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## PROVISIONAL STAMPS.

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There is possibly no branch of stamp collecting which affords more interest and study as provisional stamps do, and collectors having specimens of this class generally look upon them as being a special novelty of their collections, and are themselves entitled to be considered energetic and quick-sighted collectors. It is particularly necessary with a provisional stamp to seize the earliest of obtaining it, for to pass a specimen frequently results either in failure to get it at all, or in having to pay a price which, during its brief currency, would have purchased maybe a hundred. Provisional stamps can be divided into probably a dozen classes, a number of the most prominent causes for their existence may be given here, viz. :—

1. Stamps issued by a provisional government.
2. Stamps issued in time of war.
3. Stamps issued during a temporary failure of supplies of the kind generally used.
4. Stamps temporarily issued on the first introduction of a new or independent postal system.
5. Stamps issued owing to a previously current series, or value having been forged.
6. Temporary stamps having been issued on a change of postal rates.
7. Stamps issued on the absolute transfer of the ownership of a country.
8. Stamps employed from motives of economy, that is to use up an old stock.

1. *Stamps issued by a provisional government.*—These are very numerous, more so than any of the other classes. Chief among them are the various series issued in the Italian States, namely, Naples, Sardinia and Sicily; the HABILITADO stamps of Spain, Porto Rico, and the Philippine Islands, issued in 1868-9, the resuscitated early Mexican with gothic surcharge which were used in 1867 after Maximilian's death, the stamp of Guadalupe also came under this class. Many stamps that come under this class are very scarce, especially obliterated specimens of Mexico and Guadalupe.

2. *Stamps issued in time of war.*—The chief representatives of this class are, of course, what are commonly called Alsace and Lorraine stamps; and to the best of my collection the 1864 Holstein or some of them were issued under similar circumstances. Some of the stamps issued by Confederate postmasters, prior to the general issue authorized by the Confederate government, may also perhaps be included under this head, and these are all more or less rare. The Alsace stamps are still, and are likely to be for some years to come, very common, and the Holstein are catalogued at a low price.

3. *Stamps issued during a temporary failure of supplies of the kind generally used.*—This is a very extensive class. The British colonies alone offer a fair variety. Beginning with the rare provisionals of British Guiana, 1856 and 1862, those of the Cape of Good Hope (wood blocks and surcharged), Trinidad (wood blocks), Shanghai, Bermuda, Western Australia (surcharged), and the "Service" stamps of India, formed out of revenue labels, may be instanced. The necessity for the issue of these stamps appears to have arisen from the colonies in question obtaining their supplies from the mother country. The 1865 Brazil (figure, perforated) comes under this head. The rarity of stamps of this class depends to a great extent on the length of time they were in use, and of course on the number prepared for use. In several cases the supplies printed were very small.

4. *Stamps temporarily issued on the first introduction of a new or independent postal system.*—It has occasionally happened that, when a country adopts the system of prepayment by stamps, it is desired to bring it into operation without delay, and pending the preparation of stamps of a suitable design, some temporary label has to be used, as the postoffices of New York, Providence and St. Louis.

5. *Stamps issued owing to a previously current series or value having been forged.*—Spain stands nearly alone in having been obliged to issue stamps of this class, for, notwithstanding the almost

annual emission from that country, the 20 centimos, 1866, and 10 centimos, 1874, had to be specially issued to counteract forgery. The COUNTERSEAL on the 1872 Salvador stamps is surcharged for a similar purpose, though a person would have thought that, if a really dangerous forgery of such well engraved stamps had been conceived, it would have been easy also to copy the surcharge, which is frequently so badly struck on the genuine stamps as to be illegible.

6. *Stamps issued on a change of postal rates.*—The Buenos Ayres (steamship, 4 reales and 1 peso) and Uruguay, 1866, surcharged, are examples of this class.

7. *Stamps issued on the absolute transfer of the ownership of a country.*—There is only one marked case of this kind, and that is the double surcharged stamps of Fiji, another example cannot very well be cited unless we take the Peruvian stamps, surcharged with the Arms of Chili.

8. *Stamps employed from motives of economy.*—The Argentine Republic, 5 cent surcharged  $\frac{1}{2}$ , 1 and 2 cent; the 10 cent surcharged 8, are examples of this class, and are generally scarce in an obliterated form. These stamps are perhaps not admissible as forming a class of provisionals, as they could be also placed under class 3; but, as they can come under two different classes, there is no reason why they cannot be admitted as provisionals. There may be some other classes of provisional stamps, such as LOCALS, which, a few collectors maintain, are provisional until superseded by an authorized government issue. But we cover that point under class 4 as regards strictly provisional stamps.

In conclusion I would recommend all collectors, and more especially those who have only recently started, to lose no opportunity of acquiring provisionals of all kinds, for they may not be equal in design and execution to some of the more permanent issues, yet they often afford curious examples of native workmanship, and of the straits to which postoffice may be reduced.