ON THE SELECTION OF AN ALBUM
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To determine what to collect and how to arrange the stamps when procured, are the greatest difficulty the stamp amateur has to contend with; far greater than the procuring the stamps, for there is scarcely a person who cannot with diligence obtain a very respectable collection, by searching the papers of his own family, and trading the duplicates with his friends; but of course money makes the stamps accumulate much faster and the assortment is likely to be more varied, but these advantages are more than counterbalanced by the lack of interest felt in the collection; directly the number of stamps is looked on as representing so much cash, the chief pleasure of this delightful pursuit is lost.

To arrange a collection systematically and yet have space for new issues, is the great problem with stamp collectors, and thinking that my experience may be of some use to them, I give it for what it is worth.

The first stamps I obtained were gummed in a copy book; each country on a separate page, with the name written above; this book contained about one hundred and fifty stamps. When Mount Brown’s excellent catalogue found its way into my hands, I reorganized my collection and arranged the stamps in a new blank book, in sets as far as possible, allowing plenty of room for all the varieties he described. As my collection increased in numbers, and new issues continually made their appearance, together with stamps for countries not heretofore represented, I found my book getting uncomfortably crowded. I had just commenced to place my stamps in a larger book of the same description, when Scott’s American Album made its appearance; one of those I immediately purchased and for a long time it gave me entire satisfaction. In the course of a year or two a second and greatly improved edition was published, and I changed again mentally vowing it should be the last time. My collection now consisted of one copy of nearly all the government stamps issued, with some locals (of these I may speak about in another paper).

Having now obtained nearly every stamp that came at all within my means, I was tempted to buy some very fine and distinct shades of New South Wales stamps, and from this I rapidly drifted into collecting every stamp that showed the slightest difference in color, perforation, or watermark. To arrange these now became a question of some moment, but was at last accomplished to my entire satisfaction. I purchased five hundred sheets of fine quality of white paper 9 in. by 10 in. and in an equal number of sheets of violet tinted card of the same size; these I had the centre cut out of, leaving a border of two inches in width all round, with the inside upper angles rounded off; these cards I pasted on the sheets of paper and then cut out the names from my five dollar album, and pasted them at the top of the pages as required. I then cut out the spaces containing the stamps from my old album and mounted them on the new sheets: the raised card edge preventing them from getting rubbed or soiled in the least. My stamps had previously been mounted in my album on the following principle: I first prepared narrow strips of paper about one inch long by one-eighth broad, gummed on one side only; my stamps were then stuck to this by the top occupying one half the width of the slip; when this was dry it was doubled under and stuck in the frame made to receive it; by this plan a stamp can be raised for examination of its water-mark without injury, or can be removed from the album without damaging either one. Stamps fixed in this way lay as flat in an album as if gummed solid. My order of arranging these stamps was first to take a complete set of the first issue of the country, selecting the finest and darkest colors obtainable,
commencing with the lowest value and progressing to the highest; directly under this set I placed a similar set, with the exception that these are composed of the lightest obtainable specimens; and if there are great variations of color, like in the 10 centime 1856, issue of Italy, I select a dozen or so of the value that shows the great variations, and arrange them side by side, commencing with the lightest and gradually shading to the darkest. The additional frames for the purpose I procure by purchasing additional leaves of the album from the publishers.

The pages of my album being movable, and never having more than one country on a sheet, and seldom more than one issue, makes it no trouble to add any required number of blank pages at any necessary place; and as these are not placed with the full ones till wanted, the collection always looks full. I keep my pages (with a sheet of stiff card-board above and below), wrapped up in a large piece of linen, this effectually keeps out the dust.

One great advantage of this style of album is that I can always take a part of any collection to show a friend without having to lug round the entire book to show one stamp.

This album is only intended for adhesive stamps, and I consider them as distinct from envelopes as I do from post cards. An envelope stamp is only part of an envelope, and in many cases of no postal value if cut from the envelope on which it was printed, besides it is impossible to cut some without spoiling the design; the Mulready English and City Hanover for instance. All the envelopes I have are entire. I would not accept the scarcest impression, if cut from its envelope; but my collection of these is quite small. I should be very thankful to any of your contributers {sic}, if they would teach me how to keep them so as to be collectable. I at present keep them in a drawer, but they get rubbed and soiled, and each set has to be handled to get at any desired one, so that in a few years they would not be fit to be seen.

Post cards and money order cards, form another branch of philately; and how any album maker can make place for these to be pasted into, is more than I can understand. I should think that an album similar to those used for photographs might answer, but that would be rather clumsy; but suppose when the envelope question is settled the same plan will answer for the cards, and as the numbers are not great at present, they can afford to wait.