

The Coombs Forgeries.

H. L. Coombs of St. John, N. B. and his brother B. F. Coombs, stand convicted, (by the full admission of H. L. Coombs) of stamp forgery of the gravest character. Their plan has been to get the common 5c. issue of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, on the original envelopes, selecting specimens where the cancellation covered the stamp only, and did not extend to the envelope; the original stamps being then removed and rare (sometimes impossible) "splits" were substituted, unused remainders being cut in two for this purpose, and then cancelled with rubber stamps, made in exact imitation of the old gridiron cancellation of these provinces. These were advertised for sale at rather low prices, or to exchange for rare stamps of B. N. A and U. S. A.

Some weeks ago B. F. Coombs called upon Mr. R. W. Hannington, a St. John Barrister and Solicitor, formerly of Dorchester, in order to purchase some N. B. 5c. green, on originals. Mr. Hannington noticed that Coombs selected only such specimens as were not cancelled on the envelopes as well as on the stamps, and, his suspicions being excited by the circumstance, he made a memorandum of the address on each envelope so sold to Coombs. A few days later Mr Hannington learned that B. F. Coombs had ordered from a St. John rubber stamp manufacturer, a rubber stamp, to be made in exact imitation of the old Nova Scotia cancellation, a specimen of which, on the original stamp and cover, he left as a pattern. The Stamp Manufacturer—to his credit be it said—refused to fill the order, but Coombs had no difficulty in getting the stamp elsewhere. A few days after this the younger brother H. L., also called upon Mr. Hannington for a further supply of 5c. of N. B. and N. S. and, as before, only imperfectly cancelled covers were selected. Mr. Hannington, as in the former instance noted the address on each envelope.

Feeling quite sure that fraud was being practised, Mr. Hannington then sent a notice to a number of Philatelic journal, warning collectors to look out for bogus "splits" from St. John, and offering to examine and report upon any that might be sent to him for his opinion. Several specimens were sent to him in response to his notice, and in every instance the envelopes to which the so called "split" was attached proved to be one of those purchased from Mr. Hannington bearing, originally, the common 5c. variety.