

NOVEMBER, 1875.

ST. NICHOLAS

SCRIBNER'S

Illustrated Magazine

FOR

GIRLS AND BOYS

CONDUCTED BY

MARY MAPES DODGE

Vol. III.

No. 1.

SCRIBNER & CO.
NEW YORK.

HANOVER FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY.

Cash Assets, over \$1,400,000.

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The December number will contain an admirable article on Hans Christian Andersen, by Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen, with an entirely new portrait of Andersen, drawn by Fredericks. The "Boy Emigrants" will get into the real work of their great undertaking, and there will be another "Bass Cove" sketch by Mr. Trowbridge. The poetry of the number, by H. H. Celia Thaxter, G. P. Lathrop, Mrs. Julia C. R. Dorr, and others, will be unusually interesting and well illustrated.

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POSTAGE-STAMP COLLECTING.



ABOUT ten years ago, when the passion for collecting postage-stamps had just begun, all that was known of them could be told in a few pages of ST. NICHOLAS. But at the present day, postage-stamp collecting, in many parts of this country and Europe, has so increased, that a name—"Philately"—has been given to the pursuit, and much attention has been paid to it in various ways. In some of our cities there are shops where nothing

Indian stamps we learn something of the peculiar characteristics of these islands; while in the stamps of our own country, in common with others issuing from other quarters of the globe, we have national portrait galleries.

While postage-stamps are being collected, or when they are put into their albums, they are examined and studied. The map is consulted to find the location of the country issuing them. The history is opened to find whose portraits are figured on them. The cyclopedia is brought out to get some idea of their value. Some learned friend is questioned to find the meaning of the peculiar



New South Wales, 1875.



Orange Free States, 1867.



Paraguay, 1870.



Virgin Islands, 1868.



Turkey, 1862.



Western Australia, 1872.



Cashmere, 1867.



British Guiana, 1850.



Naples, 1858.



Egypt, 1867.

SOME NOTABLE POSTAGE-STAMPS.

but foreign postage-stamps are sold, and in Paris there is a regular postage-stamp exchange on the Champs Elysees.

The collecting of postage-stamps is not always such a frivolous pastime or occupation as many people imagine.

These little bits of colored paper, ornamented with portraits, or coats-of-arms, or peculiar devices, have a great deal of information in them. They tell of the rise and fall of princes; of the history of republics; of the manners and customs of the people; of the peculiar characteristics of the country. The French and Spanish stamps are epitomes of the histories of their respective countries; the English colonial stamps are a geography in themselves; the South American stamps present a fine display of mottoes and devices; from the West

inscriptions or legends. And, little by little, this research goes on until the collector often finds himself, in a manner, getting hints of almost everything of interest going on in the world. If Russia and Turkey are quarreling over Montenegro, he can discuss the cause of the troubles. He found it out when examining the Montenegrin stamps in his album. When a young boy is placed on the throne of Spain, and the collector's attention is called to this country, stamps show him the many changes in that unfortunate country; and Amadeus, and Don Carlos, and Isabella, and the proud and haughty nation which unveiled a new continent, pass before him as a panorama. The Centennial is spoken of; our young collector takes out his album, and sees Franklin with his kite, Washington at Yorktown, Perry on the Lakes, Jefferson

and Louisiana, Jackson behind the cotton bales at New Orleans, Scott on the plains of Mexico, and Lincoln with his emancipation proclamation.

In stamp-collecting the judgment is sharpened in endeavoring to detect the good stamps and to discard the counterfeit; the eye is drilled to appreciate the harmony and contrast of colors, in the proper arrangement of the stamps; patience is acquired and taste cultivated in the efforts to produce fine effects; and cases are known of foreign languages being studied simply to enable the collector to decipher the legends and inscriptions on the stamps. A pursuit which is productive of so much good should not be decried as a mere childish pastime.

The introduction of the postal system, as it at present exists in all countries on the globe, has been credited to England, when, in 1840, covers and envelopes were devised to carry letters all over the kingdom at one penny the single rate. This plan was adopted through the exertions of Sir Rowland Hill, who has been aptly termed the "father of postage-stamps." It now appears, however, that there is another aspirant for the introduction of the stamp system. In Italy, as far back as 1818, letter sheets were prepared, duly stamped in the left lower corner, while letters were delivered by specially appointed carriers, on the prepayment of the money which the stamp represented. The early stamp represented a courier on horseback, and was of three values. It was discontinued in 1836. Whether Italy or Great Britain first introduced postage-stamps, other countries afterward began to avail themselves of this method for the prepayment of letters, although they did not move very promptly in the matter.

Great Britain enjoyed the monopoly of stamps for three years, and, though the first stamps were issued in 1840, she has made fewer changes in her stamps than any other country, and has suffered no change at all in the main design—the portrait of Queen Victoria. In other countries, notably in our own, the Sandwich Islands, and the Argentine Republic, the honor of portraiture on the stamps is usually distributed among various high public officers; but in Great Britain the Queen alone figures on her stamps, and not even the changes that thirty-five years have made in her face are shown on the national and colonial postage-stamps.

The next country to follow the example of England was Brazil. In 1842 a series of three stamps was issued, consisting simply of large numerals denoting the value, and all printed in black. Then came the cantons in Switzerland, and Finland, with envelopes which to-day are very rare, and soon after them, Bavaria, Belgium, France, Hanover, New

South Wales, Tuscany, Austria, British Guiana, Prussia, Saxony, Schleswig Holstein, Spain, Denmark, Italy, Oldenburg, Trinidad, Wurtemberg, and the United States. Other countries followed in the train, until, at the present moment, there is scarcely any portion of the globe, inhabited by civilized people, which has not postage-stamps.

In looking at a collection, one is struck with the variety and peculiarities of the designs. You would not suppose that Cashmere, noted for the beautiful designs of its shawls, could ever sanction such a stamp as the one shown on the preceding page. And it would puzzle a hieroglyphist to decipher the queer device unless he stretched his imagination to see some resemblance between it and the Cashmere goat. These stamps are printed from ivory blocks, which accounts for their daubed appearance, the figure in the cut being decidedly superior to the stamps themselves. The stamps for the Virgin Islands are very significant. The first that appeared represented a virgin holding in her hand a lamp, and surrounded by eleven lamps. Collectors at once put their heads together, and agreed that Columbus, who discovered these islands, having regard to their number, named them in commemoration of the celebrated eleven thousand virgins of Cologne. The truth is, however, that Columbus discovered these islands on the Virgin's day, and accordingly named them after the Virgin Mary, and that the twelve lamps represent the twelve primitive Christian charities. The Virgin Isles are a group of small rocky islands north of the Caribbees.

We know of a postage-stamp issued in the Isle of Reunion (formerly the Isle of Bourbon), in the Indian Ocean, which, originally worth a few cents, cannot now be bought for one hundred dollars, although this is by no means the highest price which has been paid for a postage-stamp.

The British Guiana stamp, represented in our cut, though ugly enough, is one of the rarest stamps known. Perhaps there is not a complete set in any one collection.

We might proceed in this way, describing the peculiarities of postage-stamps, the reasons for the numerous devices and changes, and find a pleasure in the recital; but the young collector must have something left for his own industry, and it is better, therefore, to leave this part of the subject, and say something about the proper way of keeping the stamps.

It is a disputed question whether prepared albums should be used or not. Although there may be a certain measure of usefulness in them, they leave no room for the exercise of individual taste. That the prepared album should be entirely discarded is the opinion of nine out of every ten collectors, and

our advice would be, therefore, to use books made of heavy paper, with perfectly blank pages. On these the stamps may be arranged to suit the collectors' fancy.

The principle of mounting the stamps now adopted by amateurs is that known as hinging. Several methods have been advocated, but the one we name is superior to all others in convenience and adaptation to the purpose. First, then, as to the paper used for the hinges. There is a kind of fine, foreign letter paper, strong, thin, and almost transparent, called by stationers "onion-skin," which answers the best. Sheets of this should be washed on one side only with a weak solution of pure gum arabic, just thick enough to flow easily, and to not crack when dried. The sheets, when dry, must be cut into strips of about one-half inch in width. The stamps, having been freed from all adhering paper, should be placed side by side on the strip, one edge of which has been previously moistened to the depth of one-eighth inch, as illustrated in the following figure:



Then, with a pair of scissors, separate the stamps,

and trim the adhering portion of the strip, when it should look like the following:



Fold the strip backward upon itself, and by the application of a little water from a camel's-hair brush, the stamp is ready to be placed in position. The great advantage of this plan lies in the fact that a stamp once mounted can be easily removed from the page without injury to stamp or page, by moistening the hinge, the paper being so thin that a slight touch of water will loosen the hinge from the page.

A word or two on the subject of counterfeits may not be amiss. Stamp-dealing is quite a lucrative pursuit, and the profits are certainly large enough to induce the dealer to sell only genuine stamps; it is a sad fact, however, that many persons counterfeit nearly every rare stamp, and palm off their cheat upon the young collector, and even upon the experienced amateur, as a valuable original.

Young collectors should be careful to collect none but genuine postage-stamps, and to have no dealings except with respectable and honest persons.

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