

THE WORLD'S GREATEST STAMP ERRORS.

By Alvin Good.

Since that memorable day on which the Garfield-Perry Stamp Club celebrated the Twentieth Anniversary of its organization, I have been requested by many philatelists to write an article describing the "Worlds' Greatest Stamp Errors," as illustrated on the souvenir menu card presented to those attending the banquet on the above occasion; but never having done anything in the way of philatelic journalism (or any other kind for that matter) it was with much reluctance that I consented to pen these few notes.

Of course my description of these errors will simply consist of what has been published and republished in years gone by in various journals and catalogues.

In casting about for something unique which could be used as a suitable souvenir for those attending the above mentioned affair, the Committee had almost despaired of being able to furnish something in the philatelic line which would at least equal the souvenir used at the 19th Annual Banquet, and it was just by chance that the writer in rummaging through his desk came across two pages clipped from the London Philatelist, probably in 1904, in which there appeared an article by the editor entitled "The Rarest Stamp Errors," which was a review of several articles on the same subject which appeared in the Stamp Collector, The Illustriertes Briefmarken Journal, and various other journals as regards the approximate degree of rarity of stamps with inverted centres and errors of color. The writers of the above mentioned articles appended a list of errors in the order they should be placed, according to their opinion. I noted with a great deal of pleasure that Mr. Worthington possessed most of these errors, and therefore the idea of a souvenir menu card at once presented itself.

As there appears to be but little difference of opinion in the first fourteen stamps of the lists referred to above, I reproduce it, but also with a few slight changes, the most noticeable of which is that I have eliminated the U. S. 1901 inverts and inserted the 15c 1869 Inverted centre:

1. Spain, 1851 2R Blue.
2. Austria 1867, 3kr red,
3. Baden, First Issue, 9kr Green,
4. Western Australia 4d blue, Swan Inverted,
5. Spain, 1876, 25m blue & rose, Inverted Frame,
6. South Australia, 1870 4d blue with sur. "3 Pence." omitted,
7. Saxony 1851, ½ ngr. Blue,
8. U. S. 30c 1869, Inverted Centre,
9. India 1854, 4a Inverted Frame,
10. Cape of Good Hope, 1d blue Woodblock,
11. Cape of Good Hope, 4d red Woodblock,
12. Finland 1891, 3R 50K Yellow & Black,
13. U. S. 1869 15c, Inverted Centre,
14. U. S. 1869 24c, Inverted Centre.

I will not use up any space in discussing the relative degree of rarity of the above list, as my article has most to do with the errors on the Souvenir Card. In this photo are four stamps which come a little further down on the list, but nevertheless they are very interesting and curious, and for that reason were illustrated along with those of a greater degree of rarity, viz.: St. Helena 6d red without

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surcharge "ONE PENNY;" Philippine Islands 1855 1R "Corros;" Sweden 1872 "Tretio Ore" instead of "Tjugo Ore;" and Russia 1882 14 k blue and rose, centre inverted.

Western Australia 1854, 4d, "Inverted Swan."

This is one of the most famous of Australian Stamps, and one of the rarest stamps in the world. The position of this variety is probably the first stamp of the eighth row in each pane of sixty. The Philatelic Record for March gives the most

complete and latest theory regarding this error. I quote from it the following:

"Mr. Bacon's theory was that it was the frame and not the swan that was inverted. When pasting on the transfers of the central portion of the design, the workmen would not fail to notice if one was upside down. It would be quite another matter with the borders. The lettering was small and it would be a very easy thing to make a mistake. Assuming this theory to be correct there would have to be at least four Inverted Frames on the entire sheet, as it was made up of four transfers from the group of sixty in which the error occurred; and this would mean that four impressions would have to be removed from the stone, and new transfers laid on in their place. The other alternative would be to correct the error on the original group of sixty, and place four new transfers from the whole sixty on a clean stone. The latter process would mean a great deal more work, and careful examination of the entire sheet seemed to prove the former plan was adopted."

South Australia 1870, 4d Blue, without surcharge "3 Pence."

This Provisional was issued in August, 1870, and was first surcharged "3-Pence" in red (only one printing) and afterwards in black. It is possible that the error is due to want of care in "feeding" the sheets into the surcharging press, and that either the top or bottom row escaped the over-print. I have seen interesting illustrations of similar errors which occurred in this manner in the stamps of Cape of Good Hope, St. Helena and Hawaiian Islands. I understand that only about six copies of this South Australia error exist, two used and four unused ones; hence they must be very rare.

Cape of Good Hope 1861, 1d Blue, 4d Red, Woodblock.

I think it best to quote word for word the article which appeared in Vol. 5, No. 2 of *The Postage Stamp*, which I think is about the most interesting history of these stamps I have ever read:

"It reads like a fairy tale, but it has often been recorded how Mr. E. S. Gibbons—'sackful of 'triangular Capes,' about two millions of them, including hundreds of the 'sackful of 'triangular Capes' about two millions of them, including hundreds of the 'so-called 'woodblocks.' The normal copies of these latter were sold at 3s to 10s a dozen, and the above errors at 4s to 15s each. Nowadays the prices run from £3 for the 4d pale blue, to £85 for a copy of the same value in vermillion. It is almost needless to say that the errors are very rare.

"Early in 1861 there was a shortage of these two values, and Messrs. Saul Solomon & Co., of Cape Town, were instructed to provide a supply. They engraved a separate steel block for each value, and from each of these the necessary number (64) of stereotypes was taken to form a plate; but inadvertently the last stereo to be mounted on the wooden base was in both cases of the wrong value—a One Penny with the Four Pence, and vice versa.

"According to official information, there were not issued more than 201 of the One Penny Error, and 386 of the Four Pence error; but there is no reliable record as to how many sheets were actually printed. It would seem that the official figures of 24,660 of the One Penny and 12,840 of the Four Pence are much under-estimated, unless we are to assume that Mr. Gibbons' famous sack contained a much greater proportion of the actual issue than has in most cases survived to modern times from the early days of philately.

"The Four Pence is known unused—one copy, only, which fetched £500 at auction—and used in singles and in pairs with the One Penny; and the One Penny has been found in used condition only, in singles and in pairs with the Four Pence. The lower value is known in two shades (pale-blue and blue) out of the four in which the Four Pence is found; and the higher value likewise exists in two shades or colors (vermillion and carmine) out of the three of the One Penny."

These two errors are quite rare and bring good prices when in good condition, but when found in a pair set with the normal stamp as per illustration, it is doubly rare, and few exist in such condition. The Error 4d red in the block of four is unique, although it is known in a pair similar to the 1d blue, but there is no other block known, moreover, it is in matchless state, being of the very earliest impression as you will see by the date (March 26, 1861) a month prior to having been chronicled.

St. Helena, Six Pence Red, without surcharge ONE PENNY.

This stamp was issued in 1863. This is another error similar to the 4d blue of So. Australia, and was no doubt caused in the same manner. I have seen a sheet of the Six Pence green surcharged "One Shilling," the fifth row from the top was double surcharged, while the bottom row (or tenth row) had escaped the surcharge entirely. This would indicate that the surcharge had been set up to cover half a sheet, but through carelessness in feeding the sheet into the surcharging press the lower row escaped the over-print.

Saxony 1851, ½ ngr. Light Blue, instead of grey.

Only 120 of these errors have ever been printed, 63 are said to have been sold as 2 ngr. stamps and used as such before the mistake was discovered. The remaining 57 were returned to the Department of Finance in Dresden. Thirty-three of these were said to have been destroyed, and the other 24 have since been in circulation. There is a block of four in existence; a strip of five was exhibited in London in 1890, and the majority of the others are probably owned by collectors in Europe. A copy recently brought £220 at auction.

Finland 1891, 3R 50K Yellow and Black.

The correct color for this stamp is Yellow and Grey, but in some manner a number were printed in the color of the 7R which is black and yellow. It is said that only part of a sheet got into circulation. This must be true for the stamp is very scarce in this country, and had any one been holding back a supply it is almost certain that they would have appeared by this time. About a year ago I saw a forgery of this stamp. It was evidently made from the 3½R of Russia, No. 39 in Scott's catalogue, as the paper was vertically laid instead of horizontally, and had an additional outer line around the stamp. Whoever made it was an artist with the brush, and it would have deceived most anyone not familiar with Finland and Russian stamps.

United States 1869, 15c and 30c Inverted Medallions.

Two theories have been published giving the probable cause for these errors. For the first I quote from Tiffany's History of the Postage Stamps of the U. S.:

"The error is not, as is sometimes supposed, an error of printing, but in the plate. Two plates, one for each color, had to be used. Originally there were 150 stamps, as in the smaller values, but upon the plate for printing the picture, it is said one picture was reversed, and the error once discovered, the plate was cut down to print only 100 stamps, as stated in the circular. It is probable that no copies with the error were ever circulated."

Mr. John N. Luff, in his history of our stamps, I think knocks this theory all to smithereens, and to get the full benefit of both sides one should turn to page 112 in Luff's work. Mr. Luff's theory is, simply a misprint, and in that I believe most of us agree with him. Most of the copies known are used. A collector in this country has a block of four of the 24c Inverted Centre, used, and Mr. Luff speaks of a pair of the same stamp. I know of just one copy of the 15c unused and two copies of the 30c.

Philippine Islands 1854, 1R Blue "Corros."

The stamps as issued were line engraved. The sheets show 40 varieties in eight horizontal rows of five. On the plate of the 1R the first stamp in the sixth row has "Corros" in the label instead of "Correos." The error was never corrected and therefore exists in all the shades of the normal stamp. It therefore should exist overprinted "Habilitado Por La Nacion" but if so I have never seen a copy or heard of one. The normal stamp so surcharged is itself a rarity.

Sweden 1872-76, 20c Red, "Tretio."

I again quote from *The Postage Stamp* in describing this error, Vol. 5, No. 24:

"This is a rare and curious error, of the same kind as the 2 ('zwei ein halb') 'Lubeck. One of the cliches in the plate of the Twenty Ore was accidentally broken 'or damaged, and it became necessary to replace it. To save time, an old cliché 'of the 30c was used, the central figures being removed and replaced by '20;' but, 'either by mistake or because it was found impossible to make a further alteration, 'the inscription of 'Tretio Ore' was allowed to remain—the correct wording for the 'Twenty Ore' is 'Tjugo Ore.' The stamp is perf. 13.

"I find the position of the error on the sheet described as 'the fourth stamp on 'the fourth row to the left from the top.' Four good forgeries of this stamp have 'been discovered and described."

India, 4 anna Red and Blue, Head Inverted.

The following from the London Society's work on India speaks of this stamp as follows:

"Although up to the present time it is not definitely known to which printing 'the well-known error, usually called the 'inverted head' variety, belongs, it is tolerably certain that it occurred in one or more sheets of the first arrangement with 'blue dividing lines. Some seven years ago two copies were found on part of the 'original cover, on which was written in pencil, 'December 1854.' (This is described 'and illustrated in *The Monthly Journal*, Vol. X, p. 167.) It is no positive proof, but 'the evidence was in favor of the supposition that the variety belongs to an early 'printing, and further proof is afforded by the fact that the head in this variety is in 'the first state of the die, and therefore the error must have occurred in either the 'first or second transfers of the setting with the blue dividing lines.

"It is sometimes imagined that the 'inverted head' was a variety occurring once 'in each sheet. This would mean that one of the transfers of the head or of the 'frame was inverted on the stone, but that would be an error which would at once 'be noticed and corrected. It would be quite an easy mistake to place the sheet 'upside down on the stone for the second printing, and the effect of this would be 'that all the stamps on the sheet so treated would show the variety 'inverted head.' 'The above mentioned discovery of two copies on the same cover is additional evi- 'dence against the theory of there being only one on each sheet."

Spain, 25m, 1876; Inverted Head.

I have been unable to obtain any information regarding the history of this stamp. The work of the London Society does not even mention it, but of course that work was published a great many years ago. Moen's book merely lists it, but says nothing about its history. I have a memorandum that there are only five copies known.

Russia, 14k Blue and Rose, Centre Inverted.

Not being able to discover any data on this stamp, I appealed to that storehouse of information, Mr. John N. Luff, who writes as follows:

"I have no books about Russian Stamps except one on Russian Rurals, and I do not find any remarks in any catalogue. The only thing I can say is that it is well known that the Russian Printing Office is extremely careful and that errors of this nature are very rare with them. I think it is only in recent years that any have been known. If I remember rightly, quite a number of years ago an invert was reported in philatelic papers; that the late H. S. Mandel, who has been through the Stamp Printing Office in St. Petersburg, insisted it could not exist, because their machinery was such it was impossible for any inverted center to occur; but it exists just the same."

I regret not being able to present anything of much interest regarding the last two stamps, and should these notes meet the eye of some one who has the desired information, I am sure there are a large number of philatelists who would be glad to hear from him.

