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Bluffton 1533

THE
BLUFFTON STAMP SOCIETY



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BY

S. B. BRADT.

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PREFACE.

The story contained in the following pages was written with the desire to interest more young people in the entertaining and instructive pursuit of stamp collecting, and also to foster the interest of the many thousands of young collectors that already exist.

The child that follows stamp collecting finds in it an incentive to self-instruction and home amusement and is never known to use the expression so common with children, "I don't know what to do." The stamp collection is an unfailing cure for this ailment of the young.

THE AUTHOR.



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THE BLUFFTON STAMP SOCIETY.

CHAPTER I.

SOME YOUTHFUL STAMP COLLECTORS.

“**W**HO’S got a seven-cent war to exchange for a twenty-four-cent treasury?” “What have you got for a ten-cent agriculture?” “Who collects revenues, I have some rare ones to exchange?” “Charley, did you bring that local to-night?” These are a few of the many questions heard when the business meeting of the Bluffton Stamp Society broke up one evening late in the fall. The presiding officer, a bright lad of seventeen years, had just adjourned the meeting, and the members, fourteen in number, were all eager to make additions to their collections by exchanging duplicates with their companions.

It was a pleasant sight. Fourteen such bright boys as one would seldom see together; and each

one as busy as a man on "change." In fact, it resembled a miniature board of trade, only the articles bartered for were postage stamps instead of corn and wheat and pork. The ages of the boys ranged from ten to eighteen years, and every boy bore the stamp of intelligence, activity, and earnestness in his pursuit. For, be it known, that nothing so tends to produce these qualities in boys as the much lauded, sometimes ridiculed, but ever popular diversion known as stamp collecting.

For the last fifteen or twenty years few boys have escaped this fever for collecting postage stamps. There is something fascinating about it that seems irresistably attractive to all young people, and while with some its power is short, yet the greater number cling to it for years and frequently continue to collect as ardently when they arrive at man's estate as ever they did when children. With this difference, however; the boy — that is, the average boy — collects to see how many different stamps he can get, to try and obtain more than the other boys of his acquaintance: but the man, if he be an earnest philatelist, goes at it in an orderly, methodical way, classifying and arranging his collection in a manner that makes a science of his pursuit; and ever keeping fully up to the times on all philatetical matters.

The young stamp collectors of the town of Bluffton had but recently organized their society, and the meeting just over was the second that had been held. At the first meeting, some two weeks previous to this, the society had been formally organized, with a president, a vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. The office of president was held by one of the most popular boys in town, Harry Albright. He, as did the majority of the members, attended the town high-school and always occupied a high position in his classes, for he was as earnest in his studies as in his stamp collecting. He was, in fact, a boy whom a stranger would immediately pick out of a crowd for his thoughtful, attentive, and respectful manner.

Harry was the founder of our society and naturally enough became its first presiding officer. He was also, as he supposed, the first stamp collector of Bluffton, having acquired the taste for it some three years before while visiting some relations at a neighboring city. On his return home he spread the fever rapidly among his boy friends, and before a month had passed he had a score or more of rivals and competitors. At the time this story opens Harry had become quite an advanced collector. There were nearly a hundred other collectors in

town, and a few of these, twenty-three in number, had just organized themselves into a "society."

At the close of the business portion of this the second meeting of the society, Harry Albright produced his stamp album, catalogues, and duplicates—which latter he had neatly mounted on sheets of paper, and priced by the catalogue adopted as a standard by the society. He quietly proceeded to pick out Charley Bacon, a rosy-cheeked, chubby boy of fourteen, who resided at quite a distance from Harry's home and attended a different school. The two sat down together, and in a few minutes were deeply interested in their exchanges.

While this pair are so pleasantly engaged, let us take a brief glance at the remaining boys who make up the assemblage. In the president's chair we find little Willie Small, the youngest of the company. He is only ten years old, but already boasts of nearly two hundred stamps, which he is now proudly displaying to Jimmy Bluff—a little fellow but two years his senior, and who is the youngest son of Senator Bluff, the great capitalist of the town. A little beyond these two, seated at one side of the secretary's table, are Oscar Rider and Arthur Seymour; and opposite them sit Alec Johnson and George Wright. These four boys are all neighbors and fast friends; they attend the same school, are

in the same classes, and are about the same age—fifteen to sixteen. At the extreme end of the room we find Frank Hill, a boy of eighteen and the society's oldest member, talking earnestly to Will Taylor and trying his utmost to convince him that fac-similes of stamps are not worthy of a place in his album. For Taylor, who is only a year younger than Hill, and, withal, has a very good opinion of himself, puts everything that has the appearance of a stamp into his collection. It matters not to him whether any such stamps ever really existed or not, provided there is a space for them in his album and some dealer will supply him cheaply with the imitations—or rather, as in some cases, fabrications; for there never were *originals* of some of these—he will purchase them and think he is adding to his treasures. He now boasts of over two thousand varieties, but many of the boys with six or eight hundred stamps could not be induced to exchange collections with him. As we draw near the pair Taylor is just saying to his companion:

“Now, Hill, what is the use of crying out about these Hamburg locals? Of course I know some folks say there never were any. And then, too, the biggest dealers as well as the fraudulent ones sell them, and some of our best albums have spaces for them.”

“Oh, pshaw!” Hill exclaims, “You know perfect-

ly well that the parties who make the albums you refer to only provide spaces for the Hamburgs in order to sell the bogus stamps to young collectors, who are not supposed to consider carefully what they put in their collections. That is, when they commence collecting, for, of course, as they get further along they gain experience, and join with their more advanced fellow collectors in denouncing such frauds. I'll wager that the time will soon come when dealers will be compelled to omit the spaces for such doubtful stamps in preparing new editions, or else collectors will refuse to have them and fall back on blank books for albums—for the young collector is rapidly becoming educated in stamp matters. The philatelic papers, too, are waging a fierce war on the album makers in order to compel them to leave these Hamburg humbugs out of future editions; and I hope they will all pull together and affect this most desirable result."

"Well I'm sure I don't care," says Taylor, "I have spaces for them in my album and if I can fill all those pages for twenty-five cents I'm going to do it. Now look at the United States locals—and the Confederate locals, too; no one can even hope to ever get originals of all of them. Why, for a mere song I have bought reprints of both sets entire."

“Yes, and with them many stamps that never existed except in the minds of their manufacturers,” retorted Hill, “and they are not even reprints either, nothing but base counterfeits.”

“They are just exactly as good as those periodical stamps you paid a dollar for, the other day,” Taylor answered quickly.

This reply seemed to be too much for Hill, for he turned hastily around, put on his hat and left the room.

It was now getting late, being about half past ten o'clock, and the boys who still lingered in the room gathered up their collections, and each with his album under his arm trudged manfully home.



CHAPTER II.

A MISTAKE CORRECTED.

WHEN Frank Hill left the meeting so abruptly, after his conversation with Will Taylor, he felt very much disgusted, both with himself and with stamp collecting generally. But a few minutes rapid walking in the cool autumn air quickly brought him to reason, and after carefully recalling the arguments he had used in his talk with Taylor he could not but see that he was the one to blame and not philately; that Taylor was right in saying his fac-simile locals were just as good as Hill's foreign-made imitations of our periodical stamps. Frank had purchased these bogus stamps because they made such a splendid showing in his album — they being really most finely executed, and resembling the originals so closely as to deceive anyone not familiar with the latter. He also was well aware that he could scarcely even hope to possess the originals; their extremely high price putting them beyond the reach

of the majority of collectors. These considerations had led him into the mistake that had permitted Taylor to annihilate with a word all his arguments against counterfeit stamps.

As soon as Frank reached his room he took out his stamp album—he seldom carried it out of the house, as he was very careful of his fine collection of over twenty-five hundred varieties—and turning directly to the U. S. stamps, carefully removed the obnoxious periodical stamps. After completing this task he heroically threw the fac-similes into the fire, remarking as he did so “I’ll never be caught in that trap again,” and then prepared himself for his night’s rest without further worry over the matter.

At school the next day, Frank was accosted by George Wright with the remark “How is this, Hill, Taylor says he made you back down entirely last night—crawfish, he called it?”

“What!” exclaimed Frank, “He hasn’t commenced to crow over it already, has he?”

“Yes,” George replied, “he told me all about it on the way to school this morning, and, seriously, I think you made a great mistake in putting those counterfeits into your collection—for they’re nothing else, although their manufacturers try to make it sound better by calling them fac-similes.”

“Yes, yes, I know I did wrong in introducing those humbugs here; for you know, I was the first and, as yet, the only one in town to send for them,” rejoined Frank, “But no one has ever seen them in my album,” he added (he had only had them a few days), “and now no one ever can; for last night when I reached home I tore them out and burned them before going to bed. And now if Taylor wants to say anything I’m ready for him.”

“Good for you,” was all the reply George made, for at that moment the bell cut short their conversation and called them to their studies.

After school Harry Albright sought out Hill, intending to protest against the fac-similes, and was informed of what Frank had done. While the pair were talking Will Taylor joined them, remarking:

“If you aren’t the worst case I ever heard of. The idea of a fellow’s destroying those handsome stamps. Why, I have been intending to send for a set and would gladly have paid you a fair price for them.”

“You certainly can’t call Hill inconsistent now,” Harry put in.

“Taylor;” said Frank, “after our conversation last night, and the way you took the wind out of my sails, there was no half-way course open for me. I was compelled to act as I did or permit it to be

said that I draw the line, not at forgeries, but only at forgeries that were not finely executed; that when something that was counterfeited in a really artistic manner was offered I was ready enough to give it a place in my album. Now I consider that the true philatelist should not, under any circumstances, deface his collection by introducing even doubtful stamps, and if I was misled for a time by my desire to display those handsome but pernicious imitations I was made aware of my error last night in my conversation with you."

"All I have to say is that you were very foolish to burn up a dollar's worth of stamps just out of spite," grumbled Will.

"There, you're wrong again;" was the ready answer, "twice wrong, for it was not spite that prompted me to burn the things; I did it after carefully considering what best to do with them, and I'm sure spite had nothing to do with it; and you're wrong in the second place, in calling them stamps, when it is well known that they are only imitations."

"Your distinctions are altogether too fine for me. I like the stamps and shall send for a set to-day." Will replied, somewhat defiantly; adding, as he turned to leave the boys, "And I guess I'll try and get the agency for them in Bluffton, for lots of the boys'll buy them, I know."

"O, don't do that," Harry said, pleadingly.

Hill merely shrugged his shoulders, and facing toward home asked Harry to accompany him on his way. Harry assented, and added, "I do hope Taylor will not try to sell such stuff among the boys; for a great many of them might be induced to buy them. You, yourself, was tempted, and fell." This was said laughingly. "But there is one consolation in it anyhow, the boys are all shy of him because he has such a reputation for counterfeits."

"Yes, that's so," Frank replied, "and I depend on that to make him sick of his bargain. But here's my home, won't you come in a few minutes and look at my stamps?"

"I don't know but I will," Harry responded. "Got anything new?"

"Yes, I have an entire set of State Departments, including the four large ones. I only received them this morning and forgot to speak of them before. My uncle at Washington sent them to me."

"That's something worth seeing," Harry exclaimed as he entered the gate. "There certainly isn't another set in town."

"No," was the proud reply, "I think I have the only set in Bluffton, and they're genuine, too."

"We can be sure of that," said Harry, "for they don't dare to counterfeit our own stamps, or even

to use pictures of them. But, by the way,—it only just occurred to me—those newspaper fac-similes must be unlawful. Now that I think of it, I wonder they dare advertise them so.”

“You’re right every time, Albright,” Will answered. “The same thought occurred to me after I had ordered that set, but as they are made in Germany I thought perhaps our laws wouldn’t affect them.”

“Yes, yes, that’s well enough,” responded Harry, “let them sell all they want to outside of this country, but I’ll bet ‘Uncle Sam’ will be having something to say when he gets wind of their being sold here.”

The comrades entered the house and there on his desk Frank found a late issue of a stamp paper for which he had subscribed. It had arrived during his absence.

“See if it says anything about the fac-similes,” Harry exclaimed, eagerly.

“Sure enough, it does,” was the reply. “It says, ‘the attention of the authorities has been called to them and it is expected the result will be fatal to their sale in this country.’”

“Good! Good!” Harry shouted, and danced about the room for joy. “What will Taylor say now?”

“I’ll tell you what to do,” interrupted Frank,

“we'll ask all the other boys to say nothing about it to Taylor, for, you know, he doesn't take any stamp paper — says it don't pay, and that it's wasting money that might be put into stamps — and then, when he gets the stamps, we'll inform all the boys, and he'll not be able to sell a single one. Perhaps, too, it will show him that a stamp paper is of some account and induce him to take one, instead of sponging on us fellows every month.”

“Oh, no, I wouldn't do that,” Harry replied; for he disliked to play a trick of that kind on anyone. “It would be too bad to have him throw away his money in that way.”

“All right, just as you say,” said Frank, although he regretted to lose the opportunity of so soon getting even with Taylor. “But come, let's look at these beauties.”

In another minute the two were admiring the set of State Department stamps that Frank had so proudly announced: the beauty as well as the extreme rarity of the large black and green stamps bearing the portrait of ex-secretary Seward seemed to call forth their especial admiration.

Leaving the boys in such good company we will ask the reader to accompany us to the next chapter, and there, taking the liberty of turning over the leaves of Frank's much cherished album, take a

peep at his treasures: for treasures they are to him and to all philatelists, let the outside world call them what they choose.



CHAPTER III.

FRANK'S COLLECTION.

FRANK HILL was in some respects a model stamp collector. His collection had been started nearly three years before the opening of this narrative, and he had been very fortunate in having given to him, about that time, an old collection of several hundred stamps, many of which were quite rare. These he had retained for nearly two years in the same album — an old scrap book — he had received them in. Recently he had purchased an interleaved international album and carefully transferred his collection to it. In making this change Frank made it a rule to put nothing but clean and perfect specimens into his album and to remove all particles of paper and other matter from their backs, leaving them as clean as when they were originally issued, except for the cancellation marks ; and he was particular in this latter respect also, for he never accepted a stamp that had been cancelled in such a

manner as to leave either the inscription or the design indistinct or blurred.

After trying the different systems recommended for mounting stamps Frank had finally adopted what he termed the double hinge system ; that is, he took two narrow strips of gummed paper about one quarter of an inch wide and three quarters long and fastened one of them to each upper corner of the stamp to be mounted in such a manner as to leave one half of each strip extending over the upper edge; then folding back the strips he affixed them to his album, leaving the stamp hanging on two paper hinges that enabled it to be turned over and examined without the slightest difficulty. Frank had begun, like most inexperienced collectors, by pasting his stamps solidly in his album, but soon seeing the disadvantages of this method he used a single paper hinge placed at the center of the top of the stamp; but this allowed it to move to the right or left and did not hold it firmly enough in place, so he soon discarded that plan also and tried a single broad strip across the top of the stamp, folded back and affixed to the album: this he also abandoned in a short time upon accidentally discovering that the double hinge system, just described worked better and gave more satisfaction. For making these hinges he used sheets of thin

linen paper which he covered with a good quality of mucilage—it is very necessary in preparing gummed paper to use none but the very best mucilage, as a poor article will discolor the paper it is placed upon—and these, when dry, he cut up into strips of the desired size.

As we open the album we are at once attracted by the fine display of U. S. stamps: the various issues of the general government adhesives are here represented almost entire—the ten-cents of 1847, the twenty-four cents of 1851, and the ninety cents of 1857 only being absent. The pages reserved for periodical stamps were conspicuously blank, having none but the three large stamps of 1865. But what was lacking in the newspaper stamps was partially atoned for by the unusually fine lot of department stamps; with the exception of the envelope stamps, Frank's collection was complete in this respect, and the pages thus filled never failed to command the admiration of anyone who looked at them, whether a collector or not.

In envelope stamps Frank had been sadly neglectful, as the few scattering specimens but too plainly indicated. Like too many other collectors he failed to give these the attention they deserved and, until very recently, had made no effort to secure them. Very few collectors give due prominence to these inter-

esting stamps and are constantly letting slip by opportunities to secure varieties that very soon it will be almost impossible to obtain. The best way to collect these stamps is to preserve the entire envelope. When in that condition their marketable value is greatly enhanced, and they give far greater satisfaction. It was the custom of old to cut envelope stamps close up to the impressed design, but that soon gave way to the system of cutting the stamp out square and thus leaving a fine margin to offset the impression. But now the collecting of the entire envelope is the order of the day and I would strongly urge young collectors, and old ones too, never to cut out envelope stamps, but to leave them entire.

A rapid glance through the album on leaving the U. S. stamps will show that Frank's main effort has been to make his set of U. S. stamps as complete as possible. Another feature which strikes us is the evident desire to form complete sets from the principal countries and of those stamps now out of use; in consequence of this the many newly-fledged stamp issuing countries are but poorly represented. Turning back and proceeding more leisurely we find Alsace and Lorraine splendidly represented by a full set, comprising both the regular issue and the errors with reversed network, and all in a lightly-

cancelled condition. Argentine has a fairly good array; Austria, Baden, Bavaria, and Belgium are complete (excepting the envelope stamps, which throughout the collection have no better representation than in the U. S. set). Close by we find the very rare three schillings black-on-rose of Bergedorf—an undoubtedly genuine one—and some rare Bolivian stamps. Bosnia is complete, and the array of Brazillian very fine. British Columbia and British Guinea have each some fine specimens Buenos Ayres some rarities, and Canada is as nearly complete as it is often seen, it lacks only three stamps and includes fine specimens of the 1861 envelopes. Cape of Good Hope lacks the wood blocks and most of the provisionals, and Ceylon is nearly complete. The Confederate States are a total blank—not a single stamp to show for themselves. France and its Colonies make a good showing, as do likewise the German States and Empire. Great Britain is complete and in addition boasts of two “Mul-readys.” The stamps of Guatemala (an entire set) are all unused and are very handsome in that condition.

As we reach the place assigned to Hamburg we are pleased to note that the pages which were inserted for the locals have been carefully removed. Proceeding farther we find an excellent set from

British India and a few good specimens from the native Indian States. Italy shows a complete set and Japan one nearly complete. Malta has both the buff and the orange varieties and the difference in color is so plainly marked when the two are side by side as to convince the veriest skeptic—for many there are who believe that the difference is somewhat imaginary. The Mexican stamps are exceptionally fine and include four of the rare provisional "Guadalajara" issue; New Brunswick, New Foundland, and the other "News" present an interesting appearance; and the Nicaraguan stamps close by are certainly very handsome. The Roman States series is complete, something not often seen in a collection of this size; Saxony shows a complete set, including a genuine specimen of the very rare three pfennige of 1850. Spain is almost complete, and Switzerland displays a double Geneva and a nearly full set of the regular issues. Turkey looks somewhat mixed up; Frank evidently having not yet been able to master the varieties. Uruguay and Venezuela are both well represented; Victoria equally well, and Wurtemberg closes the list with an almost complete set—which includes the seventy kreutzer of 1875.

Our examination of this collection has confirmed the impression made on glancing through the album,

— that it is an exceptionally fine one. Not that it contains a very great number of stamps, nor many very rare ones, but its excellence consists in the neatness and care displayed in gathering and mounting the specimens, and the absence of any torn or soiled or disfigured stamps; and any collector can make his album conspicuous for these qualities if he will only take the trouble to properly prepare and mount his specimens. Nothing is more disgusting to a philatelist than a lot of soiled and torn stamps carelessly mounted in an album disfigured by finger marks; and the collectors who possess albums of this sort are largely to blame for the lack of interest in philately which many might feel who now are disposed to ridicule it because their experience with stamp collectors has been confined to this class.



CHAPTER IV.

A NEW COMER.

THE next time Harry Albright met Will Taylor he called his attention to the article on newspaper stamps which had appeared in the stamp journals, expecting that it would deter him from obtaining an agency for the sale of them in Bluffton. Much to Harry's surprise, however, Will, after reading the article, remarked, "Well, what of it? I don't see that it puts any difficulty in the way of selling them. 'The attention of the postal authorities,' it says, 'has been directed to the matter,' but that is all, and the chances are that it will be some time before anything will be done. In the meantime I can probably sell a dozen sets."

"But," said Harry, "You certainly would not sell stamps that you know were made contrary to law and which in a very short time it will be unlawful to handle?"

"You'll see whether I'll sell them or not," was

the only reply Will made, as he proceeded on his way.

Harry could scarcely believe that Will would do anything so dishonest as this; for it certainly would be dishonest to perform an act that was so directly at variance with existing laws as the handling of these counterfeits. He even regretted having told Will about the stamps, for now he would make all the greater effort to dispose of the counterfeits quickly. All Harry could do, however, was to warn all the boys he knew, particularly the younger ones, and this he resolved to do whenever the opportunity presented itself.

A few days later Will Taylor received his facsimiles and at once began to offer them for sale. In a short time he disposed of nine of the ten sets sent him, selling three sets to members of the society. He was greatly elated with his success but prudently determined not to send for any more, as the chances were against his selling them, so much had been said against them. He was a little uneasy, too, in regard to what action the society might take, for he had heard threatening rumors to the effect that some of the members would make an effort to have him expelled for selling the stamps, and as the evening appointed for the next meeting

was close at hand he was anxious to find out if the rumor was true.

The meeting of the Bluffton Stamp Society was largely attended, twenty of the twenty-three members being present. Harry Albright presided and everything went along smoothly until the time arrived for placing new business before the meeting. At this point Harry asked Alec Johnson to take the chair for a short time, and then, after being recognized by the chairman, proceeded to arraign Will Taylor for selling counterfeit stamps, giving an account of his own conversation with him, and also Taylor's conversations with others. He clearly proved that Taylor knew perfectly well what he was selling and closed his remarks by moving that "Will Taylor be expelled from the society for conduct unbecoming a member of the same."

Arthur Seymour, who, before he was made aware of their character, had purchased a set of stamps from Taylor, arose and seconded Harry's motion.

Will Taylor, although not altogether unprepared for this action, turned alternately red and white, and as soon as he could get the floor arose and in an excited manner attempted to defend himself; but without any success, for when the vote was cast and announced, he found that but one member aside from himself, had voted against his expulsion.

Taylor did not attempt to say anything further, but, muttering something that sounded very much like an oath, took his coat and hat and hastily departed.

When the meeting had calmed down after this event, George Wright arose and made the following remarks:

“I received a letter from a friend in Chicago which had, in addition to the ordinary two cent stamp, a stamp in the upper left hand corner which is new to me, and I think, new altogether. I hardly know whether to call it a stamp or not, and would like to have the opinion of the society in regard to it.” With this George handed the president an envelope bearing one of the stamps of the National Letter Return Association, of Chicago.

As Harry received the envelope, the members present crowded eagerly around him, all anxious to see this new candidate for a place in their albums. After a careful examination Harry read the inscription aloud and then passed the stamp around to each of the members.

After all present had inspected the new-comer, the president invited an expression of opinion in regard to it, and, as no one responded, proceeded to give his own in the following words:

“I am considerably in doubt whether to call this a stamp or not. One thing I should regard as

reasonably sure, and that is that it cannot possibly be called a *postage* stamp for it certainly does not represent money spent for postage. The question then naturally arises, can it be a local? Here I am again in doubt. My idea of a local stamp is just what the name implies, a stamp issued for local purposes. Now the use of this stamp does not appear to be confined to any one locality, but extends all over the country. I should think that it deserves a place in the company of postage stamps as indicating a new departure in the direction of facilitating the return to the writer of mis-directed and un-delivered letters. Now, will someone else please give their opinion?"

"I don't think they are stamps in any sense of the word," spoke up Alec Johnson, "If we are to collect these things we ought also to collect every other request to return to writer, and as nearly all business houses have such requests printed on their envelopes, stamp collecting would soon degenerate into a mere collecting of business cards."

"I agree with each of you in some respects," said Frank Hill, "but I think Johnson is too severe in his condemnation of the new comer, and I would like to say in reply to him that he is getting things a little mixed when he calls this stamp a request to return to *writer*. We know that anyone, by simply

printing or writing his name and address on his envelope, together with a request to return to same, can have undelivered letters returned to him, and thousands are daily doing so. But here we have something new — a company formed to receive the undelivered letters of the thousands of individuals who patronize them. They issue a stamp for use by their patrons, and have the adoption of one design do away with a vast number of different "requests." As marking a new step in postal matters, I agree with Albright in saying that they deserve some recognition from philatelists; but I am unable to say just how we ought to classify them unless it be to place them in our album of philatelic curiosities along with doubtful stamps, specimens of forged stamps which we may have run across, and other odds and ends. I don't know whether many of you have kept such albums or not, but I have found mine very useful, and I would advise anyone who has not already done so to start such an album at once — with this nondescript as a beginning."

After some further discussion the meeting finally adopted Hill's classification of the new-comer, and after some discussion of what Hill had termed the "album of philatelic curiosities," they all agreed that such an album was a very convenient and nec-

cessary addition to a stamp collector's library. The meeting then adjourned.

The usual trading and visiting was indulged in for about an hour and then the assemblage finally broke up for that evening.



CHAPTER V.

HARRY MAKES A DISCOVERY.

HARRY ALBRIGHT had always considered himself the pioneer stamp collector of Bluffton, fondly imagining that up to the time when he had introduced the science to his schoolmates such a pursuit as stamp collecting had been unknown in the community. However he accidentally discovered that he was mistaken in this, and the way it came about was as follows:

Having one day occasion to visit Jimmy Bluff, he called at his residence and was informed that he was in his brother's room. Being well acquainted with the house, and with Walter Bluff, Jimmy's oldest brother, a man about thirty years of age, Harry proceeded directly to the room and finding the door ajar gave a gentle tap and pushed it open without waiting for an answer. Much to his surprise Mr. Bluff appeared somewhat confused and annoyed at the intrusion, making a hasty but in-

effectual attempt to conceal something that had been occupying his attention when the door opened. That this object was a stamp album was very apparent, but why Mr. Bluff should appear so startled at being found with it was more than Harry could understand.

Casting a glance around the room and not seeing Jimmy, Harry remarked that he had come there in search of Walter's brother; that he had been informed that he was with Walter.

"He has not been here this morning," Mr. Bluff replied, stealing a glance at the half-concealed album at the same time.

"I'm very sorry," Harry said, and then added, "I see you have a collection of stamps there. Are you a collector too?"

This direct question still further increased Mr. Bluff's confusion, for he was too much of a gentleman to tell a falsehood, and at the same time thought it beneath his dignity to admit that he derived pleasure from the same pursuit this lad followed so eagerly. But after a moment's hesitation he said:

"Well, yes; I must say that I am. Nearly twenty years ago, while a schoolboy, I started the collection you see here, and although there have been times when I have neglected it for months and even years, I have always considered it a source

of great pleasure and have kept it pretty well up with the times. Would you like to look at it?"

Harry was delighted to have the opportunity, so Mr. Bluff made room for him by his side and in a short time the elder of the two, in spite of himself, found that he was deriving as much pleasure from the interview as the boy was; that the pursuit common to them both put them on a footing of equality in which the dignity of the man suffered nothing and the boy received very evident satisfaction.

Mr. Bluff had an excellent collection. It had been started in 1866, and its owner had for six years been a very diligent young collector, then for a period of six or eight years the collection had been practically at a standstill, receiving but very little attention and scarcely any additions. For the last five or six years, however, Mr. Bluff had been pursuing his old hobby with renewed vigor, and in consequence had made many additions to the collection of his younger days. At the present time it numbered about six thousand varieties.

After Harry had looked at the collection until his curiosity was satisfied—that is, for the time being—he expressed his great surprise at its magnitude, and also at Mr. Bluff's not being known as a collector. To the latter remark Mr. Bluff replied:

"I suppose the reason why I am not known in Bluffton as a stamp collector is that, to the best of my knowledge, there are no other men here who are interested in stamps. Indeed, it is only during the last few weeks that I have learned, through Jimmy, that there were even boy collectors in town. I have friends in other cities who collect stamps and I have no doubt there are thousands of men in this country who devote considerable of their leisure to stamps, but in some way the boys have managed to monopolize stamp collecting—or at any rate they make the most noise about it—to such an extent that the men who collect have begun to think it merely boy's play, and in consequence, some have abandoned it entirely while others follow it privately, as I have been doing. You are the only one in town who knows that I am a philatelist at the present time, but I presume the news will spread rapidly enough."

"O no, Mr. Bluff," Harry quietly remarked, "I certainly would say nothing about it if you did not desire me to."

"Tell it to anyone you please." was the reply, "and first of all to Jimmy, who is coming in search of you."

Jimmy Bluff came into the room at this moment, and Harry explained matters to him while Mr.

Bluff smilingly looked on. When he had heard the story Jimmy said reproachfully to his brother:

“I think that awful mean of you, Walter, not to let me know; and you might have given me some of your duplicates when you found I was collecting. I wish I'd have known this before I bought those bogus periodical stamps and I'd have been a dollar ahead.”

“What! you didn't get taken in with those things, did you Jimmy?” asked Walter.

“Yes, I did,” was the reply, “and it's all your fault, too, for if you'd only told me you were a collector I'd have gone to you for advice.”

“Well; you can come to me in future, Jimmy, and for the present I'll try and make good your loss by giving you a fine selection from my duplicates.”

This brought Jimmy around in good humor again, and after receiving some really choice stamps from Mr. Bluff the boys left the room, happy in the possession of the stamps, but still happier in having discovered a man who was a stamp collector.

CHAPTER VI.

STARTING A LIBRARY.

THE next meeting of the society was well attended, although not as many were present as at the last meeting described. An essay on provisional stamps was read by Charlie Bacon, after which an informal discussion was indulged in upon the subject of starting a philatelic library. All were agreed that such an institution would be of great value to the members, but when an effort was made to introduce a motion providing for an assessment of one dollar each, the proceeds to be used in starting a library, they were not so unanimously in favor of it as the previous discussion had seemed to indicate. In fact, a strong opposition was developed when the question was brought so close to their pocket-books. A subsequent effort to make an assessment of fifty cents each also failed to receive support; but finally, upon the amount

being reduced to twenty-five cents, the assessment was successfully put through.

This gave the society the sum of four dollars and fifty cents with which to start their library. A paltry amount you will say, but still it was a starting point. A library committee was appointed, consisting of Frank Hill, chairman, Charlie Bacon, and Oscar Rider. The chairman of the committee was to act as librarian, and the committee's duties were to select and purchase such books and papers as they thought best—subject to the approval of the society—and to place them in the librarian's charge.

After these arrangements had been made Harry Albright arose, and saying he would like to offer some suggestions in reference to the library, made the following remarks:

“In my opinion this matter of starting a philatelic library is of much more importance than many of the members here present are willing to admit; otherwise they would have responded more substantially to the call for funds for that purpose. We can meet here and talk and compare notes as much as we please and still know very little of what is going on in the philatelic world outside of our own narrow circle. We should first of all keep ourselves informed of every thing that is new

in the stamp line. In order to do this the society must have the very earliest notice of new issues and new stamp issuing countries. Some of the stamp papers published have very complete and reliable information of this kind, and, if for no other reason, this should be enough to warrant our subscribing to them. Then again, new information is continually being given about many of the older stamps, forgeries are described, reprints are noted, and many other points of interest are constantly turning up. Now, I would advise using the money raised to-night for subscriptions to the best papers and standard American and English catalogues. To be sure, this will leave nothing for books, but the amount was not sufficient to buy books with.

“Now there is Dr. Earee’s ‘Album Weeds’ a book we ought to possess first of all, but it would take more than half what we raised to-night to purchase it. Another invaluable book is Major Evans’ ‘Handbook’; and Dr. Horner’s History of U. S. envelopes ought to be secured while there is yet a chance to obtain it. Scott’s ‘Revised List’ also is valuable, especially for the information about U. S. locals that is included in it. There are other valuable books that might be mentioned, but what is the use of doing so when we cannot even think of buying them with our present means. Now,

I want to propose that each one of us go to our parents and, after informing them about our library, endeavor to get them to donate some amount of money to help us out. I know the parents of some of us are not able to give much, and that others are unwilling, but I think the result would more than meet our expectations and that it certainly ought to be tried."

"I think," said Frank Hill, "that Harry's suggestion is excellent, and I, for one, will act on it if no one else does."

"And so will I," spoke up several at the same time, and although a few objected to asking their parents for assistance, the majority agreed to do so, and thought their efforts would be successful.

"Now that we have, it is to be hoped, settled the question of funds for our library, or at least made arrangements for some increase in the amount," said Frank Hill, "I want to say that I heartily agree with Harry on the necessity of our having the best stamp papers. And I would suggest our taking six American and two of the best English papers. Another thing which is indispensable is a scrap book. If the earlier stamp collectors had only kept scrap books and preserved in them all the articles in relation to stamps that came under their observation, what a fund of information would

there be now on points more or less obscured by time. Every collector — most certainly every stamp society — should have a scrap book in which to keep clippings from newspapers and magazines, and in which to preserve every item of interest to stamp collectors that comes under his observation.”

“There are a great many articles that have appeared in various magazines that are quite interesting,” said Charlie Bacon; “I have recently hunted out articles in *Chamber's Journal*, *London Society*, *Harper's Monthly*, *All the Year Round*, *Good Literature*, and many others. Only a few days ago in looking over a volume of *Once a Week*, for the year 1863, I found an article entitled Stamp Collection, in which the writer treats of the then quite new pursuit of collecting postage stamps. In the course of the article he states that stamps were being bought and sold largely, in fact to such an extent that large numbers of counterfeits were made and sold to the unwary. And not only counterfeits, but even at that early day (1863) the makers of counterfeits had began to make stamps for countries or for uses that never had any existence save in the minds of their makers. As one of the most notable of this class he mentions the ‘Hamburg locals,’ which he says were made by an ‘enterprising and unscrupulous engraver of Hamburg,’ for the sole

purpose of extorting money from collectors. I say by all means let us have a scrap book, and also let us make an effort to obtain what we can of these old articles, as well as current items of interest."

Charlie sat down somewhat surprised at having said so much. But the boys had been quite interested in his remarks, and before the meeting broke up voted to use as much of the library money as was necessary for the purpose of buying a scrap book. They also one and all agreed to hunt up all the items they could to put in the book.

A vote was taken to ascertain what papers the society should subscribe to, and resulted in a choice of six American and two English papers, as Frank Hill had suggested.

So interesting had the meeting been that the boys had not noticed the growing lateness of the hour, but now they found that it had become too late for further business and therefore adjourned and went directly home, without stopping for the usual exchanges and gossip.

CHAPTER VII.

STAMP PAPERS.

ON the Saturday following the meeting described in the last chapter, Harry Albright and Frank Hill took their collections and made a visit to Jimmy Bluff. They had promised the little fellow, some time before, that they would both make him a visit and show him their collections, and it is presumable that their having discovered a philatelist in Jimmy's brother did much to hasten the time when they should keep their engagement. It is certain that both the boys hoped strongly that Mr. Bluff would be at home as well as Jimmy, and in this they were not disappointed, for after an hour spent pleasantly in comparing collections the three boys were joined by Walter, who at once invited them all to come to his room.

This invitation was very eagerly accepted by the trio, and they were soon poring over Walter's collection, while he in turn looked over theirs. Mr.

Bluff was quite astonished at the fine collections of Harry and Frank, and in particular praised that of the latter.

After some little time spent in this manner Mr. Bluff remarked that Jimmy had told him about the last meeting of the society and of the effort made in the direction of philatelic literature.

“I am afraid;” he said “that we older collectors are largely to blame for the lack of interest shown in stamp literature. We leave it too much to you boys. The majority of stamp papers have little of real value in them to collectors like myself, except for the information regarding new issues and counterfeits. And the reason for this lack of interest is that very few persons contribute to these papers except boys who have nothing in particular to write about, and who only write to see themselves in print. This, I know, is a somewhat sweeping assertion, perhaps more so than I ought to make, for there are a number of notable exceptions that might be named—papers that strive to give their readers original and interesting matter, and writers who are experienced collectors that have information and advice to impart and who do so and do it well. But there are too few of these. I wish that I could compel every man who has retained and kept up the collection of his boyhood days, to write

an article on philately. From the vast array of writers this would call forth, a score, at least, could be picked out with enough literary ability to prepare articles in a proper manner for the press. With such a staff of contributors a paper could be made not only profitable and entertaining, but it would also become a sort of philatetical missionary that would attract attention to our science and induce people to investigate it. Once awakened interest in stamp collecting and the result is almost certain, especially with persons of maturer years,—the infatuation possesses them and almost before they are aware of it they become philatelists.

“Now the average stamp paper most decidedly is not calculated to awaken enthusiasm in a person who is not already a collector. In fact, most of the papers inspire even a collector with nothing but disgust, so what must the effect be on an uninterested person? Here is a copy of a paper I received to-day that well illustrates that point. It is the initial number of a paper that styles itself ‘devoted to the interests of philatelists,’ while on the contrary its existence is only a detriment to us, and a stain on our fair name. As you can see, there is absolutely nothing in it worth a moment’s attention, unless perhaps, we except the editor’s request to throw it in the waste basket if not considered

worth the subscription price; a very sensible request that, and one which I immediately acted upon. And here is another paper, one, too, that has managed to live through a whole year, and that has even established some little reputation in stamp literature. Please note carefully that article; it occupies an entire page, and I doubt if there is one sentence in it that is free from grammatical errors.

“Now, these are not exceptional cases, for the greater part of our present press is afflicted in much the same manner. I would say, in short, that our papers suffer greatly from, first, a lack of originality; second, bad typography and worse proof reading; and third, from a seeming disregard for grammatical construction and a lack of anything indicating that literary ability exists among stamp collectors. It is largely on account of these disfiguring elements in our literature that we sometimes hear our science laughed at and made sport of; called boy's play, and considered beneath the dignity of a science—in fact, a mere pastime and only fit for children to amuse themselves with. Now, I consider it much more than a plaything; it is a study, a very science, and it depends upon the collectors of the present day to have it recognized as such.

“I do not wish you to think that I condemn our papers entirely, for, as I said before, there are some exceptions to this wholesale condemnation. And, then, too, what better can you expect when you are charged twenty-five or fifty cents for a year's subscription, and frequently have a premium thrown in besides as an extra inducement. You never can have a really good paper as long as the prices continue where they are at present, because it cannot be afforded. And it certainly would be an up hill business for any one to start a stamp paper of the character and at the price of representative papers of other sciences. Still I trust that the time will come when such a paper can be made to pay; when our press will take a leap forward and, leaving the old rut, advance to the position it ought to occupy as the representative of so many thousands of enthusiastic specialists.

“I hope, boys, that my remarks have not wearied you. I certainly have said more on this subject than I intended to, but I trust you will take it in good part.”

“I am very sure you have not wearied me,” said Harry, “I was very much interested in what you had to say, and only regretted your stopping.”

“Why can't you come to some of our meetings, Mr. Bluff,” asked Frank. “The boys would greatly

enjoy having you there, and I am sure you would talk to us in a way that would benefit us."

"Well, Frank," Mr. Bluff responded, "perhaps I will. When do you meet again?"

"A week from next Thursday evening, at eight o'clock," was Frank's reply. "We hold our meetings every other week, usually devoting two hours to them; one hour for business and one hour for exchanging stamps and that sort of thing."

"Well, I'll see about it. Jimmy, just remind me of it when the time comes, and perhaps I'll be able to go with you."

"I'll be only too glad to have you, brother," Jimmy replied.

The older boys now thought they had taken up enough of Mr. Bluff's time, and so arose to take their departure. They were not allowed to leave, however, until Mr. Bluff had given each of them a few specimens for their collections. When at last they did depart, each took with him a feeling of deep and kindly regard for Jimmy's brother.

CHAPTER VIII.

REVENUE STAMPS AND OTHER MATTERS.

WHEN the boys met again it was found that the plan adopted at their last meeting, for raising funds for their library, had been quite successful. Nearly every member brought a cash donation from his parents, some bringing only twenty-five cents, and others a dollar or two, while little Jimmy Bluff brought a crisp, new, five-dollar bill which his brother Walter had generously given him. The entire amount thus raised was nearly twenty-five dollars, an amount sufficient to give the library a good start.

Another feature of the meeting was a communication from Will Taylor, in which he acknowledged the justice of his expulsion from the society but pleaded to be readmitted, and promised that if allowed to come back he would be a creditable member of the society. It was at once decided to take him back and give him another chance.

The subject of revenue stamps was brought up by Alec Johnson asking whether they ought to be collected by postage stamp collectors. These stamps found some warm supporters among the boys present, and an interesting discussion was indulged in. Alec, on being asked to state his views, said:

“While these stamps are not postage stamps, still they possess considerable interest for postage stamp collectors. They were issued by the government and have much the appearance of postage stamps. In the case of our proprietary, or private revenue stamps, we find a multitude of designs, some of which are very handsome, and all of them quite interesting. While I don't advocate neglecting postage stamps for them, still I would advise collectors to carefully preserve all specimens they may come across, for they are constantly growing rarer, and, I have no doubt, will be eagerly sought after before long.”

“I don't think that revenues have the attention they deserve,” said Geo. Wright: “They certainly are interesting and should be preserved while there is yet a chance to get them.”

“Yes,” said Frank Hill, “and the time is growing shorter every day. Previous to the time when our government abolished them, but little attention was

given to them, but in the last few years collectors have awakened somewhat to their value and now you will find many a postage stamp collector who possesses a supplementary collection of revenues. That is, of U. S. revenues, for almost without exception the foreign revenues are given the cold shoulder. And this, too, is as it should be; for revenue stamps do not possess the universal interest that postage stamps do; in fact, their interest is confined largely to the country that issues them. In the case of our own revenue stamps we have a great variety of stamps that were issued by private companies, and which bear various original designs of more or less interest. Some of these stamps are already in great demand, and good prices can be obtained for many of them. In less than ten years, I venture to say, our private revenue stamps, even those that are now very common, will command a price that will cause many a collector to regret having passed them by when he could have obtained them easily. Of course they should be collected independantly of postage stamps, and kept in a separate album; and, further, I would not advise you to neglect your postage stamps for them. But I would urge you to secure all you come across, and to hunt up all you can of them before it is too late; and some day you will find that it paid."

' There is a certain element in Hill's remark,' said Harry Albright, "that I strongly object to, and that is his advising us to collect revenues because in a few years they will be likely to command a good price. Now, while I, of course, like to see my stamps increase in value, still I do not collect with that end in view. Some dealers, and some dealers' papers, advance as an argument in favor of collecting postage stamps, the alluring prospect of money making; say that stamps which to-day are quite common are likely in a few years to greatly increase in value; and, in support of this, cite a few rare instances of stamps bringing enormous prices. While it may be true that some of the recent issues became so rare, it is also true that the reason of that rarity was the extremely small number issued, and the chance that you or I have of obtaining specimens is about equal to the chance of drawing a fortune in a lottery. Now; I contend that this idea of making money out of our collections is all wrong. Not one collector in a hundred who buys his stamps can ever realize the cost price on them, if they are thrown upon the market: and the collector who has his stamps given to him by friends should certainly never think of selling them.

" We should collect stamps for the interest we take in them, and not in the expectation of selling

them. Do you suppose that if I should happen to become the owner of a very rare stamp — the Brattleboro', for instance — I would sell it, simply because I could realize considerable money thereby? Not much. As long as I could hold on to my collection at all I would keep that stamp, and nothing could tempt me to part with it.

“The mistake of considering stamp collecting a money making matter occasionally crops out when someone who has started with this deluded idea finds that he was mistaken. In a recent stamp paper there was a letter from a collector who had been told by a friend (presumably one of the kind who start a collection expecting to find ‘millions in it’ and fails to find them) that there was ‘no good’ in stamp collecting any more, that the present issues were being preserved by so many thousands of collectors and dealers that their prices would never advance very greatly, certainly never equal the prices commanded by many of the old and limited issues; and then he further states that there is no more fun in collecting because there is ‘no money in it.’

“Now all of you who collect stamps hoping to make money by so doing had better confine your attention to short-lived provisionals and some other stamps that appear to offer inducements to the spec-

ulator. But do not call yourselves philatelists; we do not recognize you as such. The philatelist makes a science of stamp collecting, and the element of speculation cannot cut any figure with him. We will be content to let the speculative collector join hands with that other collector who can see nothing but amusement in the pursuit, and who claims that stamp collecting is but a mere pastime and not a science. After all, he is partly in the right, for it is not, and never can be, a science to him: and I doubt much if any other pursuit can be scientific to the person who, being once a stamp collector, is unable to distinguish between the mere pastime of collecting stamps and the same pursuit elevated to the rank of a science and pursued upon scientific principles."

"Now, Albright," spoke up Frank Hill, "you are altogether too hard on me; I surely did not intend to advance any such idea as the one you protest so against. I heartily agree with you that when a collector gets the notion of making money out of stamps he certainly loses much of the interest which he formerly had in the pursuit, as well as his money, unless of course he makes a business of stamp dealing; and in that case he simply takes the same chances that any man takes who starts in business.

"An earnest stamp collector does not collect

stamps for their money value, or only for fun, but because he finds the occupation agreeable to him and suited to his taste. Almost everyone has an instinct to collect something."

"Vanderbilt must have had an immense instinct for collecting money," interrupted one of the boys.

"And," Harry proceeded, "when that instinct is centered on some particular object, the individual becomes an enthusiast in that particular, and the money value of the articles desired cuts but a very small figure with him. The rarity of the specimen, however, is of the greatest importance, and if by a little care and foresight he is able to preserve some rarities in his line, his pleasure is far greater than it would be had he bought the same at their market value. In mentioning the probable increase in value of private revenue stamps, I only intended to use that argument to induce collectors to pay attention to them now, while they are obtainable at a moderate cost, and I did not intend to hold them up as a matter of speculation."

"I am glad to hear you say so," Harry replied, "I was afraid you might have caught the speculating fever. But, boys, what do you say to our starting a paper?"

"Starting a paper," repeated Arthur Seymour,

“why there are too many bad ones already, and I'm afraid we wouldn't stand any show.”

“You don't understand just what I mean,” said Harry, “When I propose that our society should have a paper, I mean a written, not a printed one. Let us appoint an editor and a couple of assistants to produce a paper to be read once a month at our meetings. I think such a thing would prove interesting.”

“Yes, indeed,” said George Wright, “I think that's a jolly good idea. Let's have one. But who'll be editor?”

“We can settle that at another meeting,” responded Harry. “It is pretty late to-night to take up the subject, so we had better all think it over, and the next time we meet we can bring the matter up again.”

“Lay it on the table until our next meeting,” said Alec Johnson. “I guess it'll keep without any ice on it.”

The boys laughingly adjourned, and shortly afterward proceeded home, each with the idea, although more or less vague, of starting a paper.

CHAPTER IX.

STARTING A PAPER.

THERE was a larger attendance than usual at the next meeting of the society, owing largely to the discussion about starting a paper that had occurred toward the close of the last meeting. Another reason for the increased attendance was the growing interest that was being manifested in stamp collecting. This was largely due to the society itself, and the steps it was taking to make philately popular.

Several new members were proposed, and the routine business of the society disposed of. But the interest of all was found to be centered on the proposition made by Harry Albright to start a paper, and when that subject came up for discussion everyone was eager for information in regard to it.

Harry, after requesting one of the boys to take the chair, proceeded to explain his proposition in the following words:

“I think, boys, that you have gathered, since our last meeting, something of the idea I had in mind when I proposed starting a society paper. You all know how difficult it is to keep up a programme — a series of entertainment for our meetings, which will include essays and that sort of thing. Now, if we start a paper, under the management, say, of a committee of three, we can make that take the place of individual effort at entertainment, and I think it will prove more interesting than any other scheme yet proposed. I would suggest that the committee be given full control of the paper; the society, of course, expecting them to do their duty in exacting contributions from each of the members. Let these contributions be short and newsy, and strive to have them as interesting and original as possible. Now will not some one else let us hear from them on the subject?”

“I think the best way to do is to try the plan without delay,” said Frank Hill, “and I move that a committee of three be nominated and voted upon at once. I would nominate as one of the three, Harry Albright.”

“And I nominate Frank Hill,” said Jimmy Bluff.

“I nominate Charlie Bacon,” said George Wright.

These three boys, having no opposition, were speedily elected a committee to manage a paper for

the society. They were given full power to act and were required to read the paper at each meeting, after all the other business had been transacted.

After Harry had resumed his place as presiding officer, he asked if there was anything else to be brought up before adjourning. At this, Frank Hill arose and said:

‘I would like to make a few remarks about surcharged stamps. These stamps are making a great deal of noise, and are taking up a large amount of space in our collections. Now, as Boss Tweed said to the people of New York, ‘What are you going to do about it?’ There are surcharges and there are surcharges, some of them undeniably within the pale of our science, some of them doubtful, and some wholly foreign to it. But where are you going to draw the line? that’s what I want to know.

“In a recent issue of a prominent stamp paper there is a list of the so-called philatetical gains for the year 1885; that is, a list of all the new stamps said to have been issued that year for prepaying postage. According to this list there were over five hundred new postage stamps issued in that year. Just think of it! Over five hundred new candidates for places in the philatetical world. But let us glance at the composition of this host. Out of the lot, over three hundred are surcharged stamps,

leaving two hundred for new issues — that is, new designs, or, as in many cases, a change of color in the old design. At this rate it is only a question of time, and not a long time either, when there will be so many surcharged stamps that the others will sink into insignificance, as far as numbers go, beside them. Three-fifths of all the new stamps were surcharges; that is to say, they exceed the regular issues by fifty per cent. Now, I say, where is this surcharging going to stop? Or, as it does not seem likely to stop, I repeat the questions, what are we going to do about it? Where shall we draw the line?

“These surcharges that are chronicled among the philatelic gains of 1885, seem to group themselves into four distinct classes, the largest of which is called, in the article referred to, *provisionals*. This class comprises about one hundred and seventy stamps, or over one-half the entire lot. These provisionals I would divide into two classes; first, stamps of one state surcharged for temporary or provisional use by another state; and in this case the arms, or some other symbol of the surcharging state is used. In this division I would class the Peruvian and the recent Bulgarian surcharged stamps. These I think are worthy of the utmost consideration of every philatelist. But the other

division of provisionals that I now proceed to take up is another matter altogether. This class consists of stamps of a state surcharged with a different value from that which it originally possessed. In this case you have no deviation from the original type, nothing of historic interest as in the cases where the arms of conquering nations are displayed above those of the native state; nothing, in fact, but the evidence of the negligence or stupidity of the postal authorities of the state issuing the stamp; for the altered value shows that some one had failed in their attention to business, or else there would have been no necessity for the surcharge. Either this, or, as some persons assert, the postal authorities are trying to make a little money out of philately by needlessly multiplying varieties. In either case, I do not think the stamps worthy of our attention; collect the original type, and let the new values which disfigure them pass by unnoticed.

“Another class of surcharges is represented in this article by about seventy-five stamps, a little less than one fourth of the lot. These comprise colonial stamps, such as Portuguese surcharged Azores, British India surcharged Puttialla, etc. I must confess that I hesitate somewhat about attacking these stamps; some of them, notably those of Madeira, have been recognized for many years.

But, in spite of this, I will have my say. Take the Madeira or Azores stamps, for instance; we have the same identical types in the Portuguese issues, the only difference consisting of a printed line containing the name of the colony surcharged over the face of the stamp, and thereby detracting just so much from its beauty. Now, for the sake of comparison, suppose our own stamps were surcharged with the name of each State in the Union. Would you, in your collection, like to multiply the United States set by the number of States we have? And would it not be just as reasonable to do so as it is to collect stamps of Cape of Good Hope surcharged Griqualand? I say collect one type (but all colors, where such are distinct varieties and not mere varieties of shade, such as is bound to exist when the entire issue is not printed with one run of ink); collect one type, and let insignificant surcharges go.

“The remaining classes referred to are both small, the two together not numbering more than fifty stamps. These ought easily to be disposed of. The first class consists of regular issues surcharged ‘Official’ for official use; and the second class consists of fiscal stamps used postally. I would say unhesitatingly of both of these, discard them. In regard to those surcharged ‘official’ we might as well accept as varieties the Swiss ‘ausser kurs’

(out of use) and United States 'specimen' or 'canceled' stamps. The other class, fiscally postals used, possess perhaps more interest, but they belong properly to the collection of revenue stamps.

"Now I have taken up more time than I anticipated, and the hour has become quite late. However, if any of you have anything to plead in extenuation of the stamps I have condemned, I will be glad to hear it now or at our next meeting."

As Frank took his seat he was greeted with a burst of applause, intended probably as much for the eloquent way in which he had presented his view of the case as for the sentiments expressed. But as no one seemed anxious to champion the cause of surcharges that evening, the meeting was adjourned and the members departed for their homes.



CHAPTER X.

MR. BLUFF VISITS THE SOCIETY.

THE boys were greatly pleased to find, when they next assembled, that Mr. Bluff had accompanied Jimmy to the meeting. The business of the evening was quickly dispatched, and everything ran as smoothly as could be wished. Mr. Bluff complimented the boys very highly on their method of conducting the society and said it would compare favorably with many more pretentious organizations.

Frank Hill invited a reply to his attack on surcharges, made at the last meeting, but no one seemed prepared to take up the gauntlet. The chairman then requested Mr. Bluff to favor the boys with a few remarks, which request was complied with, Mr. Bluff speaking as follows:

“My young friends: My brother Jimmy brought me home a report of your last meeting, which caused me much surprise and pleasure. I must admit that

I am very much astonished at the way you youngsters take hold of this thing. In particular, the remarks made by one of your members upon the subject of surcharges were of much interest to me. Of course, there are two sides to all questions, and this particular question is no exception to the rule; in fact, it seems to have many sides to it. But while I may differ with the speaker in some respects I cannot but admire his remarks as a whole. There is no doubt at all but that we are sadly afflicted with an over production of surcharged stamps and that some remedy must be speedily devised or philately will be in danger of being swamped by these productions.

“This subject of surcharges is, to my mind, one that requires the united wisdom of all of philately’s followers. If such a thing could be brought about as a congress of stamp collectors this subject would be of first importance for its consideration. In lieu of such a congress it might be well to have the subject discussed by all philatetical societies, in order to get the opinions, or rather the arguments for or against, of active collectors everywhere; and then from the mass of evidence thus obtained we might be enabled to take some effective steps toward the improvement of the present system — or no system.

“Mr. Hill rather sweepingly condemns all stamps

surcharged for colonial purposes, claiming that as the type is the same as that of the mother country there is no use of collecting a duplicate of it, and that, too, with a disfiguring surcharge across it. Now let us glanee at the catalogue for a moment and see what stamps would be effected by such a change as this. To begin with, here is Azores — Hill would ask us not to collect them; next we have the first issue of Cyprus — these would have to go; then comes Griqualand, Guinea, Puttialla, Johor, Madeira, Montserrat (first issue), Perak, Selangor, St. Pierre and Miquelon, Straits Settlements (first issue), Sungei Ujong, Tahiti, and Timor, — these must all go says Mr. Hill. Now, I will not say he is right, neither will I say he is altogether wrong, but I would suggest that you make a list of all the stamps that come under this head, print it, and send it, together with the substance of Mr. Hill's argument, to leading collectors everywhere, at the same time inviting an expression of opinion from them. This would very likely result in obtaining the views of many collectors and would be making a good start in the right direction.

“Twenty years ago, when I began to collect stamps, there were no stamps of this kind to puzzle us; but since that time they have been growing steadily — slowly at first, but increasing gradually,

until the time is now arrived when some action is necessary. Any collector who will throw out surcharges of the character just discussed will not hesitate to side with Mr. Hill in his disposition of the remaining classes of surcharges. In regard to them I must admit frankly that I agree with him and only place in my collection such surcharges as indicate a change of government which renders a provisional surcharge imperative.

“I would like to see you proceed with this crusade against surcharges, and trust you may succeed in bringing about a much needed reform. But bear this in mind, you will be obliged, from the start, to contend against many who do not share these views. I also think that the continual demand for new stamps has led many a petty state or postal official to issue provisionally surcharged stamps that were wholly unnecessary.

“The time has gone by for receiving everything in the shape of a stamp into a collection of postage stamps. One cannot be too careful what he admits, for you all know how difficult it is to give up a stamp that has once been accepted and accorded a place in the album. I find it difficult to part with even a counterfeit that has deceived me, and when I apply the tests and find it wanting I regretfully try it again and again in the vain hope that I might have

been mistaken. But in the case of a stamp not already in the collection we are all able to be more impartial; and hence the necessity of great care in making additions.

“The latest absurdity I have ran across in the line of surcharges is a Bermuda stamp surcharged Gibraltar. Now what can be more ridiculous than using a West Indian stamp as a provisional for service in the Mediterranean? Of course the absurdity is somewhat lessened when you come to think the matter over, for both are British possessions, and most of the stamps for Britain and her colonies are made in London by De La Rue. At the same time why use Bermudan stamps for this purpose? Why not use the series for England, or for Malta, or some place not so far away as Bermuda? Or, better still, use the same stamps they have used for years past if they cannot afford a die of their own.

“But enough on this subject. I would like to hear how you are getting on with your paper; the idea appeared to me rather a good one.”

With this Mr. Bluff sat down, and Harry Albright, as chairman of the committee—or perhaps I should say editor-in-chief,—proceeded to read the paper. It proved even more successful than had been hoped for and all were united, Mr. Bluff included, in pronouncing it a decided success.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

The results of these interesting meetings of the Bluffton Society could not fail to be satisfactory to its members. The reader will remember that when he was first introduced to the society it numbered but twenty-three members; at the present writing its membership is more than double that number, and the members are all ardent devotees at the shrine of philately. Most of the new members are advanced collectors, and a few of them—among whom is Mr. Bluff—are men.

A recent ruling of the society provided that no one should be qualified for membership unless he was sixteen years old and possessed a collection of a thousand or more varieties of postage stamps. The reason for this action lay in the fact that when the society started fully one-half its members were small boys, with collections of but two hundred or three hundred stamps, and whose interest in

the pursuit was only temporary. These members were not at all to be depended upon, as they in a very short time forsook their stamps and the society and took up something else that pleased them for the moment. It was therefore agreed upon that where a boy was sixteen years of age and possessed enough interest in stamps to accumulate a thousand varieties, the chances were in favor of his sticking to it and becoming worthy of being called a philatelist. Such boys would be valuable acquisitions to the society, and such only were wanted.

This ruling did not apply to the little fellows already in the society; for there were three or four small boys who had stuck to it like little men — notably Jimmy Bluff and Willie Small. But all the later members were such as fulfilled these requirements.

It is but right to mention here the improvement that has taken place in Will Taylor. Since his readmittance into the society he has become one of its most useful and valuable members. He has utterly forsaken fac-similes and counterfeits and has rejected all such from his collection, much to its improvement; and although he now has but a few over a thousand, whereas he formerly boasted over

two thousand, still his collection is now much more interesting to the philatelist.

The meetings are being more largely attended than ever and continue to be as interesting as formerly — or even more so. With the introduction of new members and new talent into the society there naturally followed more interesting discussion and debate, which, instead of being participated in by but a few, as in the earlier meetings, became much more general and instructive.

The paper has become a decided success, and other societies who are in communication with ours have already adopted this feature, and as far as heard from with uniformly gratifying results. It certainly is a good means of inducing the members to express their views on the live philatetical questions of the day; and then, too, they are likely to present their cases in much better shape when they commit them to writing. Of course the paper has not taken the place of discussion, but is rather an incentive to it and furnishes topics for debate.

At the last meeting of the society to which I shall have the pleasure of conducting the reader the principal subject of the evening was the best method of preserving a collection. Some of the members advocated an album of this, that, or the other make, and some advocated keeping their

collections in blank books. Mr. Bluff spoke very decidedly in favor of using cardboard, and said that after an experience with nearly every one of the ready-made stamp albums he had not found any that was satisfactory, and that a blank book was not any better.* But since he had adopted the cardboard system he had had perfect satisfaction and had never been at a loss to place any specimen he had come across. The trouble with all ready made albums is that the collector is obliged to follow out the system of the album maker or else disfigure the book by mounting stamps about the margins and leaving spaces blank where the collector does not agree with the album maker as to the advisability of admitting the stamp in his collection.

The members were all agreed that the universally to be accepted album had not yet been made, and furthermore, that it was apparently next to an impossibility to make it. The plan of using cardboard, while not at all new, seemed to offer more inducement to advanced collectors than any other that has yet been developed.

As there is an end to all things so must there be an end to this record of the doings of the Bluffton

* Since this was written a most admirable album has been published,—the *Improved Postage Stamp Album*.

Stamp Society; and the writer can only hope that his readers have received as much entertainment from the narrative as he has had in preparing it for them. However, we leave the society well established and in a flourishing condition; and it may be that in the fullness of time it will again be heard from — provided it should have awakened enough interest to demand it.



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