A CHAT WITH JUVENILE COLLECTORS
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There are so many young collectors now, that a word or two of advice to them on the subject of
their collections may not be out of place. Boys are seldom able to purchase very expensive stamps; they
must, as a rule, be content with the cheaper varieties. But they need not regret that their limited supply of
pocket-money precludes them from obtaining great varieties; for it is a well-known fact that the cheapest
stamps are the handsomest. The 1 cent Nova Scotia, 1 lept. Greek, 1 kp. Russian, and several others
which we might name, are not exceeded in beauty by any of their costlier contemporaries.

It would be well for a young collector, unless he can draw upon the parental purse ad infinitum, to
discard the idea of collecting sets of stamps. The better plan would be to rest content with obtaining the
common varieties of each country, which are easily secured. By this means he would be possessed, at a
cost of not more than five-and-twenty shillings, of about 120 unobliterated specimens of the stamps of
nearly every part of the world, which, thus gathered, would afford more instruction than a number of sets.

For such a collection a large book would not be necessary. A boy need not exhaust his little store
in purchasing one, but will find a small album, or even a large sheet neatly ruled, sufficient; for stamps
look much prettier when placed together than when scattered in twos or threes over a number of pages.
On a sheet their various styles and different colours are perhaps best contrasted, but if kept in a book great
care should be used in putting them in. We have seen some boys’ collections which were really no credit to
them, although placed in handsome books. The stamps were put in all on one side, in a careless manner,
and many a good-looking specimen spoiled by being daubed with gum or surrounded by finger-marks.
Now, nothing is easier than to be tidy, and there is nothing which repays the care bestowed on them by a
charming appearance more than stamps. We should therefore particularly recommend neatness in
arranging them. A clean album is, moreover, a testimonial to the orderly ‘proclivities’ – to use the new
Yankee expression – of its owner.

Not unfrequently collections are made in account books with ruled lines and money columns, but
the stamps do not look well in such receptacles. We should advice intending collectors, therefore, either
to obtain an album or a book with entirely blank leaves.

We have often seen an otherwise neat book disfigured by a few badly obliterated and perhaps
damaged stamps, somewhat rarer than their companions. Now, we think it would be better to do without
such specimens than to spoil an album by inserting them in it, for its value is not increased by their
addition sufficiently to compensate for their dirty appearance. It is much better to wait until you can
purchase a clean specimen of a rarity, even though you may have a vacant place for it in your album, than
to fill it with a broken one a little sooner.

If your album does not contain printed titles, and you resolve upon writing them in, do not spare
pains to do them well; for if it be worth your while to write them in at all, it is worth your while to write
them in well, and make them an ornament to your book. But the less writing in a book the better; for
where there is a quantity, a little inaccuracy, a few corrections, an odd blot or two here and there, will
spoil the appearance of the whole.
And there is another thing which often has the same effect, and that is a number of large coloured engravings of flags plastered over a book. Stamps themselves are quite bright enough to enliven its pages, without placing beside them glaring patches of red, blue, green and other colours.

It is well if the young collector possesses a friend competent to advise him upon the genuineness of specimens he may wish to purchase. Too great caution cannot be used at the present time in buying stamps, as most exact fac-similes – alias forgeries – are in circulation, and are offered at temptingly low prices.

In conclusion, do not be disheartened if you cannot get all the stamps you want at once. Patience is necessary in collecting as well as in everything else. You must be content to gather your required stamps as opportunity offers, and meanwhile ‘learn to labour and to wait.’