THE LAUREATED REPRINTS OF NEW SOUTH WALES

It may excite a little surprise to see this now familiar heading reproduced in the initial number of a new magazine, nor do we propose to again go over the ground that has been so amply traversed by various writers lately in the *Philatelic Record* and Stanley Gibbons’ *Monthly Journal*. It will, however, be seen by a perusal of the following extract that justice demands a compliance with the request contained in the closing sentence. For the benefit, however, of those of our readers who may not be *au courant* with all that has gone before, we will very briefly state the facts that lead up to Mr. Vindin’s present letter. About four years since the late Mr. T.K. Tapling, M.P., Mr. M.P. Castle, Mr. B.P. Rodd, and other collectors received from Mr. Vindin a sheet of each of the values of the Laureated series of New South Wales, of the 2d., 6d., and 8d. values, unused, which purported to be genuine originals recently discovered, and being part of eight sets only thus found. Some of these gentlemen, with others also members of the London Philatelic Society, eventually became purchasers of these sheets at large prices. A year or two later it was evident that the original eight sets had considerably expanded until it became an ascertained fact that hundreds of sheets existed. These sheets were brought to this country by Mr. A. Van Dyck, of Sydney, the principal for whom Mr. Vindin had previously avowedly been acting as to the earlier “find.” The former mysteriously disappeared, and lately arriving in America disposed of a further quantity there, openly acknowledging them as Reprints. As soon as these facts became patent, in self-defence Messrs. Stanley Gibbons, who are the present holders of the stock, acquired in a perfectly legitimate manner, published a full statement of all their knowledge on the subject, and Mr. M.P. Castle (the Vice-President of the London Society), who had been in continued correspondence with Mr. Vindin, also set forth all the information that he had acquired. The burden of these statements was necessarily to cast the blame on those who made false statements in selling these stamps, and to shift the onus of their deception to the original vendors. The various Philatelic Journals having reached the antipodes, Mr. Vindin hastens as far as he is able to rehabilitate his character as an agent in the disposal of these sheets.

*(Vindin’s Philatelic Monthly, 24th Nov., 1891, p. 41)*

“Having just returned from New Zealand and Tasmania, I hasten to reply to the article on the above stamps published in the *Monthly Journal* of September. In the next issue of the *Monthly* I intend reprinting the article from the *Monthly Journal*, and will reply thereto fully. In the meantime I wish to state that I have had nothing to do with, and have no actual knowledge of, these stamps having been reprinted. When I offered these stamps for sale in 1887 I believed they were original impressions, and that only *eight* sheets each of the 2d. Star, 6d., and 8d. orange, and *one* sheet of the 8d. in blue existed. My belief was based on the knowledge that the plates were not in the possession of the N.S.W. Government, and I was further of the opinion that these plates had long before 1870 been destroyed under instructions from the Government. Mr. Alfred Van Dyck negotiated their purchase – at least, he told me he purchased the twenty-four sheets for £350 from an *unknown* party whom he had reason to believe was a Governmental official. He offered me liberal terms to sell these sheets, understood that the selling should be left entirely in my hands, and arranged for me to state that I myself purchased them, as he did not wish to be mixed up with buying and selling stamps. I had known Mr. Van Dyck for five years and, with everyone else, had the utmost confidence in him. During this time Mr. Van Dyck was living in Sydney and held a good position, had no business or occupation, and must have lived at the rate of fifteen
hundred a year or more. Dr. Houison trusted Van Dyck when he left for London with his collection worth £1,000 to be sold, and has never received a penny from him since; the N.S.W. Postal Department lent him some much-prized proofs and essays of New South Wales stamps, and these are still wanted by them. It can, therefore, be understood that I had every reason to believe in the gentleman in question. I acted as his agent when I offered the stamps for sale, and further, issued a personal guarantee with all those I sold. Fortunately I sold very few of the stamps. One set of sheets to Dr. Houison, with whom I have since arranged; one set of sheets, at a comparatively low price (under unusual circumstances), to Mr. Rodd, of Hamburg, which, I afterwards heard from several of Mr. Rodd’s personal friends in Sydney, had been cut up by him over two years ago, and sold at a large profit. This statement was made by Mr. Rodd’s own family in Sydney, and was repeated to me and also to several local collectors by friends of the family, so it is reasonable to suppose it is the truth. Of course, Mr. Rodd had every reason to believe the stamps were original, and therefore was justified in re-selling them. Beyond these six sheets I only sold a few single copies and blocks of each, and in every case guaranteed them. The whole of the balance I handed over to Mr. Dyck when he left for London in 1888, since then I have had none of these stamps in my possession, and therefore cannot have sold any. The first I knew of there being more than eight sheets of each was when I found them being offered so freely at the London auctions, therefore the principal London collectors and dealers knew of such being the case before I did. I naturally regret my connection with this swindle, for such it seems to me it is. It has worried me a good deal, and has resulted in a serious pecuniary loss, but my conscience in the matter is quite clear, and I consider I stand only in the same position as does Mr. M.P. Castle. I believed in the stamps and so did he, and he knew as much about them as I could tell him. I believe Mr. Van Dyck worked his “game” single-handed. I feel sure that no one at this end of the world can tell more than I have done in the course of this explanation. Both the Postal and Government printing office authorities have endeavoured to fathom the mystery for months past, but without success. In the next issue of the Monthly I will deal with the matter more fully, and meanwhile would esteem it a favour if the editors of the various publications in England, America, and Europe will reprint this statement.”

The burden of Mr. Vindin’s defence is that he acted in good faith as an agent for and the tool of Mr. Van Dyck. Les absents out toujours tort, but in the personal instance the saying seems to have strong ground for credence. Many of the facts as to Van Dyck quoted in the foregoing are known from independent evidence to be correct, and, as will be seen by a reference in the quotations from Mr. Vindin’s correspondence (S. Gibbons’ Monthly Journal, 1891, pp. 58-62), they tally with those therein contained. Mr. Castle in his remarks on the latter expressly gave Mr. Vindin credit for “sticking to his guns,” in his statements as to his knowledge, and was more directly concerned to locate the blame of these scandalous proceedings in the proper quarters without necessarily imputing to Mr. Vindin a conscious share in it. It is only fair to add that from two well-known and respected sources in Australia we have received assurances of the writer’s full belief that Mr. Vindin was imposed upon by Mr. Van Dyck, almost equally with the philatelic world on this side of the globe.

We shall await with interest the promised statement that Mr. Vindin announces for his next issue, and trust that it may be as full and explicit as possible. In that gentleman’s remarks no mention is made of the fact that the late Mr. T. K. Tapling purchased a set at full price, nor is it stated if any collector in Sydney bought a set under like conditions. If, as we sincerely hope, Mr. Vindin can to a great extent exonerate himself it is all the more to be desired that he should associate himself with his fellow sufferers
in endeavouring to trace the mischief home to its authors. We use the plural advisedly, as we feel certain that however astute and reserved Van Dyck may have been, he was not alone in the matter, and we are of opinion that this swindle, for such it is, to have been brought to such a successful issue, must have been aided and abetted by some person or persons of assured position. We should like to know the name of the “unknown party whom he believed to be a Government official” from whom he is stated to have purchased; we should like to know who made the paper. From inquiries made by Mr. Castle in London some time since at the hands of experts, it was stated that paper of this sort must have been made especially for this purpose, it being totally different from any made at the present day, and that the preparation of this would entail the expenditure of a considerable sum. It should also not be difficult to ascertain who printed these sheets. It would be an unusual transaction, one involving skill, care and risk, and as several persons must thus have been aware of the transaction, even though unaware of the illegal nature of the proceeding, it is possible that information might be forthcoming if the proper steps are taken. The Sydney P.O. Authorities might well enough offer a reward to this end.

The Australian stamps have always been so favoured in this country, the London Philatelic Society has taken so prominent a part of the study of them, and so many of its members have been mulcted in large sums by this nefarious proceeding, that we feel confident we are only acting in the best interests of its members by using this and every future opportunity to unravel the tangled skein, and to bring to light the authors of perhaps the biggest fraud that has ever been perpetrated on collectors.

Mr. B.P. Rodd sends us the following reply to the remarks made by Mr. Vindin in connection with his name: –

“I have received from Sydney Vindin’s Philatelic Monthly for November last, containing, under the above heading: ‘A Preliminary Explanation by D.A. Vindin’ in which, after giving his version of his transactions with Mr. Van Dyck, he proceeds as follows: – ‘Fortunately I sold very few of the stamps. One set of sheets to Dr. Houison, with whom I have since arranged, one set of sheets at a comparatively low price (under unusual circumstances) to Mr. Rodd, of Hamburg, which I afterwards heard from several of Mr. Rodd’s personal friends in Sydney had been cut up by him over two years ago and sold at a large profit. This statement was made by Mr. Rodd’s own family in Sydney, and repeated to me and several local collectors by friends of the family, so it is reasonable to suspect it is the truth. Of course Mr. Rodd had every reason to believe the stamps were original and therefore was justified in reselling them.’

“From this one would suppose that instead of being victimised, that I had been instrumental in disposing of these stamps at a large profit, &c. Had Mr. Vindin been contented with simply stating the fact that he had sold one of the sets to myself, I would have been spared the trouble of writing this, and I cannot imagine his reason for going into further particulars, especially as they are totally untrue, and if the rest of his statement is equally to be relied upon, I regret to say it is not worth the ink he took he wrote it. The following are the facts so far as I am concerned, and which I can prove by his own handwriting, &c. When the eight sheets were first offered, and I believed just before Mr. Castle offered to buy the lot, he sold one set at the ‘comparatively low price’ of £150 to my mother – subject to my approval within a certain time – she paid a deposit of £7, which in the event of my returning the sheets within the term, he undertook to repay. Not being satisfied with what I had heard from Mr. Castle, I returned the sheet within the term, and upon same being presented to him and the £75 claimed, he pleased his inability to repay
same, and therefore my mother was obliged to keep them, of course ‘under the unusual circumstances,’ for the amount of the deposit £75. My mother ‘under the unusual circumstances’ returned them to me, and they still are, and have ever since been in my collection – neither ‘cut up over two years ago, nor ever offered to any one. He goes on to kindly justify my good faith, in selling what he himself had guaranteed, and what I still have. With his Monthly I have also received copy of a letter that my mother immediately upon reading his ‘Preliminary explanation’ wrote to him, calling upon him for an explanation, and to withdraw his remarks, &c., in his next issue, also in a postscript to same reminding him that within the last three months she had reminded him that I had not been able to dispose of them. As he writes that he has arranged with Dr. Houison there is still some hope that he will do so with me.”

Since the above was written we have been informed that Mr. Dawson A. Vindin has sailed for this country, and may be very shortly expected here. We understand that the primary object of his visit is in connection with these laureate reprints, and we are confident that his statements will receive an impartial consideration, the sole object of all the writers on the subject have been to drive home the blame to the culpable parties. – ED.