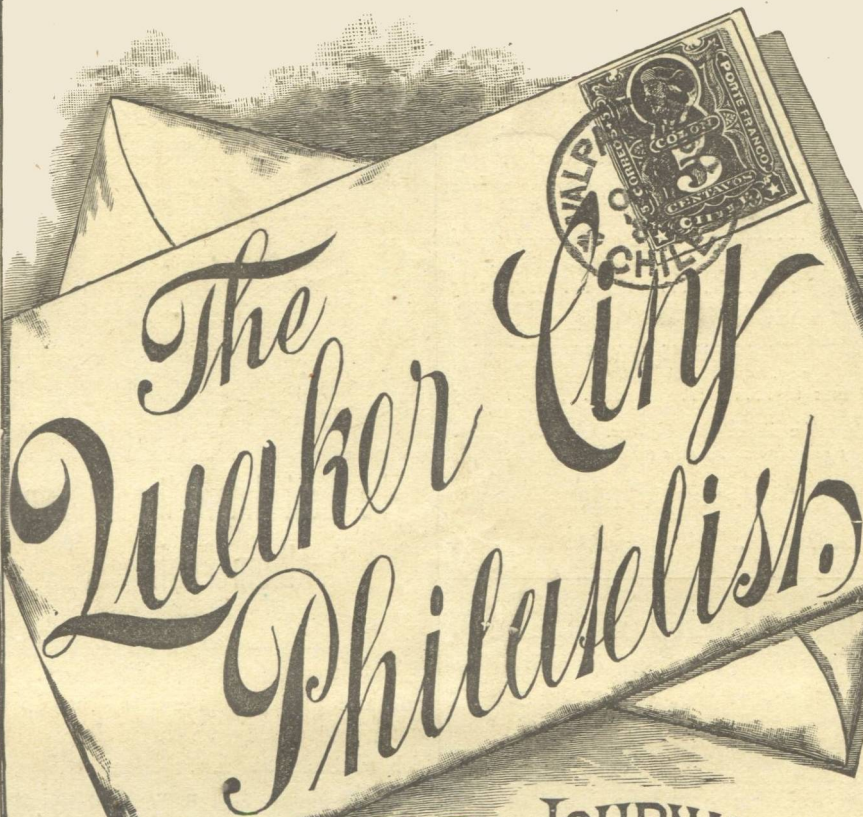


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JULY, 1894.

No. 103.



The
Quaker City
Philatelist

A MONTHLY JOURNAL
FOR
STAMP COLLECTORS.



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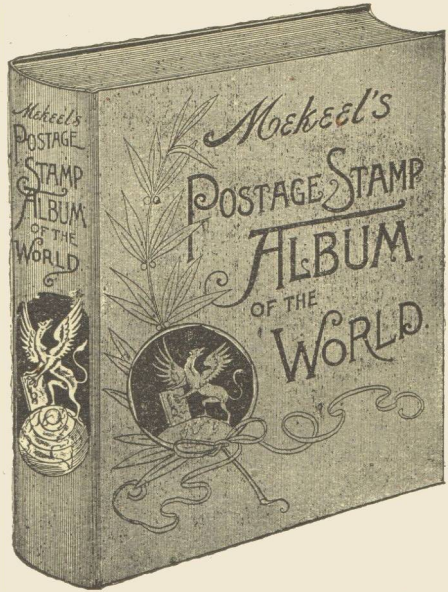
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VOL. IX.

JULY, 1894.

No. 7.

THE MODERN STAMP AUCTION.

BY LEWIS G. QUACKENBUSH.

IF, a quarter of a century ago, some philatelic Cassandra had foretold the present greatness of the philatelic auctioneer, the prophecy would very likely have been received as an additional proof of the prophetess' insanity. There is, in all probability, no feature of modern philately that would have excited more wonder in the breasts of the old-time philatelists had they been permitted to thrust aside the veil of the future and to learn the story of philately's wonderful growth from the pastime of a few scattered enthusiasts to a most fascinating study which absorbs the leisure hours of thousands of cultured men.

The sale of stamps at auction is not exactly a modern innovation, the first stamp auction having been held by J. Walter Scott in 1870; but it is only in the past half-dozen years or so that the utility of the auction sale as a medium for the disposal and the purchase of rarities has become fully recognized by stamp collectors at large. Almost all rarities which come on the market nowadays are disposed of at auction. This is a convenience both to the dealer and the collector. The dealer by means of his auction catalogue informs a large number of collectors that he has such and such rarities on hand, and the collector has thus the opportunity of securing stamps which almost never come on the market in the ordinary way.

The fears of some stamp dealers that the auctions would lower the prices of rare stamps has proved to be wholly without foundation. There have been, it is true, sales at which rare stamps brought far less than their market value, as was the case with the recent sale of the Martindale collection; but such are the exception and not the rule. The awful sacrifice of good stamps in the case noted was due largely to the fact that the collection was catalogued and sold by auctioneers of small philatelic experience or reputation. If it had been entrusted to any of the New York firms that make a specialty of auction sales the result would undoubtedly have been much more satisfactory. It has been demonstrated time and time again that a really first-class collection can be disposed of more profitably at auction than in any other way.

So far from lowering market values, instances are not wanting where rare specimens have brought at auction far more than their catalogue price. At the famous DeCoppet sale, for instance, many and many a stamp was knocked down at a price far in excess of what had hitherto been considered its value. The DeCoppet sale was undoubtedly one of the most important events in the history of philately, as well as one of the greatest advertisements that the pursuit has ever had. Even to many philatelists the news that a single stamp had been auctioned off at the seemingly fabulous price of \$1010 was a great surprise: judge then of the amazement with which the non-philatelic public must have read the reports of the great sale, heralded far and wide by the newspapers. The fact that such an enormous sum of money can be realized from the sale of a collection of postage stamps emphasizes, as nothing else can, the important fact that money spent on philately is not gone, as would be the case were it spent for any other luxury, but is safely invested in a class of merchandise (if it can be so called) which sells for ready cash in the auction marts of Europe and America.

Auction prices are notoriously fickle. To-day, in a poorly advertised and poorly arranged sale, a stamp may be sold for ten dollars; while to-morrow the same specimen may bring fifty dollars in some auction room where stamp fiends most do congre-

gate and where competition waxes hot. Auction buying is often a lottery in which good guessing as to how prices will run wins the capital prize. I refer here, of course, to those who bid by mail. Those collectors who attend auctions in person have the great advantage of being able to pick up any bargains which may develop during the progress of the sale. They do not bid blindfold, as do those who bid by mail. Probably most collectors who live outside of the large cities have, like myself, often been very much puzzled to know what to bid on stamps catalogued at widely different values by different dealers. Most collectors bid a certain proportion of the stamp's catalogue value, often three-fourths. In many cases, however, where a stamp is in exceptionally fine condition, one is justified in bidding full catalogued value or even considerably more than that.

As regards uncatalogued rarities or those stamps whose value is only approximately gauged in the ordinary catalogues, (the priced catalogues of former auctions supply the only trustworthy guide to value. Speaking of auction catalogues, it is a matter of much surprise to me to notice how little they are valued by many advanced collectors. Catalogues, having each lot marked with the price at which it was sold, are supplied after the sale by almost all stamp auctioneers. As a medium for determining the value of rarities they are unexcelled. They are not ideal works of reference, having been got up with no idea of preservation; but they do very well in the absence of anything better. There have been issued in England several very useful Auction Epitomes which would be invaluable to every auction buyer were they brought up to date. It is rather a wonder that no such works have been published in America. There have been some small attempts to fill this long felt want, but none of them have been up to the standard of the celebrated epitomes of S. C. Skipton.

In only two cities of the world is the stamp auction really the leading feature of philately; needless to say I refer to New York and London. The auction sales held in the former city are the most important in the world. One hundred thousand dollars worth of stamps, at the very least, are disposed of at auction in Gotham annually. One sale alone, last season, that of the famous DeCoppet collection before referred to, netted over \$30,000. Five large New York firms, the J. W. Scott Co., R. F. Albrecht & Co., The Scott Stamp and Coin Co., Henry Gremmel and the Bogert & Durbin Co., hold frequent sales. Smaller sales are held occasionally by Boston, Chicago, St. Louis and San Francisco firms; W. Sellschopp & Co., of the latter city hold the most important auctions outside of New York. The leading English auctions are held by Cheveley & Co. and Ventom, Bull Cooper; and, although the stamp auction has only been introduced into England very lately, it seems to enjoy as great popularity on the other side of the Atlantic as on American soil.

As I write, the auction season of 1893-94 is in full blast. Auction catalogues come in with every mail; and the familiar "going, going, gone" of the auctioneer rings incessantly in the ears of our city brethren. It was anticipated that an unusually large number of collections would be disposed of this winter owing to the financial troubles of the early part of the season. But the results have not accorded with our expectations. There has been no great rush to dispose of collections. On the contrary, collectors have seemed to believe that money invested in stamps was about as safe as it would be anywhere in these troublesome days. Those who did wish to realize on their collections, however, have found the stamp auctions a great convenience. In no other way can a good collection be disposed of so speedily and with so good results. The stamp auction fills every important place in the commercial side of Philately. Each day its value to collectors and dealers alike is becoming more and more apparent. That there are no signs of its waning popularity goes without saying, for with every season the stamp is becoming more firmly fixed as a philatelic necessity.

THE first printings of the U. S. five cent, 1861, were in yellow-brown; it was changed to brown very soon afterwards without any stated reason. We have an item printed in 1861, describing the new issue, in which the five cent is given as *yellow*.

WHAT'S IN A NAME.

BY JOHN DEVEREAUX KIRKE.

THERE has been considerable discussion of late in regard to the exact meaning of the word, philatelist. Certain writers have attempted to find a difference in the meaning of two practically synonymous terms, philatelist and stamp collector; and, to my mind, have woefully failed. It is rather a hard matter to define what constitutes a philatelist. Our lexicographers have, most of them, neglected the word altogether, and even when it is noticed their definitions are very vague and unsatisfactory.

Broadly speaking, we may define a philatelist as one who is interested in the collecting of postage stamps, either as a study or a pastime. I am aware that this is a broader definition of the word than many would be inclined to give.

There seems to be a prevalent notion that only those who collect in a scientific way are entitled to the honorable name of philatelist. But it seems to me that this gives an altogether wrong interpretation of the term. Why should the possessor of a ten-thousand-variety collection, embracing the different perforations, and the minute differences of paper, and the most trivial shades of color, be granted the title which is denied to the less richly endowed collector who is obliged from a scarcity of the needful to collect only the most pronounced varieties?

It is sometimes a trifle ludicrous to note the pretensions of that class of collectors who can afford to devote the time and money necessary to a study of the minute varieties. They appear to be somewhat inclined to reserve the title of philatelists as applicable to themselves alone; and to warn off all trespassers of low degree. They look down on the poorer men, who perhaps secure as much or more enjoyment from philately as themselves, and speak of them in tones of commiseration and pity, as "mere collectors." Where is the distinction between the two classes, if there be a distinction, as so many claim? Where is the dividing line between collectors and philatelists? These are interesting queries, and ones which the philatelic four hundred will find rather difficult to answer. I believe that the term, philatelist, should be applied impartially to all collectors of stamps, from the schoolboy beginner to the learned veteran. There should be no difference in name, since there is no difference in spirit. We are members of an army whose objects are the same to all, whether viewed by adolescence or old age.

Philately is a democratic pursuit. It has no place for ostentatious display; and sticklers for the rules of etiquette will find themselves lost in the shuffle. I can see no reason why my twelve-year-old brother, who is just enthusiastically commencing a collection, does not come under the head of a philatelist, as much as I myself do, after a half dozen years' experience of stamp collecting. And then, again, I cannot see why I am not as rightly described as a philatelist as my neighbor, Mr. Moneybags, who has been collecting for thirty years, and has a thirty-thousand-dollar collection. The term advanced collector is the proper one to use for such as he; but philatelist is a general term, applied to an entire class of human beings, and can be properly used in referring to the humblest stamp collector on the globe.

Personally, I consider the word philatelist one which could be spared from our vocabularies with small loss. The words philately and philatelist, while perhaps sounding better than the plainer terms, stamp collecting and stamp collector, are far less clear in describing the character of the science. Nine out of every ten non-collectors are wholly ignorant of the meaning of the word philately, and would not understand it if they came across it in the course of their reading, whereas the meanings of "stamp collecting" and "stamp collector" are self-evident.

"Philately" has received the sanction of use, and is, no doubt, a picturesque name for our science; yet, leaving sentiment out of the question altogether, I believe that we should do better to call the pursuit simply, stamp collecting. It is known to the

world by that name. Few outsiders remember or care to remember the complicated term, philately.

As is well known, philately is a French term, not an English one; and stamp collecting was considered a sufficiently good name for use for a great many years before the word philately was imported from across the pond. That it is a better name for the science than the one most used now, many stamp collectors believe and contend. Whether the name philately will, however, fall into disuse in the future, may be doubted. It has been in use so long that any attempt leading towards its retirement will be strongly opposed by many to whom the term is endeared by a score of pleasant associations.

Apropos of the suitability of philately, as a name for the pursuit of stamp collecting, the following extract, taken from the *American Stamp Mercury*, of July, 1868, about the time when the word was first introduced into America, may be interesting:

"*Philately*. This is the new-fangled term which a few egotists in Europe and a very few more in America have, in their self-sufficient wisdom, decided to be the term by which the science of stamp collecting shall henceforth and for ever be designated.

"Before accepting the word, however, it might be well to ascertain whence the same high-sounding term is derived.

"The coiners of the word gravely inform us that 'Philately' is compounded from two Greek words, one of which means *a friend*, and the other *exemption from tax*, and on the strength of these two words, the word 'Philatelist,' literally 'anti-taxationist,' is introduced to an enlightened community. So far, so good; in that sense, we have no objection to the word 'Philately,' nay, more, we are an ardent philatelist ourself, and have righteous contempts for income rates, special licenses, manufacturer's taxes, beer-barrel stamps and other impositions as well as for the mercenary officials who impose them; but we respectfully submit that anti-taxationist and stamp collector are not synonymous terms, and further that not even the widest stretch of the imagination of the amateur lexicographers who coined the term can convince any sensible collector that the word 'Philately,' either in its derivation or literal sense, is in any way applicable as designating the science of stamp collecting, and for which purpose we will venture the remark that the word Timbrophily has heretofore been found in every way suitable without taxing either the patience of collectors or the brains (if they have any) of the pedantic egotists who coined the lovely phrase, Philately."

A NEW FAD IN STAMP COLLECTING.—While there are certain mean people who habitually understamp their letters and leave the recipient to pay the extra charge resulting from such a postal offense, some err in the other direction, and when in doubt overstamp. Such a practice is naturally quite satisfactory from the standpoint of St. Martin's-le-Grand. But the habit has drawbacks of a most unexpected nature, and such have just come to light in the provinces. A postman was found with a large number of letters in his possession which he ought to have delivered. His neglect of duty was apparent, but on being brought before a magistrate the man solemnly declared that he had not for an instant proposed to appropriate any of the letters. He had retained them a while because he found them to be overstamped, and it was his intention to "convey" the superfluous amounts of postage to his own pocket. Doubtless the temptation to turn a dishonest penny in this fashion is common among postmen. Indeed, we doubt if dishonest is not too strong a word to meet the case, though the offense is a serious one and the authorities are wise to treat it so. But the public is responsible.

THE new contract for U. S. envelopes, to go into effect October 1, 1894, has been awarded to James Purcell, of Hudson, N. Y. The Plympton Mfg. Co., of Hartford, Conn., have held this contract for twenty years. This change will not necessitate new dies, as those used by the previous contractor belong to the Government, and can be transferred to the new one. There will be changes in watermarks and shapes.

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PHILATELY'S SATELLITES.

BY JOSEPH F. COURTNEY.

IN paying a visit to any of the various Philatelic Association Conventions, which are held from year to year, a stranger is firmly impressed with the large amount of intelligence displayed in the countenances of those who are taking part as members. In very few gatherings of this description would it be possible to find such a large number of young men, each and every one showing by his conduct that nothing has been left undone in the matter of his education.

Philately is notably not a pursuit of the ignorant or the depraved; it is a pastime for those persons who, having exhausted themselves with professional duties during the

day, find in the arrangement and study of their stamps a delightful recreation. In a great many instances we find in the prominent philatelist a young student who has been poring over his classics throughout the day, and who finds in the reviewing of his album a pleasant respite from his arduous studies.

This is as it should be. Philately is a star that should have for its satellites seekers after knowledge; not that any great amount of knowledge can be directly attributed to the study of philately, but the fact that a person assumes an interest in the collection of foreign postal issues stamps him as being interested in the geography, history and progress of the Old and the New World.

While Philately is a pastime of the educated, still there are many who gain access to its ranks, with the sole purpose in view of deriving as much pecuniary benefit as possible, at the expense of the philatelic world in general, thereby betraying the trust which was reposed in them.

Not that I refer in any disparaging way to the philatelic dealer, so long as his business is conducted on legitimate lines, and he be not guilty of dishonest transactions, for I am well aware that the number of stamp collectors would be small indeed but for the publicity given to philately through the advertisements of the dealers, but what I am endeavoring to convey is the fact that by far too many unscrupulous individuals are in the habit of disposing to young and inexperienced collectors speculative postal issues of questionable value which may or may not be good for postage in the land of their nativity.

This is *not* as it should be; in fact, the profession which some of our dealers are practicing, that of acting as the intermediary of some God-forsaken colony in the Atlantic or some never-heard-of island in the Pacific, whose ruler is desirous of replenishing his empty treasury at the expense of the philatelic world, is worthy of nothing but the severest condemnation, and the only channel left open to the philatelist for self-protection is to patronize only those dealers whose business transactions are able to bear the closest scrutiny.

RARE STAMPS.

We note the following list of rare stamps in the *Illustrirtes Briefmarken Journal*, giving their comparative rarity and value as usually considered correct.

1. Mauritius Post-office 1d.	\$4000 00
2. Mauritius Post-office 2d.	2000 00
3. Sandwich Islands, 1st issue 2c.	1200 00
4. British Guiana 1856, 1c. carmine.	725 00
5. British Guiana 1850, 2c. rose.	500 00

But it claims that the following list is nearer correct, basing the claim upon the actual number of each stamp known to exist.

1. British Guiana 1856, 1c. carmine.
2. Sandwich Islands, 1st issue 2c.
3. Br. Guiana 1850, 2c. rose.
4. Mauritius Post-office 1d.
5. Mauritius Post-office 2d.

There is but one specimen of the Br. Guiana 1856 1c. known, which is in the hands of a collector who would not sell it at any price. Of the Sandwich Islands only four are known. The Br. Guiana 1850 2c. brought \$1010 at the DeCoppet sale, a low price considering that only six specimens are known, whereas of the 1 and 2d. Mauritius, about sixteen are known. An unused pair of these sold for \$3400 some time ago.

There are a few other stamps, among which we might mention the Milbury and New Haven, which are undoubtedly rarer than some of the above-named stamps.—*The Philatelic Monthly*.

Of the Japanese Jubilee stamps, there were printed 15,000,000 of the 2 sen, rose but only 700,000 of the 5 sen, blue.

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