

A Few Hints to Beginners.

In my experiences I have too often noticed that amateurs do not in general sufficiently scrutinize specimens which pass through their hands, and by not so doing lose a large amount of experience.

If you intend to form a collection, do not attempt to do so before you have fully persuaded yourself that you intend to persevere, then after you have obtained an Album, be careful that your specimens are carefully classified and that no counterfeits creep into your collection, as these are a disgrace to the latter. If you have any doubt as to the genuineness of a stamp, have it carefully examined before permitting it a space in your collection. To be partly protected against this evil it is best and will pay in the end to deal only with those dealers who have a good reputation and will warrant there "wares."

It is quite possible that you will obtain some rather delapidated specimens in the beginning, and will feel inclined to make them part of your collection, I tender you the following advice:—Never let any but perfect specimens be part of your collection; this rule if strictly adhered to will add much to the beauty, as well as the value of your album. But lately I was offered a collection which, according to Scott's Catalogue, was worth about \$36, but as some of the rarest specimens were in a premature state of decay, i. e., covers missing or perforated edge damaged, I could not tender any reasonable offer for the same.

Obtain a standard *Illustrated Catalogue*; it will be greatly to your advantage, as you will obtain much valuable information, as well as become acquainted with the appearance of the several issues by closely perusing it.

I will now mention a few issues which are not very easily distinguished by amateurs. In 1868 the Post Office Department at Washington issued the first set of embossed stamps, and continued to issue them in this shape until the year 1872. Of these issues, the latter is very often mistaken for that of 1871.

The former are with a few exceptions, in reality of no value, but the latter command a very respectable price. Both these issues were like both in appearance, color and value but being a rectangular embossing on the back, the 1871 issue is thus very much sought after. By this, young collectors may see that it will pay them to examine the back of a U. S. stamp.

Without a catalogue, no beginner, I think I may safely assume, will be able to distinguish the issue of 1871 of the German Empire, from that of 1872, without having had his attention called to the fact. There is in reality but a very slight difference. It consists in the shape and size of the eagle, which is a trifle larger in the 1872 issue than in the other, otherwise the colors and values correspond exactly. Then again, some of the German States have issued specimens which contain a silk thread, while one or two years afterward we find the same specimens lacking the silk thread. All these things must be closely studied and considered, so as to enable an ardent amateur's wish to be realized,—a collection remarkable for its multitude of varieties. Don't think that there is not much difference between a surcharge and an original, as a collection is never complete without them.

Also a few words about the treatment of stamps. If they should be tightly gummed to another paper, etc., try to loosen them by holding them over some very hot steam, and after you have succeeded in getting them off, then dry