

The Two-Cent Canada Envelope Purple.

BY F. W. WURTELE.

As this envelope has been denominated "fraud" and the cry of a "swindle" has been raised in regard to its issue, a few words of explanation on the matter will be of interest to the philatelist. It has also been stated that this envelope was printed in error, that it has been recalled by the Postoffice Department, and that it has been speculated in by Postoffice officials. All such assertions are incorrect.

The envelope was issued for a perfectly legitimate reason; it was placed on sale in the usual manner at the postoffices where it could be legitimately sold, and its sale, while it lasted, was absolutely unrestricted. As a matter of fact, purple was the only legitimated color in which he could have been printed for the purposes for which it was issued.

To understand the position clearly, it is necessary to explain the objects, past and present, of a two-cent envelope in Canada. The rate for postage on letters, for local delivery in the place where they are mailed, in the majority of Canadian towns is one cent, while the larger cities, where there is a delivery by carrier, this local rate, technically known as "The drop letter rate," is two cents. Hence, a two-cent envelope was only intended for use for drop letters, in the larger Canadian cities, and it was only supplied to postmasters in those places, unless specially asked for by postmasters in those towns where the envelope could only be used by the addition of an adhesive stamp, as long as a domestic rate for letters beyond the limits of the town remained at three cents.

Towards the end of December, 1898, the supply of the old 2-cent green envelope was practically exhausted at the Department at Ottawa, and in order to be prepared for any demand, from city postmasters, for more envelopes of this rate, a small supply was printed in the then proper color of the two-cent stamp, that is, purple. Although it had not then been given out to the public it had been decided by the government that commencing January 1st the postal rate to all parts of Canada and the United States should be reduced from three to two cents. According to the regulations of the Universal Postal Union, the stamp representing the domestic rate of postage must be printed in red, and knowing that, according to this arrangement, in a very short time the two-cent would have to appear in the latter color, the authorities decided to print only the small quantity that might be required for drop letters in purple.

The most of this limited stock was sent to the postoffices where the two-cent rate was in force, with instructions to sell them only after the stock of the two-cent green was exhausted. The same rule was in force in regard to the one cent envelope in green. A supply of the latter was lying in the Montreal postoffice for a month or two

and could not be had until the old one-cent blue was sold out. It must be borne in mind that stamped envelopes have a very limited sale in Canada, as very few business houses use them, and they are mostly sold out at a time to those persons who write their letters in the postoffice and come to the stamp wicket asking for an envelope. In fact, where stamp envelopes are employed by anyone else, it is because some one connected with the business house that uses them is interested in philately. Outsiders, that is the majority of the public, do not now that such things as stamped envelopes are in existence.

I had been trying for a long time to obtain at the Montreal postoffice some of the one-cent green envelope for my correspondents, but I was always met with the answer "We can't sell you any until the blues are cleared out." One evening, on again inquiring for one-cent green, the obliging young lady, who is in charge here, informed me that only 100 or so of the blues remained and, if I would buy them out, I could have my long sought one-cent green on the following morning. She also told me that she had only about the same quantity of the two-cent green, and if I would buy them she would get me the new issue of the two-cent also. This was the first I had heard that a new two-cent was contemplated, so I bought up all that remained of the old 1c and 2c envelopes, and sure enough, the next day obtained a supply of the 1-cent and 2-cent purple.

I could have then secured about 1,000 2c purple, which was the entire stock sent to the Montreal postoffice, but not anticipating the change of color I purchased only what I thought was enough for ordinary wants. In the meantime the postal rate for the whole of Canada had been reduced from three to two cents, necessitating a much larger supply than formerly, of two-cent envelopes, and also necessitating that they should be printed in red; these were issued with in a day or two of the two-cent purple, thus originating the report that the latter had been recalled or withdrawn. There was absolutely no restriction as to its sale, no error and no recall. That those who were fortunate enough to purchase them during the few days they were current should be dubbed frauds or speculators are unjust. In nearly every case they were bought in the ordinary course of business without any knowledge that the color was to be changed to red. That the envelope will be a rarity I have no doubt, for I am officially informed by the department that no more are to be issued in purple, and I doubt whether they could be legally issued in that color, seeing that the agreement with the Universal Postal Union is now in force. According to the usual mode of computing the value of a stamp in proportion to the quantity in existence this envelope should be worth at least \$5 or \$6, and those collectors who purchase them at what I consider the low price they are now being offered at, that is, from \$1 to \$1.50, will

have no reason to regret their investment in the future.

It is unjust to accuse officials of the postoffice department, who are courteous and obliging gentlemen, of using their official knowledge of the interior workings of the department to speculate for their personal gain. They are sworn to guard the secrets of their office and can give no secret information to officials of other departments or to the public, except by the violation of their oath of office, and at the risk of instant dismissal. It is natural that at Ottawa, where the stamps are first issued, the news of the limited extent of this issue should be first known, consequently it is to be expected that the public there, be they officials or others, should be able to first buy up the stock in the local postoffice, but this is not in any way illegitimate, and can furnish no reason for calling the issue "a gigantic swindle."—Weeklie's Weekly stamp news.

Canada Surcharged.

2c on 3c envelopes, unused, fine, 12c post paid.
Same, not surcharged, unused, fine, 16c post paid.

CANADA.

1868	1-2c black...	09
	1c red brown...	10
	12 1-2c blue, (scarce)...	14
1869	1c yellow...	15
1859	1c pink...	04
1892	50c blue...	22
1875	2c and 5c register...	03
	8c blue, unused, fine...	1 45
1877-96	1c envelope with 2c jubilee on it...	03
1895	2c green env. 4c leaf stamp on it...	03
1898	5c and 8c 4 leaf, used...	05
	1-2c 4 leaf, unused gum...	02

NEWBRUNSWICK.

1, 2, 5, 10, 12 -12 and 17c unused, complete set...	50
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NEWFOUNDLAND.

1880	1c, 3c and 5c...	12
1887	1-2c, 1c, 2c, 3c and 5c...	01
1890-95	1-2c, 3c and 6c...	10
1898	1c carmine, (scarce), used...	05
	3c jubilee, used...	02

NOVA SCOTIA.

5c blue, only...	15
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UNITED STATES.

1890	3c, 6c, 8c, only...	04
1890	6c brown...	02
	(Wan) 98, 2 var. for...	01
	3 varieties special delivery, cat. 25c...	10
1895	3c, 4c, 5c, 6c, 8c and 15c for	05
1898	5c blue for...	02
	Special packet of 100 assorted U. S. Columbus and 95 val. Omaha, 4 maple leafs and figure Xmas well assorted for...	20
	We have B. N. A. postage 7 percent. postage extra on orders under .50c or otherwise stated.	

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