NEW YORK, JANUARY 10TH, 1869.

Mr. Editor: - When I first commenced “stamp collecting,” some time since, I was entirely in the dark in regard to the petty details of the most interesting study of Philately. How to commence; what album to employ; who to purchase of, and how to prepare and insert stamps, - all these points I have had to learn by actual practice, and desiring to obviate the difficulties under which most new collectors labor, I have been tempted to give the results of my experience for their benefit.

In commencing a collection the first thing needed is an album. Of these there are many varieties, the choice of which can be regulated by the purchaser’s fancy. I think the best are Lallier’s and Scott’s. The former has panels ruled out for the different varieties, and there is a letter-press description of every stamp issued up to the date of publication. In case new stamps are issued by countries not now using them, leaves of drawing paper can be inserted in their proper places without difficulty. Scott’s Album, in many respects is much better calculated for beginners than Lallier’s. It contains spaces for every stamp ever issued, and blanks for new emissions. It is neatly printed, and bound in a variety of forms, and last, though not least, is very cheap, being about half the price of Lallier’s. The next step is to procure a good and reliable classified catalogue from an honest and trustworthy dealer. Of these there are several, one of which is published in this city. I leave out purposely several excellent English publications, as the expense of postage in getting them out is heavy and useless.

Prepared now with an album and catalogue the Collector may select, according to his taste, the stamps which please him. One piece of advice let me here insert: whoever you purchase stamps of, be sure the dealer is an honest man. I could surprise the readers of this article by giving a list of foreign stamps counterfeited in this city and Boston, by dealers who say they are willing to warrant every stamp leaving their places. Several of my friends have found out by dear experience that such a guarantee is worth nothing. Upon receiving stamps which it is desirous to place in one’s album, the first care is to remove from the backs any paper which may be still adherent. This may be accomplished by placing them in a little cold water, which, in a short time, dissolves the adhesive substances used, besides removing any dust on the face of the stamp. I should mention in this connection, that the Russian stamps will not bear washing, as they are printed in water colors. The paper on their backs, however, should be removed by placed a piece of wet blotting paper over the back, and letting it remain for a few moments. The stamps should be allowed to dry, and may be placed in an old book to get rid of the corrugation produced by the washing. After this they are ready for insertion in the album. In fixing them in, the best plan is to use only mucilage prepared from the gum Arabic. On no account use the mucilage sold in the different stationary stores, it contains in many instances acetic acid which will alter in time the fine colored inks used in printing stamps. In putting the solution of gum upon the stamp use a fine camel’s hair brush and paint only two lines at each end of the stamp, as is recommended by a “lady contributor” on page 14, vol. 1.

This method of mounting admits of an easy removal in case it should be necessary, and is the best beyond a shadow of a doubt. In case stamps require removing which have been completely covered with
paste on their backs, wet blotting paper should be allowed to remain upon the stamps for some minutes when they can be removed without injury to them or the album. Having laid the stamps upon the panels destined to receive them lay a piece of thin paper over them and rub gently with the fingers, this proceeding will fix the stamps firmly and smoothly in their places. In buying stamps my preference is for canceled ones for the reason they have actually fulfilled the mission for which they were created, while uncanceled stamps, many of which are made by the bank note companies of New York City, and may never have been near the countries whose postage they represent. I certainly would not disdain uncanceled stamps but prefer the ones actually used. I would here mention the names of a number of reliable dealers but such a proceeding might savor of favoritism and produce hard feelings in the minds of those not noticed. However I will advice every collecting friend if they desire to become fully posted as to the status of dealers to apply to the Editor of the “Journal of Philately,” he is thoroughly posted and I am sure will afford every information in his power. One more piece of advice and I shall have finished. In trimming postage stamps do not cut them too close to the border, and never cut away the perforation of they are a distinguishing character of the stamp. Trusting these few words of advice may not have proved superfluous, and apologizing for occupying so much space in your valuable “Journal.”

I remain very truly yours,
COSMOPOLITAN

P.S. Should my existence be doubted by a “Stamp publication” issued not many miles from Boston, Mass., I would be happy to afford this doubter ocular proof of my existence upon application.