



Comments and Reminiscences

by J. Murray Bartels

Philippines—1854 Issue

THE first issue of the Philippines ranks high among the classics of Philately. Only one set of stamps had appeared previously in all Asia. These were the three embossed stamps of the Scinde District of India.

A peculiar feature of these Philippines, consisting of forty stamps to a sheet (8 x 8), is the fact that each stamp on the copper plates was separately engraved. Naturally each subject shows a marked variation from the other 39 which makes it quite easy to reconstruct a plate, especially as large blocks and even full sheets of some values exist. Such sheets are known of the 10c carmine and 1r unused, the 10c pale rose and 1r dull blue used. The largest block of the 5c orange (used), contains 37 of the 40 varieties. This was in the collection of the late M. Mirabaud, its present owner is H. F. Tows. An interesting error occurred in the plate of the 1 real where on one stamp the inscription reads CORROS instead of CORREOS.

Very fine copies of this issue are difficult to find as the paper cracks and breaks quite easily.



The likeness of Queen Isabella II on these stamps was rather distorted and when it came to her attention for the first time nearly two years after issue, she was shocked and immediately forbade the continuance of their use on mail to Spain.

Upon the abdication of King Amadeus on February 11, 1873, a provisional government was formed and all previous stamps were demonetized. Several denominations of the Isabella stamps were surcharged HABILITADO POR LA NACION for provisional use. Among these there were several

sheets of the blue 1r first issue of which about a dozen copies are known including the unique error CORROS. One of the world's rarest stamps is the 2r green of the first issue with the provisional surcharge. Only two copies are known, one was in the Mendel collection, the other in the Ferrary collection. The finest known used copy of the 1r blue was recently acquired by A. F. Lichtenstein.