SCHOOLS OF PHILATELY
BY C.P.S.
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For some time past, a very considerable portion of our contemporaries have been taken up with articles on the above subject, so that the question has probably been asked by nearly all our readers, “Have American collectors any distinctive ideas in regard to their mode of collecting stamps?” I have been patiently awaiting for some months to see if any amateur would not give to the world the desired information; or, better still, some dealer who, from knowing what they sell, would naturally be better acquainted with the subject; but as no one has as yet answered, I have taken upon myself to reply. My only qualifications are, that I have been an ardent Philatelist for eight years, and during that time have been acquainted with every dealer of any note, and intimately connected with a large number of collectors, of course knowing what my friends collected, and being pretty well posted as to what the dealers had for sale.

In answer to the above question, I must positively answer Yes! and I do not believe that there are more than twenty American collectors who differ from the “American School.”

Our next question is: “What do American Philatelists collect?” First, they aim to collect every variety in the engraving of every postage-stamp; for instance, they collect the two distinct varieties of engraving of the ten cent envelope stamp of the first issue of the United States, which, by the way, are excluded from all the European albums, while they give half-a-dozen spaces for varieties in the shade of some common stamp that is, in nine cases out of ten, the result of accident, after the stamp has been printed, and fulfilled the mission for which it was made.

Second, they collect only the shade of a stamp in which it was originally printed, except there is a decided change of color, as is the case of the 1d. Antigua, where the stamp was originally printed in rose and afterwards orange, but after the change in color continued to be issued in the new tint.

Third, in regard to envelopes, they cut out the stamp with a large enough margin to keep them from looking cramped, regarding it as ridiculous to save the entire envelope, as in a majority of cases it never had any value; as, for instance, nearly every specimen of the octagonal Prussian envelope stamps are found cut out to the shape of the stamp and pasted on the letter they prepaid.

I am well aware that there are many amateurs that use Lallier’s album, but nearly all are grumbling with the spaces they have to fill with varieties of perforations, watermarks, paper, and shade. For my own part, I collect every variety according to the most advanced ideas of the French school, and find great pleasure in studying the varieties of paper, perforation, and watermarks, and certainly think the page of my album that contains the set of lithographed Maximillian stamps, commencing with the 7 cent. of the palest pearl gray, and gradually getting darker and darker with varieties of the same stamp, till it reaches a rich, dark purple, nearly black, far superior in beauty to that containing the gay and beautifully executed stamps of Costa Rica and Salvador. But still I am an exception, the general idea being to first get one of every stamp, thinking that there will be plenty of time to fill up collections with varieties afterwards. How deplorable this state of things may be, the fact remains that American Philatelists do not
collect varieties afterwards. However deplorable this state of things may be, the fact remains that American Philatelists do not collect varieties of watermarks and paper, and only differences of perforated and unperforated, with varieties of color, when they possess foreign albums that leave spaces for their reception, in which case the obnoxious specimens are procured, but under protest, if I may be allowed the expression. One of our contemporaries is publishing an article from a celebrated writer on watermarks, but I am sorry to say, as far as my observation goes, that it is not read. I am certain nothing could be more interesting than the study of watermarks, where it is taken up and considered; but Americans, as a rule, require something more exciting that the quiet perusal of such a study. However, be this as it may, the American School of Philately is more strictly adhered to in the United States than either the French or English Schools are in their respective countries.