Although postal card collecting has grown into popular favor with the mass of collectors quite recently, very few collections contain the “Official Business” postal cards, and very few collectors can boast of anything but a very meagre knowledge of their existence. The reason of this is obvious. The average individual rarely sees a specimen and those who do, if they are not a collector, pay little or no attention to them. So the philatelic world, generally speaking, knows very little about these highly interesting issues.

It shall be the purpose of this article to dispel, if possible, the cobwebs from the minds of many, and incidentally describe a few of the varieties.

These cards have no face value. No stamps are required on them. They are used solely, as their name implies, to transmit department messages through the mails.

The variety most commonly met with by the public is the “Held for postage,” cards notice. It is used by postmasters to notify addressees of mail matter deposited at their office without the necessary postage affixed. This card is reasonably well known, but a description of it may be not amiss to some. In the upper right hand corner, on the face of the card, taking the place of the stamp, is the usual penalty inscription.

First, the word, “Post Office,” with space left under it where the name of the P.O. is to be stamped, and under that “Official Business,” in one line, following with, “A penalty of $300 is fixed by law for using this Card for other than Official Business” in two lines. Four lines are ruled in the centre of the address. At the top is a number enclosed in parenthesis thus (No 1543). This is the number of the card and is used by postmasters when ordering a supply from the department. The reverse of the card is given up to the notice which requests the addressee to forward postage for the unstamped matter. The card must be returned also, therefore a collection is usually minus the variety.

Another variety, and one with which all publishers are more or less familiar, is the postmaster’s card, “Notice to publishers to discontinue sending publication.” This card may be of two colors; viz. – white and blue. The blue is the latest and fast superseding the old white card.

At the top, appears, “Post Office Department.” Below it, are spaces for the Post Office, State, and date, in three lines. At the left of this and separated from it by a brace, appears “This must be Legibly stamped on or written in by P.M.” Four ruled lines in the center provides for the address. In the lower left hand corner is the penalty, which is the same as the above described, with the exception of the word “on,” which is used in place of “for.” The number of the card, 1528, is found on the reverse side. This card is used to notify publishers when certain subscribers refuse to take the publication from the office.

A third rarity which we will describe is rarely seen outside of the postal service, but it is very interesting especially to postmasters. It is mailed at Washington, D.C., at the office of the Auditor for the
Post Office Department and is sent to the various postmasters informing them whether or not their preceding postal account was correct. The paper used in this card is of a better grade than the two preceding varieties. In the upper right hand corner, in one line, appears the sentence, “If not delivered in TEN days return.” Under this is a ruled line separating the above from “Treasury Department, office of the Auditor For This Post Office Department,” in three lines. Under this is another ruled line, below which is “Official Business.” “Any person using this card to avoid the payment of postage on private matter of any kind will be subject to a fine of Three Hundred Dollars,” in four lines.

In the center, in large type is printed “Postmaster” followed by three ruled lines for the post office, state and county, which must be written in. The number of this card is 2-2221, and is found in the lower right hand corner.

These are only a few of the “Official Business” postal cards, but lack of space prevents any further description of them. The varieties of Official Envelopes are even more numerous than those of cards, while the wrappers deserve their share of attention also. Lucky, indeed, is he who can make a collection of these interesting issues.