

# THE BAY STATE ADVERTISER.

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No. 1.

## POSTAGE STAMPS

AND HOW THEY ARE MADE.

By J. M. T. Partello.

Did any of the readers ever see the process of manufacturing the little postage stamps we all take so much pleasure in collecting? Perhaps the greatest manufacturing firm of this kind on this side of the Atlantic, and possibly in the whole world, is located in the fifth story of the Equitable Life Insurance Building, on the corner of Broadway and Cedar street, in New York City. A great many of the foreign stamps, we find so much trouble in securing for our albums, are born on this very spot in New York City. The American Bank Note Company hold the contract for the making of the United States postage stamps, and they have held it off and on ever since July 1st, 1861. The Continental Bank Note Company had it for awhile; but, I believe, the American Bank Note Co. have it at present writing. They renew their contract every four years; and having the presses, inks, expert workmen, and everything else necessary to manufacture the stamps, they are able to underbid all competitors for the job, and thus secure a renewal of their contract at the expiration of every four years. It once fell to my lot to pay a visit to the top of the Equitable Building (which, by the way, is perfectly fire-proof), and you may be sure I enjoyed every moment of time in examining everything in this great postage stamp mill which I consider the greatest of the kind in existence. The first thing to do is to step on the elevator at the ground floor, when you are shot skyward with such tremendous velocity that you not only have every bit of breath taken out of your body, but you also imagine the machine is going straight up through the roof. This last catastrophe does not take place however, for the elevator box suddenly comes to a standstill, a little door slides back, and you step out in front of an iron-barred door which is constant-

ly locked and guarded by a janitor, who sits within the bars. Our party "had a pass," and so the door was unlocked for our admittance. We met the government agent, who is always present to attend to the interests of the U. S., also the superintendent of the Bank Note Co.; both of whom were very courteous to us and showed us all the mysteries of stamp manufacturing. The whole upper floor is divided into a number of rooms apportioned out as office rooms, printing rooms, drying rooms, cancelling, cutting, perforating, and every other kind of room. In printing, steel plates are used, on which two hundred stamps are engraved, and that number printed at each impression. The stamps are entirely printed with large rolling-hand presses, each press having one man and a girl to do this work. Near by are two other men kept hard at work covering the plates with colored inks and passing them to the man and girl who do the printing. I counted ten of these presses in the room, although less than half that number were in operation, as there was no particular rush for stamps at the time I visited the establishment. The paper used, as every one can see by examining the stamps, is of a peculiar texture, somewhat similar to that used in bank notes. After coming from the printing presses, the sheets of stamps are given a chance to dry, and then are sent into the next room to be gummed. This was the most interesting room of them all to me, as I was particularly anxious to see what manner of paste was used in gumming the sheets. I knew that gum arabic or simple mucilage cracks paper badly (see the last issue of *Aunt A* which, to my mind, takes the cake for miserable gumming), and so I walked into the next room and up to a large smooth table, where stood a pair of pasters with large calomining brushes in their hands slapping on the gum with rapidity, care and precision. I examined the brushes, and found them to be of the finest quality of camel's hair, as fine and as soft as silk. Next I examined the paste-pot, and was not long in discovering the secret of such excellent paste, it was all due to the potatoes. One of the workmen informed me that the

waste was a composition made of the powder of dried potatoes, starch, and other vegetables, mixed to the right proportion with warm water. The receipt is so simple and the composition so excellent, that I have half a mind writing it out and sending it to the Austrian government with my compliments. After covering with this paste, the sheets are placed on little racks to again dry, this time being fanned by steam power for an hour or more. Taken from the racks they are placed between sheets of pasteboard and pressed in hydraulic presses capable of applying between 225 and 250 tons. The next thing to do is to pass them over to a number of young girls armed with shears almost as large as themselves, by whom the sheets are cut in half, each sheet then containing one hundred stamps. Cutting by hand is preferred to that of machinery, as the latter method, it has been found, destroys too many stamps. In the next room are a number of squads, to whom the sheets are passed for the perforating process. This is done by machinery, singly too, and with great care, lest some of the profiles should have their beauty spoiled by being cut full of holes. After being perforated, the job is finished and each sheet undergoes a careful scrutiny. If a single stamp is torn or mutilated, the whole sheet is condemned, then cancelled by cutting, and afterwards burned. If they pass the final test, the sheets are pressed once more, then packed and labeled, and stowed away in another room to await orders. I asked our guide how many stamps were destroyed by reason of some fault in their manufacture. He answered between 700 and 800 sheets a week, which would make between 70,000 and 80,000 individual stamps destroyed four times each month. I forgot to say there is a small room off to one side where the final counting is done. During their manufacture the stamps are counted no less than eleven times by girls, whose expertness in the business is only equalled by the lady counters in the Treasury Department at Washington; some of whom count more money in a single minute of time than most of us can hope to possess or even in a life time. So great is their accuracy and such care do these young ladies take in counting them, that not a single sheet of stamps has been lost during the past twenty-five years. We saw many other wonderful things in the building which would not be interesting to narrate. On one shelf I saw a plate with the profile of Don Pedro engraved

thereon, which led me to believe that possibly the stamps of Brazil were manufactured in the very room. Having inspected every thing worth seeing, the superintendent politely but expeditiously conducted us back to the iron-barred door, opened the same and showed us out, turned the key on us. We stepped aboard the elevator once more and sped downward I thought with a speed more alarming than when we ascended, arriving at the bottom with just about as much breath as when we went up. An open door-way led us to the street, and we mingled with the crowd on busy Broadway, much pleased with our visit to the wonderful stamp factory above our heads.

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#### EGGS.

The oval eggs of the bird are covered with a thin white or colored shell, formed largely of carbonate of lime (calcium carbonate). Inside of the tough skin lining of the shell is inclosed the albumen or white of the egg, which encloses the yellow or yolk. In the centre of the yolk, is a jelly-like speck, called the germ, from which the bird is hatched. No matter how the egg lies, the yolk is made so that the germ is always upper-most, therefore, when the hen is sitting on the egg, the germ is always nearest to the warmth. While the bird is in the shell, the yolk and albumen are its food. Between the skin and the shell, at the larger end, is a space filled with air for the bird to breathe. In most animals, other than birds, the outer shell and white are wanting, but the yolk and germ are found in the eggs of all animals. Birds usually deposit their eggs in nests. The egg of most all common birds are told about in the articles on those birds. In some countries the common people live almost entirely upon the eggs of the wild water birds, that are found on their shores.

Reptile's eggs are generally quite large having a large yolk to feed the young animal. Covering them is a tough skin like parchment not hard like the shells of bird's eggs. They are deposited in warm sandy places, dunghill, or on heaps of vegetable mould, when they're hatched by the heat from the sun or the warmth from the decayed matter. Crocodiles and alligators lay from 20 to 60 eggs; tortoises and turtle, 20 to 25; serpents, 10 to 50; and lizards, 8 to 12.

The Amphibian's eggs (such as frogs and toads), look like little lumps of jelly, each containing a tiny black speck. The real eggs are the black specks, the jelly which keeps them together is the food of the young when born. These eggs may be found in the water near the shore, fastened in bunches to sticks or grasses. Those of the tree-frog and toad look the same, only the former lays its eggs in bunches, while the latter lays its eggs in long strings. The tree-frog goes into the water only in the spring to lay its eggs. The young leave the water and live in trees when they are large enough.

Fishes' eggs are in little sacks called roe or spawn, containing sometimes thousands and even millions of eggs. Nine million eggs have been known to be contained in the roe of a single codfish. Some fish lay on the sand or gravel along the sea-shore; others choose the leaves of water plants and sea-weed; while others deposit their spawn in the shallow water at the head of rivers. The ray, shark, and etc., lay but few eggs, and take better care of them than other fish. An oblong horny case encloses each egg, which is attached to sea-weeds by long tendrils. The shell is thin at one end, which enables the young fish to break its way out when it has grown large enough.

The eggs of Crustaceans are usually carried about by the female, fastened under the body where they are hatched. Under a lobster were found more than 12,000 eggs and crayfish are said to lay more than 100,000 eggs. They are laid in bunches fastened together with a sticky fluid. These eggs are very small at first, but are about the size of small shot when about to be hatched. It takes about six months to hatch young lobsters. The mother shakes the eggs with her tail and breaks the shell, which lets the little ones free, and she gets rid of her burden in a few days.

Insect's eggs are of different shapes and colors, generally white, yellow or green. Bee's, fly's, and beetle's eggs are mostly round. They are almost always laid near some thing that their young will eat. The flesh-fly lays its eggs in meat, the cheese-fly in cheese; and the tumble bug in a ball of dung, which it rolls away in a safe place. Vegetable-eating insects lay their eggs upon the leaves of the plant upon which it feeds. The flea lays about 12 eggs; flies and beetles, 50; silk-worm, 500 to 2,000; queen bees, 50,000; and ants, millions.

— TO BE CONTINUED —

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