

STANLEY GIBBONS MONTHLY JOURNAL.

VOL. XVI.

SEPTEMBER 30, 1905.

No. 183.

Editorial.

* * *



We are glad to be able to set before our readers, in the present number, the full programme of the International Philatelic Exhibition, as finally approved by the General Committee. A little unavoidable delay has been caused by the holiday season, but this is hardly to be regretted, since the prospectus now goes out at the very time when collectors are returning to their stamps and the Societies are ready to discuss philatelic matters, among which the coming Exhibition will certainly claim a very prominent place. Intending exhibitors will realize, however, that they have no time to lose; they have first to decide what they will exhibit—a task which is only easy to the very strictest specialists—and their leisure time during the six or seven months that intervene will be fully occupied in filling up the little vacancies that most of us have to deplore, and in adding a few of those minor varieties that are often more difficult to find than the greater rarities.

The list of classes and sections has been arranged upon novel lines in more directions than one. We alluded in July to the intention of the Committee to mix up the contents of Parts I and II of our publishers' Catalogue, and to classify them according to the individual merits of the countries or colonies, looked at from a philatelic point of view. The task was no easy one, as we then pointed out, and although great judgment has been displayed in its execution, the Committee cannot expect that their work will entirely escape criticism.

Another point that may be noticed is that this is to be strictly an Adhesive Stamp Exhibition; with the exception of the class for exhibits by manufacturers of stamps, who may, we presume, show any examples of their work that they consider most attractive, and of the final class for postal curiosities of various kinds, the show will include adhesive stamps alone. For the first time, we believe, at any Philatelic Exhibition on a large scale, postal stationery of all kinds is rigidly excluded. We regret this very much, but at the same time we are not in the least surprised at it. Postal Stationery is a very unsatisfactory thing to exhibit; a highly specialized collection of envelopes, cards, etc., occupies an inordinate amount of space; it is of no use to show the stamps only, the real interest of such a collection lies in the varieties of paper, size, shape, flap ornaments, inscriptions, and so-called minor details, many of which are far more marked than some of those that are considered of so much importance in adhesives. Unfortunately it is a fact that there are very few collectors of philatelic objects of this nature, and a small proportion only of those few have ever availed themselves of the opportunities afforded them of showing their collections at previous exhibitions. We are sorry to find that no encouragement is to be given them this time, but it is only the natural result of the cloud under which stationery has been lying for some years past.

A further limitation of the scope of the Exhibition may be seen in the absence of all classes for Philatelic Literature, Albums, or Accessories. This is another new departure, which doubtless was not decided upon

without due consideration. Collections of philatelic literature have, of course, never been shown in full (there is a well-known collection in London which would occupy a large proportion of the space engaged for the whole show), and a skeleton exhibit is both uninteresting and unsatisfactory. We hesitate to suggest in these pages that either publishers or writers of philatelic works deserve recognition on these occasions; both may be considered to be abundantly rewarded by the highly lucrative nature of their business! Classes for Albums and Accessories, however, sometimes contain novelties that are well worthy of note; there are various little things in the way of simplified albums and catalogues which the general collector is still looking for, and which the prospect of immediate reward and advertisement might evoke.

Still, we must not be looked upon as finding fault; a Philatelic Exhibition is primarily an exhibition of stamps, the stamps are the things that people go to see, everything else is a side show. We congratulate the Executive Committee upon the completion of one very important portion of their work, and we hope that the rest of their labours may be equally successful.

* * *

Errors.

VARIOUS learned persons have from time to time given to the world their ideas on the subject of the Hundred Best Books, we have also seen what were said to be illustrations of the Hundred Best Pictures, and it was not altogether unnatural that some of our enterprising contemporaries should have endeavoured to compile lists of the Hundred Rarest Stamps. The method adopted in one instance was an unscientific one, it is true, but it probably produced a sufficiently accurate result; it took the form of inviting collectors to send in lists of what they considered to be the rarest stamps, and then compiling a list that represented the results of the voting papers thus obtained. This would be a perfectly fair system of dealing with books and pictures, for it is a matter of opinion which is the best book or picture; but the comparative rarity of stamps is a matter of fact, not of opinion, and only those who are thoroughly acquainted with the facts as to the numbers

of the various rare stamps that are in existence can compile an accurate list of them, in the order of their relative rarity. In reality of course no lists compiled in this way are entirely satisfactory, so far as actual rarity is concerned; the most that they can do is to include the stamps that have fetched or are likely to fetch the highest prices, which is another thing.

The latest catalogue of this kind that we have seen is one published in the *Illustrirter Briefmarken Journal*, and copied into *The London Philatelist*; it is a list of the Forty Rarest Errors, and has been compiled by Messrs. Senf Brothers, whose opinion upon a matter of this kind is backed by long experience. The compilers preface the list by the statement that "errors of overprinting, whose numbers are legion, are not taken into consideration; the errors here listed have at least a value of £5 apiece, such of less value not being enumerated." The latter part of this statement requires a little explanation. Do Messrs. Senf Brothers mean that they found only forty errors that were worth more than £5 each, or that they omitted all errors, however rare, that would not in their opinion fetch £5? Because in the latter case the list is not that of the forty rarest errors, but of the forty errors that would fetch the longest prices—a consideration that would affect both the contents of the list and their order.

It runs as follows:—

1. Spain, 1851, 2 reales, *blue*, instead of *red*. (1)
2. Austria, 1867, 3 kr., *red*, instead of *green*. (2)
3. Baden, first issue, 9 kr., on *green*, instead of *rose*. (4)
4. West Australia, 1854, 4d., *blue*, *inverted centre*. (6)
5. South Australia, 1870, 4d., *blue*, *without surcharge* "3 PENCE." (5)
6. Saxony, 1851, $\frac{1}{2}$ ngr., on *blue*, instead of *grey*. (10)
7. U.S.A., 1869, 30 c., *inverted centre*. (9)
8. Cape of Good Hope, 1861, 1d., *blue*, so-called woodblock. (13)
9. Spain, 1876, 25 m., *blue and rose*, *inverted frame*. (3)
10. U.S.A., 1869, 24 c., *inverted centre*.
11. U.S.A., 1869, 15 c., *inverted centre*.
12. U.S.A., 1901, 4 c., *inverted centre*.
13. Cape of Good Hope, 1861, 4d., *red*, so-called woodblock. (14)
14. Finland, 1891, 3 r. 50 k., *yellow and black*, instead of *grey and black*. (11)

15. Great Britain, 1869, 10d., red-brown, watermark *Emblems*, instead of *Spray of Rose*.
16. U.S.A., 1901, 2 c., *inverted centre*. (12)
17. India, 1854, 4 a., *inverted frame*. (7)
18. East Roumelia, 1881, 10 p., black and rose.
19. West Australia, 1869, 1s., *olive-brown*, instead of *green*.
20. Finland, 1866, 5 kop., *black on yellow*, instead of *brown-lilac on grey*. (8)
21. New South Wales, 1856, 3d., green, *watermark* "2."
22. Colombia, 1863, 50 c., *red*, instead of *green*.
23. Gibraltar, 1889 (10 c.), *carmine*, *value omitted*.
24. Mauritius, 1848, 2d., blue, "PENOE" instead of "PENCE."
25. West Australia, 1865, 2d., *lilac*, instead of *yellow*.
26. Colombia, 1863, 20 c., green.
27. Sweden, 1872, "TRETIO ÖRE," red, instead of "TJUGO ÖRE."
28. Philippine Islands, 1854, 1 r. f., blue, "CORROS," instead of "CORREOS."
29. Switzerland, 1862, 10 c., blue, *figures of value impressed twice*.
30. Spain, 1855, 2 r., *green-blue*, instead of *brown-violet*.
31. Peru, 1858, medio peso, *red*, instead of *yellow*.
32. Porto Rico, 1882, 20 c. p., *olive-brown*, instead of *lilac-grey*.
33. Switzerland, 1867, 25 c., green, *figures of value impressed twice*.
34. Finland, 1866, 10 kop., *brown-lilac on grey*, instead of *black on yellow*.
35. Bulgaria, 1884, 5 st., *rose*, instead of *green*.
36. Guatemala, 1882, 5 c., red and green, *inverted centre*.
37. New South Wales, 1851, laurel wreath, 3d., "WACES," instead of "WALEs."
38. Spain, 1865, 12 c., blue and rose, *inverted centre*.
39. France, 1872, 15 c., *brown on rose*, instead of *yellow*.
40. Porto Rico, 1877, 5 c. p., *carmine*, instead of *brown*.

We have added in brackets the numbers allotted to some of the items, in a list of the *fourteen* rarest errors, drawn up by the editor of *The London Philatelist*, than whom we could ask for no better authority in matters of this nature.

In some remarks upon the list, our *confrère* raises the important question of what is an *error*. He notes that very few errors of watermark are mentioned, and suggests that some of the stamps of New South Wales and

Victoria with abnormal watermarks might well have been included among the famous forty. The varieties with abnormal watermarks of New South Wales were, we suppose, the results of genuine mistakes, but it is very doubtful whether such was the case in Victoria; it appears certain that in the latter colony at some period (probably after it had been decided to use the same paper for all values), the special watermarked papers were used indiscriminately, and the results of such use cannot be considered *errors*, but merely varieties. Even before the period we have suggested very great laxity must have prevailed, so much so that it is questionable whether the printing of one value upon paper originally intended for another was really a mistake, or whether it was considered permissible—perhaps in order to save the trouble and delay of drawing from store a fresh supply of the proper paper, when only a few sheets were required to complete an impression of a certain value. This may have happened in New South Wales also, and would account for the fact that some of the watermark varieties of that colony are quite common.

We may add that, according to our publishers' Catalogue, the so-called error "WACES" of the 3d., laureated, New South Wales, is by no means so scarce as the 2d. with "WAEES" or the 6d. with "WALLS" of similar type, and that all three are priced lower than the 2d. Sydney View with "CREVIT" omitted.

The editor of *The L. P.* asks, "Did the engraver of the 'Post Office' Mauritius not make an 'error' when he forgot or neglected to use the word 'Paid'?" This question we are confident may safely be answered in the negative. It must be remembered that the plates with "OFFICE" were engraved before those with "PAID," and there is no evidence whatever that any instruction to use the latter word was given in the first instance. It is difficult to understand why the alteration was made; "Post Paid" was not required in addition to "Postage," while "Post Office Mauritius" was a reasonable inscription enough. We suspect that the word "PAID" was introduced by the engraver simply because it took up less space than "OFFICE," and gave him only four letters to cut, instead of six.