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The Beginner.

The beginner as a factor in the development, is not sufficiently considered; his needs—and they are not few—are disregarded, and his wants are scoffed at by the majority of those more advanced in our hobby. It is, indeed, true that many magazines are printed especially for him, and him alone; but the beginner who is really a beginner does not ever see a stamp paper of any description; he has scarcely heard that such a thing as a dealer is in existence, and he cannot distinguish between a surcharge and a millimeter. It is this class of bona-fide beginners that I desire to discuss—our relations with, and dues to them.

There are dealers—happily few yet sufficient to be a disgrace to philately—who count it a very brilliant and intellectual accomplishment to be able to sell stamps to beginners at twice or three times catalogue, and buy from them at perhaps one twentieth of the list price.

I remember that when I was first essaying to collect the “Wee bits” there was a dealer, a youth of fourteen summers, of this description in the town where I lived.

He happened to be looking through my collection, when his eagle eye beheld a stamp, which was, as I found later, catalogued at the time at about two dollars.

Well, this dealer inadvertently forgot himself and offered a dollar in exchange

for the stamp. My awe at the contemplation of this munificent amount was abandoned. My hearts action was twice the normal. Tears of joy welled in my eyes, and with trembling hand I tried to commence choosing my dollars worth from his sheets. By this time however, the young man had perceived his fatal error and hastened to remark in a commiserating tone. “Oh, I was only fooling you about the dollar. Just the same I’ll let you have forty cents worth of stamps for it.” Although somewhat disappointed, still I considered forty cents in an enormous sum, but while I continued to hesitate he said: “Look here young fellow! you’re trying to cheat me. This stamp is printed on pink paper, and I can’t give you more than a nickel for it.” Of course, it was the pink paper that made it valuable, but I blissfully ignorant of the fact, marched of the proud possessor of a five-cent Seebeck, almost thankful that I had not been compelled to pay my dealer friend (?) for the privilege of carrying my stamp away.

Such scenes are daily repeated, and will be until the Millennium arrives. It is vain to try to prevent dishonest people from being dishonest. The only effective remedy lies in educating the philatelically ignorant till they know too much to be gullied. How to do this is a question that demands serious and immediate consideration. It very evidently can not be