists generally get rid of their old stock, and keep it more up to date than the small country places, where some of them never throw away

anything, no matter how old it is, even if the pills, etc., are all dried up and of no earthly good as a medicine. Besides, in a large city stamp fiends are more in evidence, and the drug stores at this time have been overhauled for stamps time and time again.

“From Fort Wayne I went south on the Wabash. In Huntington there is an old drug store with stock so old some of it was there before the stamp tax was enacted. While waiting to get the attention of the proprietor a lady came in and asked for a bottle of Osgood’s India Chologog. The druggist after some search found a bottle, and while he was wrapping it up I noticed a six cent orange stamp on it, and asked the lady if she didn’t want the revenue stamp I would like it for my ‘little boy (?)’ who was making a collection. She gave it to me at once, and would take no pay for it; but it wasn’t the proprietary, the long-looked-for stamp, Doc., but the ‘inland exchange’ variety, of no particular value. Still it gave me encouragement to think that there might be good stuff in the store, and I was not mistaken. For a hypodermic syringe, costing me fifty cents, the apothecary was glad to let me have what stamps

I wanted, which amounted to a catalogue value of nearly one hundred dollars, and included two Talcott's on pink, a rare stamp, worth more than catalogue price. It was here I met with an experience that is the lot of most stamp hunters. At the postoffice I learned of an old farmer who had a lot of war envelopes with stamps that he would sell cheap. I hunted him up, and from a whole lot of cheap stuff found three wide die, U. S. envelopes of 1855, cataloguing twelve dollars each. He only asked three dollars for the lot. Soon after a fellow calling himself a brother of the other one came in with twice as many stamps, but of the commonest kind, and wanted five dollars for his. It seemed almost impossible for me to make him understand that his stamps were of no value. He couldn't see how I could pay three dollars for not half so many, but I finally gave him a dollar for half what he had, to keep peace in the family, and threw them away after he had gone.

“From here I swung over to Wabash. There I was completely left. The druggist was an old skin-flint and up to stamp fiends, and when I approached the subject he asked me what I gave for

'em. From the outward appearance of things I thought I could safely risk two dollars for the privilege of going through and taking off what I wanted, which he accepted. After sweating and digging an hour or so, I found everything with the stamp gone of any worth, and only cheap, worthless truck remained. I correctly surmised that there had been other fiends there before me, for the druggist said as I was leaving that there was a chap along there last week who gave him a dollar for what he wanted, and the next son of a gun that came into his store for stamps he would soak for three dollars."

"That's pretty good. It reminds me of a fellow in here since you were around. He wanted to look for stamps, but I told him between you and myself, if he found anything worth anything he could have it. But I made some nice trades with him. He does not collect match and medicine, only postage, and I gave him a fifteen cent 1869, for medicine stamps cataloguing fifteen dollars, that I didn't have in my collection. I am getting along finely with it. As you suggested, I sent a lot of duplicates to the exchange department of the American Philatelic Association, and

am exchanging a good deal with collectors all over the country. If you haven't disposed of that Talcott pink, I would like a copy."

"I sold one of them, Doc., to a New York collector, but the other I'll trade or sell to you. But the find of all in Indiana was in Terre Haute, and was another great surprise. Soon after the stamp tax went into effect, a Mr. Barr doing business in Terre Haute under the name of T. H. Barr & Co., took advantage of the clause allowing private dies and had his 'phiz' etc., engraved on a stamp approved by the government. They used it on their fever and ague cure, a dollar remedy, and a medicine in those days having a very large sale, but confined almost exclusively to territory comprising Indiana and the adjoining states. Previous to this trip I have found a few of these stamps which are catalogued by Scott at a dollar, and being only on one kind of paper, is a desirable one and worth fully fifty cents each; while in Terre Haute I thought of this stamp, and on ferreting out the old firm found that Mr. Barr had died many years ago, and the firm had gone out of business. But Mr. Barr's brother-in-law, in the retail drug business there, told me that the

stock of medicine which he believed was stamped went into the hands of E. H. Bindly & Co., wholesale druggists of that city. I did not dwell long hunting up Mr. Bindly, and asked him if he had this stuff.

“ ‘Yes,’ he said, ‘we have a lot of it; what will you give for it?’

“ ‘Oh,’ I replied, ‘I don’t want the medicine, but the old revenue stamp used on the article interests me.’

“ ‘We could not bother taking them off for you,’ said the druggist; ‘the medicine has been here for a good many years, and I would sell that to you cheap.’

“ ‘But I don’t want something for nothing,’ I insisted. ‘Find out how many stamps you have and I’ll make an offer. If satisfactory, well and good. If not, all right.’

“ ‘Well, the druggist sent a boy upstairs to see how many they had and reported there were 129 packages. I then offered a few cents each for the lot, more than I need have offered if I had known that the 129 packages were 129 dozen or over 1500 of the stamps. But such was the case, and in spotless condition, they all being underneath

the outside wrapper, and as clean and perfect as when the Barr Co. placed them on there, over twenty years ago. Think of it, 1500 stamps cataloguing so many dollars, and worth at least seven hundred and fifty dollars. I have never made six hundred dollars any neater and cleaner than that, and I have found out since that I could have bought the whole business, medicine and all, for less money than I paid for the stamps. But wasn't I lucky, Doc?"

"I should say you *were* lucky. I think I'll sell our my drug store the first offer I get, and go hunting medicine stamps through the country. I don't make that clear money out of this place in six months. Don't you want to trade jobs?"

"Not yet. I wouldn't walk round in the narrow confines of a store, even if there was more money in it. Life is too short. Well, from Terre Haute I swung over into Illinois to Paris. Here a druggist had evidently discovered the value of some medicine stamps, for my offer of two dollars for a lot he had was received with laughter and derision. He opened up a Scott's catalogue, and I departed without saying a word. When anyone springs anything like that on me,

Doc., I generally have to throw up my hands. It is a sad thought that there are some druggists who will take advantage of a stamp hunter in that way, but such is the case.

“The next druggist felt almost insulted at my tendering him a dollar for stamps found in his stock, worth about ten dollars. ‘They are not worth anything, and I don’t want to take any money for them,’ said he. I didn’t argue the matter. The next place where I found anything of value was in Bloomington, Ill., and I missed it by not being more careful. The wholesale druggist of the town had read somewhere about old patent medicines stamps being of value, and when I asked about old stamps, he was ready for me with a whole box full. But he knew too much—I couldn’t trade. Among other stamps I noticed a stack of nearly three hundred three cent orange proprietaries, but he wanted three cents apiece for them. If I had taken him up, I would have made several hundred dollars, for only a dozen or more copies on top were the common perforated stamps; the balance were rouletted, catalogued three dollars each, but I didn’t know that and only discovered it the other day. I cannot understand how I

could make such a mistake in not looking all through the pile, but from what he said about catalogues, etc., I took it for granted he knew what he had. He didn't, however, till some local collector put him onto it. It was then our friend Gurley heard that he had these stamps, but he was too late, too. His price had gone up from three cents to three dollars each.

“Speaking of this, Doctor, reminds me of a stamp collection in Bloomington that should be classified among the noted ones of the world. At least it probably cannot be matched. It consists of an old German album over thirty years old, with 511 different varieties of rare and common stamps, and every one of them counterfeit. Some of them were catalogued four cents and some as high as seventeen hundred dollars, whose originals are the rarest of the rare. Many were used or apparently used with forged postmarks and cancellations. You hear of counterfeit specimens of rare stamps cropping out every once in a while but for a whole album full, without a genuine one among them, it is a philatelic curiosity to say the least. The collection belongs to Mrs. W. D. Lee, who, under her maiden name, Belle Plumb,

has quite a business house in Bloomington, dealing in artists' and painters' supplies. She also owns a very fine general collections of stamps, and this old German album drifted in one day and was purchased for a trifle."

CHAPTER XV.

THE COUNTRY POSTOFFICE.

“A measly looking kind of a ‘Skate’ came by here last week and filled my doctors full of cheap stuff, so I am afraid my order will be a little light this trip, but I’ll probably scare up something. How is the stamp business? Haven’t found any more 1,500 stamps worth a dollar a piece have you?”

“No, Doc., my finds since I was here last have not been so many or so valuable. Luck seems to have been with the other fellow. I will tell you how I missed it after I have seen your competitors. In the meantime look over your stock and see if you can’t scare up a fair order. Business has been a little shy also, lately.”

“All right, come in again after dinner, and I’ll look it up.”

* * * * *

“I have been calling the Mekeels down here in St. Louis, Doctor, first-class, monumental liars. They advertised some time ago unused specimens of the ninety cent 1869 issue of postage stamps

at thirty dollars each, stating they were found in a small Illinois county postoffice. Now, as a matter of fact, I have visited about every postoffice in Illinois, and to suppose I would have missed anything so good as a stamp like that is absurd; but I evidently slipped up on Carbondale down here in Jackson County. The facts are, thirty of these rare stamps, worth over one thousand dollars, were shifted from one postmaster to another for over twenty-five years, and untabbed and forgotten were there a few months ago. But the bright-eyed little post clerk gave me the marble heart and said there wasn't a thing in the office dating back before the Columbian stamps. At the same time, I had hardly left the town when a little boy, not over twelve years old, made the discovery that these thirty ninety cent stamps were there. He had some idea of their value, and was on pins and needles how he should get the twenty-seven dollars necessary to buy the stamps. His older brother finally let him have the money, on his promise to return it in ten days with five dollars interest. The stamps were in his possession in a few minutes, and he at once boarded the train for St. Louis and made for the

Standard Stamp Company in Nicholson Place. He expected to get about a hundred dollars for the lot, but the stamp man seemed so eager to pay him two hundred dollars for them that the boy was sharp enough to first see what the Mekeels would do, and went out. On arriving at the Mekeel establishment he told his story, and said that three hundred dollars, and not a cent less, would buy the stamps."

"Well, Doc., he reached home that night with the three hundred dollars in his fist, and now every postoffice within a radius of one hundred miles of Jackson County has had some one from Carbondale asking for ninety cent stamps with a picture of Lincoln on it. One might search every postoffice in the United States and not find another stamp like that. How so many ninety cent stamps, so rarely used even in the largest cities, got into an office of a small town and lay there undisturbed for a quarter of a century, is one of the mysteries no one can explain.

"Yes, I have been a little on the 'hog train' in my hunt for stamps lately. I had another unhappy experience and disappointment in Flora, Ill. The day clerk in the leading store while

talking stamps, said his father was running a drug store in a little cross road town ten miles from there, and when he was there last he noticed a long green stamp on an old demijohn in the back room. He remembered it was a dollar value and had Washington's head on it. Its description tallied exactly with the one dollar proprietary, worth in the neighborhood of one hundred dollars, and I did not dwell long talking about it. I dropped my grip on the spot, jumped onto a bicycle and struck off across the country as fast as I could pedal.

“‘You're to late,’ the old man said, ‘why wasn't you round last week? There was a fellow in here wanting a lot of turpentine and I filled up that old demijohn with it and scraped the old label off.’”

“That was hard luck for a fact, but you can't expect to always have things come your way. I suppose there are lots of old stamps of value still found in these country postoffices? Our postmaster here only the other day let me have a block of eight fifteen cent yellow that he didn't know he had.”

“Yes, that is the way it is, Doc. The major-

ity of postmasters in the smaller places don't know the character of these stamps, and will put a caller off, saying he has nothing, when in fact he might have some rare ones buried back somewhere in the office. I am not interested so much in postage stamps, but unless I am in a great hurry I manage to tackle the postoffice before I leave town. Some of these hobo postmasters are characters and no mistake. Many are so ignorant they can't understand what I want with stamps issued twenty years ago, when the present issue will answer for postage just as well. One old duffer down here in one of the small river towns has his postoffice in with the general store, where everything is kept from a pulpit down to a hay rack, and from a spool of thread up to a baby carriage—one of those typical country stores with the stove in the center, around which you can always find the oldest inhabitant and two or three of the other village standbys and old-timers, swapping stories and discussing politics, the crop prospects, etc., with an 'I deau vum,' and 'I tell yeau,' as Dr. Holmes puts it. Well, I walked into the place a short time ago and asked the old chap with circular saw whiskers and cut

'frowsy' like round under the neck and ears, if he had any obsolete stamps in his office. 'What do you mean—postage stamp?' asked the old fellow. 'Yes, but those issued previous to 1880' 'I reckon not, but I'll see. What do you want to do with 'em?'

" 'I use them to trade with the Czar of Russia. He wants all these old stamps of the United States he can get, and he sends me Russian stamps for my little boy who is making a collection.'

" 'See here, young fellow, if you are a government officer wanting to look through my office spit it out, and show your authority, but don't try and work any bunco business on me. I am not so green as I look,' he replied.

" 'Now don't get off your knocker, my dear sir,' I said, I am only a traveling man gathering up these old stamps for collectors and that is all there is to it. I will look through your stock of stamps and if I find anything I want, I'll pay you for them, and if there isn't anything, why, there is no harm done.'

" 'No you don't,' the old man answered, 'I am kinder suspicious of you, any how. If you want some postage stamps I'll sell them to you, but to

prowl through my government property, I'll not allow you or any other man to do it.'

“Well, I had to bring in a friend in the town to explain matters to him, but after all I didn't find anything of any value, and the old chap still wonders to what possible use I could put any of his stamps, except for postage. But that is the way many of them think. Our friend Gurley wrote to a cross roads country postoffice out here in the West somewhere, enclosing a money order for twenty dollars, and asking for certain stamps. The money was returned, stating: ‘I don't think i have no rite to sele stamps away. This post offis is for peple livin' here. If you ain't got no offis in your town where you can buy stamps, rite to the goverment.’

“The dense ignorance of some people in this age of advanced civilization is very amusing. An old chap right here in Illinois flew up in the air in a postoffice one day and vowed, ‘It is downright robbery how this government is doing with us poor people. I read to-day that all it costs to make postage stamps is eleven cents a thousand, and here I have to pay two cents apiece for 'em—it is a blamed outrage.’

“But the postoffices, Doctor, have been written to so much and so many have called for any possible stamps of the old issues, that seldom nowadays is anything found of great rarity. I had quite an experience with a postoffice in a country town up here in the northern part of the state. I had heard that they had twenty thirty cent black United States postage, 1879, worth about one dollar each, but that the postmaster wouldn't sell them. I found that to be true. He said he wouldn't sell them; he didn't have to sell them.

“‘How is it you refuse my money for stamps? Aren't you here for that purpose?’

“‘That may be, but these stamps are mine and I don't sell them to anybody,’ he replied.

“I learned at the hotel that the old man's pretty daughter was there alone during the noon hour, and I might get her to let me have them. Now I am not so much with the ladies, at the same time not so very slow either when occasion arises. I found out her hobby was collecting autographs, and I happened to have with me an old English letter from some one no one ever heard of probably, but dated back twenty years. So I struck a barber shop, trimmed up my whiskers, changed

ends with my cuffs and spruced up, Doc., altogether in pretty fair shape. On entering the office, there she was, with golden hair and soft brown eyes. I asked for a postal card, and then with the most engaging smile and winning ways that I was capable of, said: 'I am very pleased to meet you, Miss Barnes. I have heard of you a good deal.'

" 'But I don't think I know you, sir,' she says, with manner not so engaging.

" 'Possibly not, but I know of you so well as having a very fine and rare collection of distinguished autographs, that you must pardon me. I am a stamp hunter myself, and oftentimes get some rare letters, and as I only want the stamps the letter is of really no use. Now here is one I think is very rare, signed by a noted member of the English Parliament, and you are welcome to it, if you like.'

" 'Oh, thank you sir, you are very kind indeed,' this time beaming with smiles.

" 'I suppose you haven't anything around the office in stamps that would interest me,' I then asked her.

“ ‘I don’t think so, unless it is the Columbians, and you probably have those.’

“ ‘Yes, those I don’t care for. Perhaps if I don’t intrude, and if you will allow me, I’ll step in behind and look over what you have. Possibly there may be some I would like to get.’

“ ‘Certainly, step right in.’

“ ‘Well, Doc., I went through the stock of stamps and turned up the thirty cent black. ‘I would like to buy these’, I said, ‘very much.’

“ ‘I am afraid father wants those; he said something about keeping them, but he can get some more probably. I’ll let you have them,’ she smilingly answered; and I left with the stamps and a cordial invitation to call again and stay longer.

“ ‘The only way to do to be sure of good finds in post offices is by some means or other get action on the stamps yourself, and see exactly what they have.

“ ‘Hunting for many of these stamps, however, is like the fellow going out for bear. He didn’t get any, but he saw a man who said he had seen some bear’s tracks. That is about as near as I come to many of the stamps I want. I find oth-

ers who have got them or seen or heard of them, but I don't seem to ever get sight of them. I missed it in Mt. Carroll, Ill., the other day. I had discovered about forty dollars' worth of desirable match and medicine stamps in a drug store, but being dinner time and having had rather a weak breakfast, I concluded to feed first and sponge the stamps off afterwards; but on my return found my friend, the druggist, jumping up and down waving a Scott's catalogue in his fist, and the stamps that wouldn't have cost me over a dollar if I had let my dinner slide for an hour or so, hit my pocket book for a five dollar bill."

"Your dinner cost you then, four dollars and a half, probably."

"Yes, that's right. When you ever find anything good in stamps, stay with them till you get 'em, Doc."

"That's so. A fellow was in here last week after stamps—about the tenth one in the last six months. I didn't do him any good except to make a trade, out of which I made five dollars."

"Yes, a good deal of this stamp business is, anyhow, like the fellow selling his yellow dog for

twenty dollars. He didn't get the money but two bitch pups worth ten dollars apiece.

"But speaking of dogs, Doc., reminds me of an old girl of mine I had years ago in Chicago. She was a stamp fiend too, and was an expensive luxury for me in those days, and finally nothing would satisfy her but a nice fifteen dollar dog. I can't for the life of me at this time understand, Doc., how I could spend five dollars for carriages, six dollars for theater tickets, suppers, flowers, etc., and fifteen dollars for dogs on a salary of eight dollars a week, and pay board; but the saddest thought is, I didn't get the girl after all."

"That was real sad; I am sorry for you, but what became of the dog? If I had it, I might trade it off for more stamps."

"I don't know; I only wish I had my fifteen dollars back.

" 'Tis sweet to love,
But oh, how bitter
To love a girl
And then not git her."

"Yes, old man, but you're better off than some. The old saying also is, you know, 'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.'"

“Yes, that’s true, Doc., and I might have got tired after a while, dog and all. Wasn’t it Solomon, or was it Moses, who got tired of love?”

“It was Solomon, I reckon, where he said, ‘Comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love.’”

“It is too bad he wasn’t a stamp collector. They would be more of a comfort to him than apples. But I must hurry, Doctor. You have your order all written out, have you? All right.”

“It isn’t so much as I would like. Next time I’ll have a larger order for you, but for mercy’s sake, don’t pay any more fifteen dollars for dogs. There are plenty round town here for fifty cents that ought to please any girl.”

CHAPTER XVI.

DOWN IN "EGYPT."

"Your hotels are improving down here in 'Egypt,' Doctor."

"Yes, I understand they are. There was a time when the sheets had to be used for table cloths during the day, but now I am told they have sheets on the bed, as well as cloths for the table."

"Yes, that's so; and I notice they have had wooden floors put in since I was here last in Punkville, but the knots in the mattress still stick out pretty sharp, Doc., and the same mucilaginous towels and cast iron soap are still here."

"Yes, but you expect too much. You can't have sheets on the bed, magnolia blossom soap and fringed end towels all at once. Give us time. But speaking of hotels reminds me of old man Mitchell. Do you know him? I don't know as he is much on stamps, but he is a humming bird on coins."

“Do I know him? Well, I guess yes. Every druggist in the United States, and almost every body else knows him, his diamonds and his plasters. He is one of the characters of the day. Drinks water through a glass tube so he won't wet his mustache.”

“Yes, that's the same fellow. Well, he came in here last summer, dressed as usual with an eight dollar suit of clothes and carrying from five to six thousand dollars worth of diamonds and coins about his person. His shirt had not been laundered for at least a month, but the usual diamond stud, as big as a walnut, loomed out just the same, like a light house at sea. He asked for a drink of water, and taking out the glass tube you speak about, nearly a foot long, drinks through it, wipes it on his handkerchief, and then of all the cussing on our hotel here, your feeble protests are like a gentle zephyr, side of a cyclone. I don't know what they did to him over there, but he said the bugs would have thrown him out of the window if the cockroaches hadn't come in and taken his side and killed the bed bugs. Said his breakfast consisted of sole leather the proprietor called fried liver. On opening the eggs they

walked away from him. You could drive nails with the bread, and sitting at the further end of the table the coffee was so weak it would never have reached him if it had not been for the strength of the butter. After he had cussed around a while at that rate, he went out into a grocery store around the corner and bought some crackers and cheese. He then stopped into the bank opposite and undid his wealth and spread it out in the window. If you know what that man carries you will wonder as everyone else, that some one has not waylaid him long before and hit him over the head. He must live a charmed life. Well, every pocket had something; that noted chain of his of rare twenty dollar gold pieces, 1804 dollar, etc., came first. He then made a pile of smaller gold pieces, rare silver coins, diamonds, etc., etc., and there he sat, with nearly the whole town looking at him, eating his crackers and cheese. You know for yourself what he carries, and our unprejudiced jeweler here next door places the conservative estimate of at least five thousand dollars as the cash value of the stuff that man carries with him around the country."

“But I don’t wonder, Doc., at his kicking too, on the hotel here. In this part of the state they are the worst in all my travels, and from a piece of rubber tire found in my hash down here in Grayville I should judge that the bicycle has indeed supplanted the horse, at least here in Illinois. It is in these rank and tough places, however, where I make my best finds in stamps, which fully compensates for the shyness of the grub.”

“There is some comfort in it then, after all; but what have you got hold of lately? I am still hungry for a six cent orange proprietary. Why don’t you uncover something like that in your finds?”

“Yes, Doc., why don’t I? Why doesn’t anybody else find them? They are not to be had. Still, I don’t give up hope yet. I may surprise you some day with a great find of these stamps.”

“I hope so, I want one of them, and I don’t know where I can get one for less than thirty-five dollars, do you?”

“No, it takes that sum to procure a perfect specimen, but I know where they are placed and you will hear from me the first one after landing any. I came so near and yet so far from one

the other day in Highland, Ill. I took everything I could see of any account in an old drug store there, but left a lot of pills with two three cent green proprietaries on them. What do you think? A local collector in the dry goods business a few doors away looked through after me, found these boxes of pills, and the last of the lot, that I did not see, contained a beautiful specimen of this rare stamp, which he obtained for twenty-five cents! I feel like the farmer who looked back over the hill and found his load of potatoes had slid out through the open tail board. The English language wasn't strong enough to express my feelings."

"Why in thunder didn't you look more carefully? You are the greatest fellow I ever heard of for just being 'too late' or just 'missing things.'"

"But like George Washington, Doc., history fails to furnish another instance like his for daring and determination, when on that memorable Christmas Eve, with his small army of half starved, bare-legged and bare-footed soldiers, with their pants out at the seat—if they had any pants—he crossed the Delaware and captured the

Hessians. He lost more battles than he ever won, but he organized victory out of defeat and triumphed in the end. He was determined and I am like him in that respect. I do not grumble, I do not murmur, I do not repine, and although there may be some doubt of my standing up close to him on veracity, I'll get there after a while on persistency and determination in the hunt for these stamps."

"I hope so. I now see this Spanish war will bring out more revenue stamps, re-enacting the laws of the 'sixties."

"Yes, I notice it. It ought to increase the value of the old ones by making many new collectors, and it no doubt will. Since I have seen you last I have made some pretty good finds just the same and right down in this section of the state. Do you know where Willow Hill is?"

"I guess I do. I would be ashamed to die in that place. I was there in the 'seventies and if the inhabitants haven't learned a great deal since, they probably don't know the civil war is over yet, and about ten years from now they will know who Dewey and Sampson are. The drug stocks are old enough to have stamps and whiskers too.

How did you get there? Did you ride on the railroad or drive over from Robinson?"

"I rode on the railroad, Doc., but the next time I guess I'll walk. I'll get there quicker. Of all the railroads in the country that Indiana and Illinois Southern is the one that ought to go down in history like Dewey and Hobson."

"That's so—it is a corker and no mistake. One day I was visiting my old home and thought I would go over to Effingham, about twenty-five miles, and come back in the evening. It rained soon after I started, and the roof of the car leaked so every passenger had his umbrella up. After a while the train stopped and I asked a traveling man who was looking out of the window what was the trouble, and he said there were a lot of cattle ahead of us. In a few minutes the train started and went along a half an hour, making fully three miles, when it stopped again. The traveling man looked out and I asked him, 'What's up now?' and he said, 'They have caught up again with those cattle.' It took me nearly four hours to make twenty-five miles, and I was all day getting back. The road ahead of you looks as if an earthquake had struck the country, the rails were

so warped and twisted. Once the train seemed to go real smooth, comparatively, and I asked the conductor, 'What have you been doing right here, putting down new rails, or why do we ride so easily?'

"'No, we are off the track now,' he said."

"'Yes, down here in 'Egypt,' as they call it, Doc., in Chicago, bum hotels are not the only things on the bum; even doctors offices and drug stores are twenty years behind the times. Down here in Carmi on the Big Four road, lives a physician whose office reminds one of the poem, 'Bachelors' Hall,'—'ashes and praty-skins kiver the floor.' I don't believe the place was ever swept out; his instruments, surgical dressings, medicines and office paraphernalia are scattered around on the shelves and the floor and the table and every place, and the doctor himself reflects the condition of his office. Uncouth, unkempt and unclean, but that fellow does the business just the same, and people for miles around, even in other counties, come to him for treatment and advice. I called on him at the suggestion of a druggist, to see if there was anything in our line he wanted. From sizing up the place I did not

expect much of an order, but the old chap didn't let up on ordering goods till I went through the whole catalogue, and it resulted in an order larger than all the rest in the place put together. No, you can't tell by the looks of a toad how far he can jump, and this physician probably prefers to be king among the hogs than hog among the kings. But I was going to tell you about my stamp finds, Doc., here in 'Egypt,' and I have found my very best stamps in these hobo places. In a drug store in this town of Willow Hill, where you were, I made a find that I didn't know was worth much till a week later. I had given the druggist seventy-five cents, his own price, for what few medicine stamps I found in his store, although they did not catalogue over seven dollars and not all in the best condition, when he asked if old postage stamps were any good. 'Sometimes,' I said, 'what have you got?'

"'Oh, I don't know,' he says. 'My brother had a habit of keeping all his old correspondence, and there is an old trunk upstairs filled full of old letters.'

"Well, he went up and got them down, and I spent an hour looking over the lot, and selected

about twenty stamps in all, for which a dollar and a half seemed to satisfy him very much. 'You're a liberal kind of a chap,' he said. 'There was a fellow along here last summer who gave me only fifty cents for twice as many.'

"That accounted for so many common stamps left in the trunk, but I didn't say anything, and looking carefully over the lot last week, I discovered two copies of Scott's No. 723, catalogued at fifty dollars each, that the other fellow overlooked, too.

"While rooting through the other drug store in the place, I made a find also."

"What one was it, next to the postoffice?"

"Yes, sir."

"That was my old place. There was a lot of old stamps there when I left, but you and these other hunters must have got them all, as I didn't find anything when I was down there last."

"But I didn't get very much, and the druggist was very much taken back when I voluntarily offered him one dollar for five ten cent black and green proprietaries, cataloguing twelve dollars and a half, and one ten cent 1878, cataloguing fifteen dollars. 'I didn't know there was a premium on

'em,' says he. 'I know some coins are rare, but I don't know who would pay anything for old stamps; no value to them, but I reckon you wouldn't give me a whole dollar if they wa'n't worth that to yer.'

"He guessed all right then, Doc; I am not much in the habit of paying out good money, just to spend it for nothing. But talk about your hotel here. I don't know as Mitchell ever landed in a town called Newton, but they only charge one dollar a day, and my conscience reasons out to me to put down three dollars on my expense book. It was worth two dollars to eat the blamed stuff; and when I asked for a toothpick, the Dutch proprietor said, 'I did haf some, but dem dam fellers dat stop here took 'em all away.'"

"You're onto your job all right, all right. You traveling men always make up these things, working in an overcoat and a suit of clothes or your expense account, etc. How do you manage to do it without the firm seeing it or knowing it? It's a mystery to me."

"That is one of the ways of trade. It is what is called 'diplomacy,' Doc. I was traveling for a house a number of years ago, who were very

particular about itemizing each expense, so I put down in the daily expense book: 'Shave fifteen cents; news ten cents; bath twenty-five cents,' etc. The first of the month came round, and the sales manager wrote me that the house did not allow expenses for shaves, baths, and the like. The next month it wasn't down on the book, at least they didn't see it on the book, but it was there just the same. Instead of putting down two dollars or two dollars and a half for hotel bill, I made it cost three dollars, and worked in a shampoo and a haircut onto 'em also. One time I had been on a whirl in Kansas City to an extent that I was about twenty dollars shy on my account, and how to work this in on my expenses was a problem. I finally solved it, however, by leaving my trunk behind and toting another grip, and fifty cents to seventy-five cents baggage transfer went down each day on my book, while my trunk, in fact, was left behind for four or five weeks. This putting down fifty cents 'bus fare every day is another great act of working in odds and ends of necessary expenses. Most of the hotels in my territory have either free 'buses, or are within reach of a street car, or within a

block or two from the depot. I put down fifty cents for 'bus fare in Cairo, Illinois, once, and the firm wrote me asking where the Halliday House had moved to; that when the writer was out there last fall, the hotel was right next to the depot. I wrote them that I did not know where the hotel was, and the hack driver was so eager to earn his fare, he fooled me and drove me five or six blocks around the city and then back again.

“But after all, Doc., business is what is wanted, and the expense account is never questioned if orders are coming in large enough and fast enough to warrant it. Every conscientious traveler has legitimate expenses that are impossible always to think of and get down, and no house will ever question a reasonable amount for the total expenses. One of our Hebrew brethren was out quite a while without being heard from. Finally his expense account came in, with an elaborate drawing of how he made the territory from day to day. The firm wrote him like this: ‘We have received your illustrated route list. It is very pretty, but please send us no more maps; we have all the maps we want. What we want is orders. We notice in your expense ac-

count a charge of eleven dollars for a horse and buggy; where is the horse, and what have you done with the buggy? We also notice a charge of six dollars for billiards. Please buy no more billiards for us. We have no use for them in the clothing business.' "

"He beats you, doesn't he? Well, I suppose, as you say, orders talk. Well, it is late, and being the first of the month, I have my books yet to make out. I suppose you expect an order from me. Well, let's see. Put down—

$\frac{1}{2}$ gross bella plasters,
 1 box Poorman's plasters,
 $\frac{1}{2}$ gross court, on silk,
 10 lbs. cotton in lbs.,
 5 " " " $\frac{1}{4}$'s,
 5 " " " oz.

Cross that out in quarters. I find I have five pounds back underneath the show case. The physicians seem to be stuck on J. & J.'s gauze, but I can get in Lee's all right. I want only about five 5 yds. cor. sublimate. I guess that's all."

"How about corn plasters?"

"I can't seem to sell anything but Sarg's corn

plasters. A fellow came along here a while ago and gave a lot of free samples to our shoe men to distribute, and it has made quite a demand for it."

"It's a good thing, too. If I am not mistaken, Doctor, we make it for those people."

"It's all right, anyhow. That's all. Send it through Barker & Wheeler, Peoria. Keep a-digging for six cent orange proprietaries."

CHAPTER XVII.

A STUDY IN HUMAN NATURE.

“I suppose in your travels you find many cranks among us druggists too. The business is what makes us so. The narrow confinement, long hours, small profits, excessive and unwarranted taxation, cut prices, etc., place the pharmacist in rather an unenviable position at the present time.”

“Yes, I guess that’s true, Doctor. There was a time when the province of a druggist was to dispense prescriptions, but nowadays his store has got down to a regular accommodation shop—but speaking of characters among druggists, have you ever heard of John Denslow of St. Joseph, Mo.”

“No, I don’t think I have.”

“Well, he is one of the characters of the trade, but a right good fellow, too. He is one of the few druggists who is an expert salesman as well as a competent pharmacist. Anyone can wrap a piece of paper and a string around a patent med-

icine and hand it out when called for, but when a bald-headed chap comes in and wants a razor strop which you haven't got, it takes a salesman to satisfy him with a fine tooth comb."

"That's so."

"John is this kind of a chap. If anyone came into his store with money to spend, he would manage to get the coin anyhow, and find something to please the customer. He wasn't like the Conrad Mercantile Company in the palmy days of Buffalo, Wyoming. I was out there at the time and one day a fellow came in and wanted a nickel's worth of cheese. The manager heard it and hollered out: 'Tell that blamed tenderfoot if he hasn't got two bits to go back East and get his cheese.' But with John, he would let nothing escape. One day a boy came in and wanted a dime's worth of pigeon's milk. Our friend was staggered for a minute, but he raked in the ten cent piece and told the boy that it was expensive stuff and ten cents did not get much, and, anyway, he hardly ever let it out without a doctor's prescription. 'Who was it for?' The boy replied that a certain insurance man sent for it, and John said, 'All right, I'll give it to him,' and

went behind the case for a minute and came out with a small bottle containing some dark liquid labeled, 'Pigeon's milk; teaspoonful in a little water after each meal.' And the boy went out with it. In a few minutes he returned and said he wanted the money back, that 'that wasn't pigeon's milk—pigeon's milk was white.'

"'Why didn't he tell you he wanted white pigeon's milk,' says John, and took the bottle and put in something to make it white. The boy never came again. The joke seemed to be on the insurance man.

"The druggist was nonplussed once, though. A Chinaman came in one day and wanted ten cents' worth 'fiofloxi.'

"'What is it?' asked the apothecary.

"'Fiofloxi,' said the Chinese.

"'Talk United States—what do you want.'

"'Fiofloxi, fiofloxi,' repeats the Chinaman.

"After taking down about everything in the store, John finally found out that what the Chinaman wanted was fine flaxseed."

"Yes, a druggist gets all kinds of calls like that and of all the misspelled words in writing orders, it would seem that no one knows how to

spell correctly anything a druggist carries. I have kept a list of some of the orders I get. Here are a few:

“ ‘Kokarets.’

“ ‘Lacerated Babies’ Food.’

“ ‘Cas Kara Se Grady.’

“ ‘Ox Alick Assid.’

“ ‘Spils Kure.’

“ ‘Buels Koff Syrup.’

“ ‘Suttlers Powders.’

“ ‘10c worth Inset Powder, 15c puffer with it.’

“ ‘Proxide of Hog’s Head Gene.’

“ ‘Gum De Pitch.’

“ ‘Tomlins iy water.’

“ ‘Kaster Ole.’

“ ‘Parigodic.’

“ ‘Kampher Spirit.’

“ ‘Halls Catar Kure.’

“ ‘Cherries Pictorial.’

“ ‘Benzine Plaster.’

“ ‘Swete Spireits of Nighter,’ and the worst of all was an order for three cents’ worth of ‘Red Physiftea,’ meaning red precipitate. Yes, the druggists get the brunt of everything nowadays. He is simply the public servant and everything is

expected of him, from taking care of satchels and handbags up to nursing a baby while the mother does the rest of her shopping. An old lady came in here the other day and said she had seen Hood's sarsaparilla advertised, and that she would try a nickel's worth, and if it helped her she would order more. Talk about your exalted and professional side of the drug business—it is not more exalted now than a peanut vender's. Again, the responsibility resting on the druggist, above all other tradespeople, is something the general public does not consider at all. You go into a grocery store and order some sugar, and the grocer sends up salt. All you can do is to send it back and cuss the grocer; but if you order quinine from a druggist and he puts up morphine, 'where is he at.' The druggist gets all the disagreeable things to do and answer. If the base ball team in town is hard up, they want you to help them out the first one. Only this morning a Salvation Army man was in and said they were shy one hundred dollars on their rent, and a dollar apiece from the merchants would get them out of debt. Everyone thinks the druggist and the doctor earn their money so easily and are getting rich so fast.

The truth of the matter is the average druggist to-day is not earning a decent living, is confined sixteen hours a day and seven days in a week and three hundred and sixty-five days in a year, and his clerks earning fifty to sixty dollars a month are much better off."

"Yes, that's exactly so, Doc. No one knows it any better than I do, and the deplorable condition of the drug business, especially in the largest cities, tells on us too. There was a time when salesmen on the road would draw five and six thousand dollars a year, but they are now 'have beens.' It is harder every year to sell goods; there is less profit on what you do sell, and less compensation in it. Yes, like the druggists, the traveling man's life is not strewn all the time with roses, but I get even with myself in the stamp business and stamp finds."

"You are more fortunate than many in this particular. What luck have you had lately? I have added quite a few more of the match stamps since you were here."

"I haven't picked up much in my last trip, Doc., only a few odds and ends. A druggist in Foreston, Ill., recognized me at once when I en-

tered his store last week, as getting some stamps from him the last trip around—some of those ten cent black and green proprietaries, worth a dollar each—and trotted out three more of them with the remark that he had saved them for me, thought I would be around again.

“But I must tell you of my experience with a druggist down here, not far from Peoria. Of all the closest, hardest and meanest men to sell to in the trade, he heads the list. To show you what we have to put up with once in a while in selling to some druggists, I’ll tell you how I had to deal with him. In the first place, after I had satisfied him that Lee’s goods were all right in price, the quality wasn’t satisfactory. The cotton didn’t seem so white as J. & J.’s and wasn’t so long a fibre, and was lumpy, etc. Then he got some water, but the absorbent qualities seemed all right, and he ordered a couple of pounds to try. You know how it is, Doc., when you are buying goods and waiting on trade at the same time. No one is apt to let a customer go in order to give a drummer attention, and every few minutes this druggist would drop me to wait on a customer. I had him started on cotton when a little girl

came in and wanted ten cents' worth of something to take the lice off of baby's head. He wasn't so long filling that, and came back to me: 'Now about belladonna plasters; how much do you ask for them by the gross?' he asked. I told him, and he half admitted it was cheap, but my sample didn't smell like belladonna, and it didn't stick right. Then he had to smell of it again and get a sample of Bauer & Black's, and weigh them. By that time a woman came in and wanted five cents' worth of plaster of paris. This was kept in the back part of the store, and it was some little time before he had it wrapped up, when the lady said: 'Oh, that's too much,—three cents' worth is enough.' After he had got back to me he had forgotten the smell of the plaster, and had to smell of it again, and finally said he would try a half a dozen at the gross price, but I had anticipated the size of his order and had made the dozen price in quoting by the gross, but I kicked on half a dozen, and after five minutes' arguing I had him increase it to a dozen. By this time a lady came in with a five dollar bill for a two cent stamp, and she had hardly gone out when a sweet little miss entered and talked away till she got the

druggist to buy a ticket from her to a church fair. By that time he had forgotten what he had ordered from me and I had to commence all over again. When he got down to corn plasters, the holes were too small, and in the bunion plasters, the holes were too big. The court plasters were too thick and the isinglass plaster too thin. No matter what I had there was some kick coming, and slow—my Godfrey! I was in his store over an hour by that time and hadn't sold him five dollars' worth of stuff yet. Finally he decided on a twelfth of a dozen boxes of plain and medicated gauze. I put that down, when the door opened and a fellow came in as if he wanted to buy something, and my friend dropped me to see what he wanted. He proved to be an advertising man with some clock scheme or other, and you would hardly believe it, but that fellow talked him into his scheme, and the druggist signed his contract. I was then hopping mad. Of all the trials of a traveling man, the hardest, and one that makes him cuss worse than anything else, is to hang around a drug store hour after hour for an order and just as you get your customer started,

some 'skate' comes in and gets the buyer away from you onto his stuff.

"Well, he got back finally, and I put down fifty cents' worth more, when a lady came in with a prescription calling for six dozen capsules. It would take fifteen minutes, and she would wait. I waited also, but mentally to myself, I was damning everybody and everything. Finally, however, she got her capsules, and with one or two more minor interruptions, I got my order amounting to eight dollars and thirty-seven cents.

"With a new account my house instructs me to investigate their credits, and I stepped into the bank to find out about him. The cashier said he was a bad egg; that they had all kinds of trouble collecting drafts on him; that he owed everybody he knew of; that he wouldn't advise my people to fill the order unless it was accompanied by the cash, etc. By that time I found I had missed my train, and that there was no other out till the same time the next day, except a way freight at four o'clock in the morning. The other druggist was out of town, and there I was. Talk about your trials of a druggist. A traveling man sees unhappy days, too, Doc.

“But after all, it was a good thing for me that I did miss my train. Having leisure time, I went back to my friend’s store after dinner, mousing around for old medicine stamps. ‘These stamps are worth a good deal of money, nowadays,’ says the old chap, ‘and I am not giving them away.’

“ ‘But I don’t want something for nothing,’ I replied. ‘Let me look through here, and I’ll make an offer, or put your own price on the stamps, and if satisfactory I’ll pay it.’

“That suited him, and I dug through from top to bottom, but didn’t find anything but a few common stamps, not worth a ten-cent piece, that he wanted a dollar for. I was going to leave in disgust, when I spied an old Solon Palmer’s perfumery bottle in his show case, and lifting it up, was astounded to see three ten cent blue 1878 proprietaries, and one six cent, a total value by Scott’s standard catalogue of forty-six dollars and fifty cents.

“ ‘What do you want for these?’ I asked. ‘The private stamps are what I am looking for, but I’ll give you face value for those, ten cents apiece,’ not thinking he would take me up.

“ ‘No, sir, they are worth more than that. Why, my sister down in Vermont got a whole dollar for one stamp, but you can have them for a dollar and not a cent less.’

“ ‘No,’ I said, ‘I won’t do it. They only cost ten cents when they were new, and these are now used and canceled. Sell ’em to some other fellow. I’ll give you a half a dollar for ’em, and you can take it or not, just as you like. I don’t care.’

“ ‘Make it seventy-five cents,’ he says.

“ ‘No, I don’t want ’em anyway,’ I replied. Most druggists give me these stamps for nothing, and I don’t want to dicker over a few old stamps that are no good anyhow.’

“ ‘Well, take ’em for fifty cents. They didn’t cost me anything.’

“Doc, if he had given me a twenty dollar bill he wouldn’t have given me so much as he did when he let me have those stamps for fifty cents. I would have paid twenty dollars rather than to have passed them, but if I had intimated anything of their being worth that, he would think he had the rarest stamp in existence and would want a hundred dollars for them.”

“You’re all right. But I haven’t got that stamp myself. I suppose you will make me a present of a copy.”

“Yes, I will, doctor, with this agreement. You demand Lee’s goods when you’re ordering from the jobber, and take no other, and give me the preference over these chaps like Cook and Spear and the other fellows just as good as I am, but not so entertaining.”

“All right, old man. I’d do that anyhow, but I am glad to get the stamp just the same. Now find a bunch of six cent orange proprietaries, and give me one, and my weary life as an unfortunate druggist will not be so bad.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN OLD TIME STAMP HUNTER.

“Well, well, I didn’t know you. What did you do with that fine crop of red billy goat whiskers?”

“Doctor, what constitutes a chump, a large mouse-colored chump?”

“Give it up, unless you constitute one.”

“You’re about right. I guess I’ve been one. Listen and I’ll tell you how I might have made thousands of dollars out of those whiskers, or rather the absence of those whiskers.”

“Wait a minute till I see what this customer wants. One of Sarg’s corn plasters to send to his sister in Texas. Well, go ahead and tell me about your whiskers.”

“It was this way, Doc. The last three months I have been out to the Pacific coast as far south as San Diego, California. Just after Christmas I bought a ticket in St. Paul, paying one hundred and twelve dollars and fifty cents for it, which was good for six months, allowing me to stop over

as I pleased, and covering the Northern Pacific railroad to Portland, Oregon; then on the Southern Pacific south to San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego, and returning via Sacramento, the Central Pacific to Salt Lake, and the Union Pacific east to Denver, and the Santa Fe to the Missouri river, either Omaha or Kansas City. It was one of those iron clad contract tickets, giving my full description, habits of life and antecedents, color of hair and eyes, style of beauty, size and color of whiskers, etc. I had no trouble with it until on the return trip from Los Angeles. While in San Diego, it being warm and summery, and beards of my color and character being especially attractive to the Mojave flea that predominates in that country, I took a notion to get shaved without first getting permission from the Southern Pacific to do so. I boarded the north bound train for Sacramento, not thinking anything about my ticket. Well, the conductor punched it all right, but this road has a train agent who follows in after the conductor and fires off all those riding on scalpers' tickets, or on otherwise shady transportation. He lit onto me without any ceremony at all, a

cuss weighing about two hundred pounds, and demanded my ticket. I gave it to him, and he looked it over, saw the whiskers punched but no whiskers on his joblots, coolly put the ticket in his pocket and said, 'You will have to pay your fare. This ticket don't belong to you—you bought it in Grunewald's ticket agency in Los Angeles.'

"Doctor, it makes me weep to think of the golden opportunity I then lost. Why didn't I keep still and let them throw me off as if I was a bale of hay, and sue the road for twenty thousand dollars and get five thousand, as one fellow did under nearly the same circumstances; but my ire was up. I called him a liar in real bad language; that I got the ticket in St. Paul; that if I had to wear certain clothes or a certain kind of a hair cut to please the Southern Pacific railroad, I didn't know it; that I would defy him to put me off and so on, till he believed me by my explanations and gave me my ticket back."

"Well, I should say you were a chump, and with such a grasping corporation as the Southern Pacific railroad, which runs pretty nearly everything in Southern California! You are a

d— fool. You didn't know enough to pound sand into a rat hole, and traveling as you have, all over the United States!"

"I know it, Doc. And traveling too, as I have, on all kinds of tickets, no tickets at all, passes that had run out, women's tickets and everything; and here on my own signature. Well, like the fellow in jail, when his lawyer called and said: 'They can't keep you in here; you have no right to be here.' 'That's true enough,' the boy said, 'but I *am* here, so what are you going to do about it?'"

"Next time keep still. Start out with no whiskers and raise a fine line of 'em before you come back and see what they say. But how about your stamp hunts in that country? Haven't found a six cent orange proprietary? My collection of the perforated revenues is now complete, excepting that one."

"Not yet, Doc., but I'll get there with them some day. No, I didn't find anything in California worth mentioning. You see in the match and medicine line eastern preparations, upon which were the most valuable revenue stamps, never reached the Pacific coast to speak of, as the over-

land railroad was not completed till 1869. I told you of Mr. Ernest F. Gambs of San Francisco, as being one of the pioneer dealers. He is also one of the leading authorities of the day on United States revenue stamps, especially the match and medicine varieties, of which he has, without doubt, the largest and most varied stock in the country. He also was a great stamp hunter in the early days, and for rare, valuable finds, he has probably been more fortunate than any one, at least that I know of. I have probably found more stamps in quantity than he, but starting in when they hadn't been hunted for so much as now gave him the advantage, and he was remarkably lucky and successful. I found him in a very reminiscent mood, and he told me all about his experiences with stamps, which I'll repeat to you, Doc., now that I have got time on my hands, if I am not boring you."

"No, not a bit of it. But come in after supper and I'll be more at leisure then. I also want to look up my plaster stock. I'll have quite a little order for you."

* * * * *

“Mr. Gambs’ first strike, which seemed to him at the time his greatest find, was in 1873. It was an old collection, found by chance in a second hand book store in Baltimore, which he secured for five dollars. It was postage stamps only, but among others very rare indeed, were two of the rarest British Colonies, the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick shillings, which now catalogue a hundred dollars and seventy-five dollars each, respectively.

“Another great find of his was a collection of very rare medicine stamps. An old time druggist, a Mr. Habicht, who had a drug store in the old Barnum Hotel in St. Louis, had a clerk who was a stamp fiend, but got tired and quit, and was glad to part with his collection for four dollars. Among the stamps were Fleming Bros. liver pills one cent black, cataloguing fifty dollars; Husband two cent violet, fifty dollars; D. S. Barnes one, two and four cent vermilion; United States Proprietary Medicine six cent; P. H. Drake two cent, cataloguing thirty dollars, and others equally rare. Mr. Gambs was dealing in stamps in St. Louis in those days, and although I have found some good stuff there myself, he sys-

tematically canvassed almost every drug store in the city, and has experienced many of my joys of rare finds, and also many of my sorrows in finding stuff with the rare stamp torn off or damaged, or where some other fiend had been ahead of him. He also struck many fine lots of match stamps. One day a boy came into his place of business in St. Louis selling matches. He was surprised to find each box had an Alligator Match Company stamp, rouletted, now catalogued at five dollars. It is needless to say the boy went out with an empty basket. He found one day in an Illinois town a lot of Barber Match Company's three cent long strip stamp, and of course bought the whole business and sent it by express to St. Louis. Mr. Gambs was very shrewd. He found out that a Philadelphia drug house had on hand a lot of Scheetz bitter cordial, the jobbing price being seven dollars and a half a dozen, but the stamp worth about sixty dollars a dozen. He would buy the medicine at the price, have it shipped to St. Louis, take the stamp off and slap on in its place a four cent regular issue, costing of course only four cents, and then sell the medicine back again to the firm billed from some other name.

He was as sharp as Forepaugh, the showman, who would buy up old plug street car horses in Philadelphia, rejuvenate them on his farm and sell them back again to the same company and make fifty per cent. He obtained thirty-three copies of the six cent James C. Kerr stamp, worth seven dollars each, from the son of the old doctor, at face value. One time in hunting through St. Louis drug stores for stamps, he ran across a lot of Marsden's four cent black, but could not get the stamp without buying the medicine, which he did, the stamp worth many times the cost of the nostrum. He was collecting accounts for his uncle, who was in business, and one of his victims was an old woman who would continually stave him off. One day he found her sick with a severe cold in the chest, but could get no money. Thinking she might die without paying his bill, he sent round a bottle of this Marsden's pectoral balm. The next time he called the balm had cured her, and she was so full of glee over it she plunked up the money due, much to Mr. Gambs' surprise.

“ He found many stamps from mere chance and sheer good luck, like our friend Gurley who found

two four cent playing cards on the street of Chicago.

“The St. Louis Drug Co., was gutted by fire along in the early seventies, and while gazing at the ruins Mr. Gambs picked out of some sawdust quite a number of Dr. M. Perl six cent black, worth fifteen dollars each, that the water had washed off from the bottles. Many times in his hunt for stamps he has been taken for a detective or government officer, as I have been. One day he was in a grocery store looking for match stamps. Up jumped the little German proprietor and said: ‘Ach nein, get away from mein store outd, already quick. I vas onto you—you vas ein detectif, sphyin’ roundt to see if mein goods vas stamped. I vant noddings to do mit you—get outd!’

“In California he found some good stamps also. I thought I had picked up as many ten cent black and green proprietaries as anybody, but it seems that he discovered in 1891 over one thousand copies of this stamp in fine condition on cans of opium. Another San Francisco find of his was seven copies of the Fettridge two cent vermillion, which is found on Fettridge’s balm of a

thousand flowers. I never have found this stamp, which, in good condition, is worth full catalogue price. I have run across many bottles of the balm, but the stamps thereon were always the three cent green proprietary. At one time a large consignment of wax matches were shipped to San Francisco from New York via Cape Horn. Mr. Gambs had the good fortune to find one hundred of these boxes, each having a ten cent blue proprietary. One time he owned twenty-five copies of the three cent playing card, unperforated, probably the only known specimens, now catalogued at fifty dollars. Only a very few of the rarest, almost unobtainable, match and medicine stamps have never been in Mr. Gambs possession, such as the Catterson playing card, Thos. E. Wilson four cent black, Ayer four cent lilac and a few others. He has also made some extraordinary finds and deals in postage stamps. The three cent pink 1861 unused, is now catalogued at thirty-five dollars. He once secured two hundred and thirty-seven spotless copies for a few cents each. At that time no one believed in this stamp, but Mr. John N. Luff, the expert on distinguishing varieties and dies and counterfeits,

pronounced them the genuine pink and the stamp had a boom.

“Christmas, 1884, was a lucky day for him. He located in a California town five hundred of the seven cent envelope entire on amber, a full box of five hundred of the ten cent 1874 (Booby die) on white, and a broken box of the ten cent 1874 on amber. An abandoned old hair trunk in Baltimore revealed to him a number of copies of the rare Baltimore Carrier stamp, horseman type, red. The now almost deserted village of Pacheco was, years ago, a prosperous California stage town. In 1883 Mr. Gambs stumbled into the postoffice there and came out with six hundred of the three cent chocolate envelope 1864 on white and amber. A week later he landed in Petaluma, California, about the same number of six cent purple 1864, on white and amber; the twelve hundred cataloguing twelve hundred dollars. Among other rare stamp finds he obtained fifty-five copies of Moody Michel Co. four cent black in Yellville, Arkansas, and sixty-five copies of the twenty-four cent 1855, the latter found in San Francisco in 1893 by the owner, who had put them away thirty-five years before and had for-

gotten their existence. Unused and perfect as these were, two hundred and twenty-five dollars is not overestimating their present market value. This Moody Michel stamp is much rarer than the catalogue price, seven dollars, would indicate. It comes only on silk paper, and very rarely is seen in good condition. I consider the stamp worth ten dollars at least. Moody, Michel & Company were wholesale grocers doing business in St. Louis, and this stamp was used on their West India bitters. Later on, they concluded to organize a sub company under the name of The West India Manufacturing Company, to manufacture and handle the bitters. This necessitated a change of stamps, and the old one became very scarce in consequence. Mr. Gambs ferreted out these I speak about in a Yellville, Arkansas, drug store, and it was one time when he didn't have to buy the medicine to get the stamps. From this same firm he heard of three dozen bottles of the Red Jacket bitters in Hot Springs, Arkansas, and after a good deal of correspondence he obtained the stamps thereon, the four cent Bennett, Pieters & Company, but he had to buy the medicine too, paying a dollar a bottle for it—the full retail

price. Perhaps the most interesting of Mr. Gambs' numerous stamp finds was that of the Humboldt Express stamp. In the good old days of '49 in California, a stage line ran from Sierra County to Reno, Nevada. The tariff on letters carried on this line was twenty-five cents, and on all such letters for a while was a brown colored stamp of the Humboldt Express Company. Mr. Gambs labored hard to trace any of these stamps, but with no success, till along in the year 1888 he accidentally ran across a party who was a former agent of the company, and secured from him a dozen copies unused and perfect. A genuine copy of this stamp now cannot be obtained for less than ten dollars. He secured a large quantity of the A. Beecher & Son match stamp now catalogued at seventy-five cents. A Savannah, Georgia, grocer, had a number of cases of these matches, which were imperfect, and did not light. Mr. Gambs got ear of it and purchased the lot for a mere song. The J. B. Kelly & Co. four cent black is a rare stamp, used on their Old Cabin bitters, and worth ten dollars at the least. He purchased a number of bottles of this remedy with stamps attached, from a Belleville, Illinois,

druggist. Unfortunately, however, in shipping them to St. Louis, some of the bottles broke, and the stamps were badly stained. The most valuable and important postage stamp envelope find of his occurred in 1883 in Forest Hill, an offshoot little town in Placer County, California. The ten cent green 1861 United States envelope stamp has a market value to-day of about fifty cents on amber paper, and the six cent of the same issue on amber is worth about one dollar, and the six cent on white paper about four dollars. Mr. Gambs stepped into the postoffice and asked for anything obsolete in old stamps for sale. You could hardly believe it, but among a lot of cheaper stuff, he found six hundred copies of the ten cent stamp, over five hundred of the six cent on amber, and seventy-five copies of the six cent on white, worth over one thousand dollars, costing him about one hundred. Many times, though, he has just missed a lot of fine things. In the spring of 1894, a leading New York firm was endeavoring to corner all of the 56,000 one dollar Columbian stamps they could. Mr. Gambs learned of ninety copies at Fresno, California, postoffice, and immediately sent a money order for ninety dollars

for the stamps, but the same mail brought to the postoffice a mail order from the New York firm for three hundred and twenty dollars, calling not only for the one dollar stamp, but all of the high value Columbians the postmaster had, and Mr. Gambs' money was returned. He wept copiously when telling me this, as the stamp went up at once to six dollars.

“He also deals in old coins. Our old friend Mitchell you were telling me about, Doctor, had a coin the last time I saw him, the half dime of 1802, he said was worth over five hundred dollars. I told him he was a liar, and he replied that he would give me four hundred and fifty dollars for all I could get. Well, Mr. Gambs happened to step into a grocery store for a cigar one day in St. Louis, along in the year 1877, and received in change one of these rare coins, the finest specimen known. He sold it to a New York dealer for fifty dollars. The dealer refused two hundred dollars for it, thinking it would bring a higher price at auction. It was sold, however, for one hundred and forty-seven dollars and fifty cents, but eventually landed in Mr. Garrett's collection in Baltimore, who paid six hundred dollars

for it, so brother Mitchell is not so much of a liar after all.

“But the hour is late, Doc., and I’ll have to quit for this time and say good-by. My train leaves in an hour. I’ll see that your order is shipped promptly.”

“All right, and make it fifty pounds of cotton instead of twenty-five. I am in hopes of selling the new hospital that opens up next week. Keep your eye peeled for a six cent orange proprietary.”

CHAPTER XIX.

THE GREAT "ST. LOUIS STAMP FIND" IN LOUISVILLE.

"You remember telling me something of a find in Louisville, Kentucky, of St. Louis stamps worth thousands of dollars?"

"Yes, Doctor, that was the greatest find in the history of philately. You would hardly believe it, but over twenty-five thousand dollars were paid Louisville parties for these stamps numbering only one hundred and thirty-seven specimens: seventy-five five cents, forty-six ten cents and sixteen twenty cent stamps, a face value of less than twelve dollars."

"Is it possible, and no six cent orange proprietaries among them either?"

"No, Doc., rare and as unobtainable as that stamp is, it falls far short of the value of St. Louis stamps. As I told you some time ago, in speaking of the leading stamp collections, these stamps range in value from one hundred and fifty to several thousand dollars each."

“I can hardly believe it, yet I read in a daily paper the other day something about the great value put on these stamps and this find in Louisville. How did it come about—who made the strike?”

“There were so many, Doc., that had a finger in the pie, and have been so anxious to conceal their identity, that the exact details of the ‘find’ are hard to reach with accuracy; but I’ll tell you the story as I have received it, as near the exact truth as it is possible for any kind of a story to be told by a traveler in the drug business.”

“Yes, you’re such a confounded liar. I hardly know whether to believe all you tell me or not, but go ahead with it.”

“You can rest assured, Doc., that the story is absolutely true so far as the value of the stamps and the sums paid for them is concerned. I’ll go back first to a little history connected with these stamps. Did I tell you how the postage stamp happened to come into use?”

“No, I think not.”

“Well, back in the year 1839, a traveler journeying through the north of England, by the name of Rowland, surname Hill, stopped over

night at a wayside inn. I don't know if his whiskers were cut like a circular saw, or were of a Jo-Jo effect,—perhaps he had no whiskers,—anyhow it is immaterial. History also fails to tell us of the character of the inn, but the presumption is there were sheets on the bed with a good spring, so the guests need not ring for water. Whether on opening the eggs, they walked away or stood right still is also not specified, but the chances are, Doc., that if it had been your hotel here the invention of the postage stamp would have been deferred for an indefinite period, as Rowland would not have stayed over the night, but moved on and slept in the field and got a good night's rest."

"Yes, but what has all this to do with the St. Louis find? What are you drinking to-day, river water?"

"No, I don't even bathe in it down here in 'Egypt', but let me continue. When brother Hill arose in the morning to continue his journey, a postman stopped to deliver a letter addressed to a young girl, presumably a 'biscuit pusher' or 'mop chaser' about the hotel. All letters in those days were sent C. O. D., and our lady friend

was busted; at least she said she was shy the shilling necessary to retain the epistle, in the meantime toying and twirling her chewing gum and turning the letter over and over in her hands.

“Rowland stood by with a tear drop in his eye, listening with his large generous heart at her song and dance to the postman, of being too poor to pay for the letter.

“‘Allow me,’ says Rowland, and at once plunks up the money, in spite of the girl’s protest. After the postman had gone she explained the matter to our traveler: said that she was indeed too poor to pay for postage, but had arranged with her brother, who had written the letter, so she could tell what he had to say by secret marks on the envelope.”

“You’re lying now; envelopes weren’t in existence at that time.”

“Anyhow, Doc., the letter then itself had secret marks; and continuing his journey, Rowland mused that such a system invited dishonesty. The more he thought of it, the more he became impressed that something attached to the letter prepaying the postage was far preferable. His views found favor with the English government,

and on January 10th, 1840, the first postage stamp was issued.

“Soon after the use of it in England, the United States Congress brought up the matter of the use of an adhesive stamp in this country. There was considerable opposition to it at first. The old way of a hand stamp ‘paid’ or ‘collect’ placed on the letters seemed to work satisfactorily to most of the members of Congress. It finally resulted, however, that a few postmasters issued stamps for the convenience of their patrons, and upon their own authority. They had no value outside of the postoffice in which they were issued, and were only recognized between the purchaser and the postmaster. The first stamps issued this way were by the New York postmaster; the stamp at Brattleboro came next and the St. Louis stamps came into use in the fall of 1845. Five and ten cent stamps were the only denominations at first issued. They were engraved on a common visiting card plate, the design of each denomination being repeated three times upon the plate. Each of the six stamps was engraved separately, and therefore showed lines and marks different from each other, and that is why this find in Louisville

proved so valuable, as it turned to the light certain dies of these rare stamps, whose existence heretofore was doubted. The necessity of a higher value, a twenty cent stamp, soon made itself apparent, and the five cent was altered to twenty cents, and when the stock of five cents some time afterward became exhausted, the the twenty cent plate was again re-altered back to five cents, still further creating complicated varieties. The use of these stamps was entirely optional and their popularity was limited to a few large firms. The general public preferred to use the hand stamp 'paid.' The two leading concerns using the stamps were Crow & Co., jobbers of dry goods, and Wm. Nisbet & Co., private bankers of St. Louis.

“You can thus see, Doc., that the stamps are very rare, and these 137 found in Louisville are probably the last that will ever turn up, as the original plates and remainders were destroyed.

“In those days Louisville was the gateway to the South, and commercially stood ahead of both St. Louis and Cincinnati. The Louisville connections and correspondents of Nisbet & Co. were Tyler and Rutherford, and all the mail at this

time addressed to this firm from St. Louis bore the St. Louis stamps. This was known to the leading stamp firm in St. Louis, who had made a special study of these stamps, but all trace of the Louisville house and their correspondence had disappeared.

“Late in the summer of 1895, Jackson, a colored porter employed in the Louisville court house, was requested to clean out a lot of rubbish in the basement and burn up the old correspondence and paper that had lain there till it was an eyesore. While stoking the stuff into the furnace, several old letters struck him as being peculiar, having “bear picture stamps” on them. Jackson had never seen anything of the kind before and he concluded to put a few in his pocket. There was no telling how many he had burned up before he thought of this move. At any rate he had quite a little bunch of them saved, and when the head janitor of the building came in and showed an interest in the stamps, Jackson asked him what he would give him for them, and readily accepted two bits and a can of beer. The janitor, knowing of a fellow who collected stamps, took them around to him that evening, thinking possibly he could make

a dollar or so on the deal, and was agreeably surprised to receive ten dollars for the lot of nine stamps, really worth nearer three thousand dollars.

“As Jackson had not opened or destroyed all the boxes of old letters, the janitor took his co-worker into his confidence and at an early hour the next morning ripped open the remaining boxes, and altogether found the entire 137 St. Louis stamps, directed to the old Louisville firm from Nisbet & Co., St. Louis. They reasoned out to themselves that if nine were worth ten dollars, 137 should bring about one hundred and fifty dollars. They concluded to let in a third party, better posted and educated, as to the best way to dispose of them. On the following Sunday the trio called on a stamp acquaintance on Market Street, with a dozen of the stamps, and asked him what he would give for the lot. The sight of the rare stamps almost took the dealer's breath away. He was posted on their value, and on closer examination discovered three stamps to be of the rarest dies and worth hundreds of dollars. ‘I'll give you twenty-dollars apiece for them.’ The sellers were astounded, and jumped at it at once,

receiving three hundred dollars for the lot. They now had 116 stamps left, and figured out that either the stamp dealer was crazy or they had left several thousand dollars worth of stamps.

“The following night they met at the janitor’s house to discuss the situation, and decided that two of them would go to New York with twenty of the stamps, and try to close them out to the leading firms there, and in the meantime the third party would undertake to dispose of ten of them in Louisville at not less than twenty-five dollars each, which he did.

“On arriving in New York they were sharp enough to first investigate the value of the stamps on the market, and soon discovered, although they had no knowledge of the different die varieties, that the twenty stamps should bring one hundred dollars each or two thousand dollars. They easily obtained that price, and returned to Louisville with some idea of what a fortune they had. There were now left unsold 86 stamps: eight twenties, twenty-four tens and fifty-two fives. Hitherto they had paid no attention to the different values, but now realizing that the twenties and the re-touched fives were worth a great deal more, they

decided to ask more accordingly. After further council on the manner, they concluded to try St. Louis this time, and wrote on first, stating they had four St. Louis stamps on an original envelope, two fives, one ten and one twenty, asking what they would give for them. It so happened that this combination was considered by the St. Louis firm as of doubtful existence, and they wired back, 'Send C. O. D. subject to examination; one thousand dollars.' This staggered them more than any of the series of former surprises, and they saw at once that they had missed it for not negotiating with this firm before. They took the first train for St. Louis with eighteen of the stamps and received twenty-five hundred dollars all told. In the meantime, one of the officers of the company had got wind that this lot comprised only a fraction of a large find in Louisville, and immediately after the two had departed, he took a train for Louisville on a still detective hunt, to get at the bottom of the facts concerning the find. He arrived about as soon as the stamp venders and for three days quietly ferreted out the facts. From the party who paid the first ten dollars, he gradually traced, including the eighteen bought in St.

Louis, ninety-five of the stamps, and step by step gradually acquired them all at an enormous expenditure of over twenty-three thousand dollars. But as enormous as the sum seems, Doc., the St. Louis firm realized in the resale of the stamps close to twenty thousand dollars clear profit."

CHAPTER XX.

THE GREATEST FIND OF ALL.

“Well, the druggist has got it once more in the neck. I was just reading the new law, Doctor, requiring stamps to be put on the proprietary articles again, and, although it will help the stamp business and no doubt start many new collectors, the druggist has to pay for it.”

“That’s true. It is too bad. We can’t raise the selling price on most of the articles taxed, but the manufacturer raises the price on us, many of them to twice the cost of the stamps, and there we are.”

“You will have to make it up, Doc., on crude drugs and prescriptions, and charge more for them.”

“Yes, I can do that to a certain extent, but the nuisance and inconvenience of it is very annoying. Excepting compound drugs, it taxes almost everything in the store. Pharmaceutical preparations, pills, compound tablets, powders, etc.—every medicinal compound whatsoever,

must be stamped, no matter whether one manufacturer or ten make the article."

"Yes, that's so. The old law covered only patent medicines, and the like, but this is sweeping in its provisions; even our old corn plasters and mustard leaves must be stamped.

"The clause on private stamps will make a great many new medicine stamps, but that two thousand dollar provision will preclude many from taking advantage of it, and those taking it must buy so many stamps that there will probably be no more such rarities as Thomas E. Wilson's, Morehead's, Neurodyne, Husband's violet, etc. Still they will be interesting to collect, as much so as the old ones. I'll take especial interest in watching them as they come out, and in about twenty years from now a new set of 'stamp hunters' will crop out, digging through the drug stores for stamps for 'their little boys who are making a collection.'"

"At the same time, old man, everyone will want to save them, like the Columbians, and the result will be that only a very few will ever be catalogued higher than in cents probably. But the law requiring their use is burdensome and the

tax excessive, and I believe it will be of short duration. For that reason, therefore, it is possible some varieties of papers and errors, etc., may crop out, upon which a high price may be placed."

"Yes, Doctor, and then again I am inclined to think that the law will be repealed for the reason that there will be no need of the tax. Spain is now ready to throw up her hands, and I think the two countries will soon be at peace."

"I hope so, but it is harder to repeal a law than it is to enact it. But how about your stamp hunts? Haven't you run across a bunch of St. Louis stamps like the 'find' in Louisville you were telling me about?"

"No, Doc., but I heard of a case while in St. Louis that shows the irony of fate. One of the leading stamp collectors there, who by the way has as fine a collection as any one in the city, excepting Tiffany's, destroyed a whole lot of the rare St. Louis issue, thinking they were of no value, not being the regular brand of postage stamps. He was collecting in a small way back in the seventies and one day while looking over a lot of correspondence for the general run of stamps he

was struck with the oddity of these 'bear picture stamps,' but being a local issue thought they were of no particular value and threw them away. He was careful to save stamps worth now perhaps a dollar or so, but pairs of retouched five cent St. Louis worth thousands of dollars were passed as not worth picking up. You remember my telling you, Doc., about a ten cent Baltimore found in Louisville, which eventually sold for four thousand four hundred dollars. Well, I met the boy who found that stamp, which made as much of a stir for the time being as the St. Louis one. It was uncovered in an old lawyer's office with several hundred ten cent 1847, and other good stuff. The attorney had told my friend he could have anything in the office, and when this Baltimore came to light the boy knew at once it was a good stamp, but had no intimation of its real value. He placed it in the hands of an older friend in Louisville to sell for him, and the leading stamp firms in Washington, New York and St. Louis were telegraphed to make offers, and the result was the St. Louis firm got it, but costing them, I am told, nearly two thousand dollars. Anyhow, it now rests in Mr. Castle's collection in Spring-

field, Mass., who paid the sum stated for it, four thousand four hundred dollars, the highest price up to that time ever paid for a single postage stamp.

“But let me tell you of a find I had myself last week that will surprise you, Doc.—the greatest of them all. I was in a little town down here on the Ohio, the oldest in the state; so old that when Lafayette sailed down the river, the town was there ready to receive him. There is an odd genius there in the drug business, with a stock some of it so old it was there before the stamp law of the sixties was enacted. He is one of the best known characters in the business. Years ago he was justice of the peace, and everybody calls him ‘Judge.’ To size the old fellow up you wouldn’t think he had a dollar to his name and was a fit candidate for the poor house. His beaver looked like the kind put over bricks on April 1st for fools to kick, and rumor has it that he has worn the same suit of clothes for the last twenty years. No one ever saw him with a collar on, and he wears a shirt till it wears out and then buys another one. But the Judge can laugh at us. He owns nearly all the town and can buy

out all the druggists in the county. His store, too, looks as dilapidated as the owner, a regular junk shop. Goods were piled on the floor and broken show cases, dirt and uncleanness everywhere. Drugs were mixed in with patent medicines, and cobwebs and the like gave the place an appearance as much unlike what a drug store ought to be as it is possible to imagine. He always had a habit of saving everything, never throwing anything away.

“I had dug through his stock before for stamps, but without finding anything at all. He said his nephew back East was out to visit him, and being a stamp fiend took off everything himself. Well, last week I was down there again on my regular route, and after selling him a small order, he asked me if I was still interested in stamps. Of course I told him I was and he said:

“‘I was looking through my old safe the other day for some certain papers, and I came across a lot of stamps in an old envelope that I did not know I had, and must have laid there for over twenty-five years.’

“‘What kind are there, Judge?’ I asked. ‘Trot ’em out. I may be able to buy ’em of you.’

“In a few minutes he came back with the envelope and opened it before me. Well, Doc., I nearly dropped dead. My breath was taken away; I was dumbfounded. Tears filled my eyes. After many days, too true! too true!

“The Judge says, ‘What’s the matter with you, are you in pain?’

“‘No, no; no pain Judge. I lost a very dear friend recently and you must excuse me. I feel pretty bad over it.’

“Doc., would you believe me, and would you wonder at my feelings, when I tell you that these stamps numbered three hundred unused and perfect in blocks and sheets of the six cent orange proprietary, catalogued at \$15,000?”

“No, I don’t believe you. You’re lying to me.”

“But there they were, just the same.”

“You don’t mean it; it can’t be true. My heavens, a six cent orange proprietary that I have been trying to buy for \$30 for the last nine months, and there you were with 300 of them! I can’t believe it. They must be counterfeit.”

“That’s what I thought, and I questioned the old fellow all about ’em.

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“‘I came by them in this way,’ says the Judge:

“‘There’s quite a history connected with these stamps. Along in the sixties I was in partnership with a Dr. Hall, and we put a medicine up of our own, called Dr. Hall’s fever and ague cure, and priced it \$1.50. There was a good deal of ague and fever in this country in those days, but we soon found out a dollar and a half was too much to ask for the medicine and we changed the price to a dollar a bottle. I don’t know how it was but these three hundred stamps were never used. I suppose Hall got them, and then finding it best to change the price, bought four cent stamps, and in some way these were never exchanged, and have laid there forgotten and unknown all these years. Are they any good now, I wonder?’

“‘Oh, yes; they are of some value, Judge, but there are so many of them, and all of one kind. I would like to have one of them for my collection, but I hardly know what to offer you for the lot.’

“‘Oh, I’ll give you one; but can’t you use them all? What will you give for ’em? They

are no use to me now, and you can trade them off round the country.'

"Well, what will you take for the bunch?'

"You may have them for what they cost us, six cents apiece; eighteen dollars for the lot.'

"But that is more money than I can spare; but I'll risk it some way. I'll tell you what I'll do, Judge, I'll pay you fifteen dollars in cash and send you two dozen of Sorg's corn plasters. You can get six dollars for them, and that will really give you more money than your own offer.'

"All right, take 'em along.'

"Doc, I don't know how I got to my hotel, whether I ran or walked, or swam up the river. I was dazed—I was crazy."

"I should think you would be crazy; but what did you do? Where are the stamps? I won't believe it unless you make me a present of a copy."

"Wait till I get through. I thought it over that night how I could place these to the best advantage, and finally decided I would dispose of the lot in a bunch, and not parcel them out. Acting on that decision I left my samples behind, took the boat to Cairo, Illinois, and boarded the

Big Four express for the East, and the third day afterwards reached Boston. I immediately went out to Lynn and hunted up Mr. Howard K. Sanderson, knowing he had the ready resources to buy anything, no matter how much, if he could see a profit in investing. I soon found him, and asked him if he wanted to buy a block of four six cent orange proprietaries."

" 'Yes; how much do you want for them?'

" 'I'll sell you three hundred of them, unused, in blocks, for ten thousand dollars spot cash for the lot.'

" 'Yes, I guess you will,' he replied. 'You nor no one else ever saw three hundred of these stamps in blocks.'

" 'It don't make any difference. I have them just the same. You may not believe it, but here they are.'

" Well, Doc, he was as surprised as I was, but did not weep. He might have wept if I had offered them for eighteen dollars, but he took my offer after I had explained how I got them.

" 'First,' he says, 'you must make out an affidavit that no one else has seen them, and agree not to tell anyone or advertise the fact. Your

word is good, but your agreement in writing is better.'

“‘All right,’ I said, ‘that’s satisfactory.’ So we went into Boston, drew up the agreement that I would forever keep the find a secret, etc.; went into the Boylston National Bank and in a few minutes he had the stamps, and I had in my fist ten thousand dollars—five one thousand dollar bills, eight five hundred dollar bills, and the rest in one hundreds and fifties. I was then so overcome I felt a change come over the situation. The air seemed to thicken. I looked around in alarm and the bank and my money had vanished. I then turned over against the wall and shed tears in earnest, but not from joy and thanksgiving.

“Doc, instead of picking up six cent orange proprietaries in reality, I was trying to pick the knots out of the mattress of your cheap hotel here. I was dreaming, that was all.”

(THE END.)

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