

ly-prepared watermarked paper, bearing, respectively, a spread-eagle, dove, castle, and the initials P. O. D., U. S. The later issues of Russia are, however, issued on plain paper.

In England and America, the regulation now is that the stamp be placed on the right-hand upper corner of the letter or envelope. In Saxony, Hanover, Baden, Brunswick, and Austria, &c., the stamp was formerly placed on the left-hand side of the envelope; now they are usually placed, as in Canada, on the right-hand upper corner. In Russia and Finland the envelope stamps were at one time impressed on the flap; and in Brazil, the adhesives were occasionally used as a seal, which caused them sometimes to be overlooked by the post-office officials.

During the internal war in the United States, postage stamps formed almost the only currency of small value in circulation; and the government issued them without being gummed for the purpose of their being so used, as it was found that the gummed stamps were apt to adhere together when carried and handled. They afterwards issued fac-similes of postage stamps printed on larger paper, with full directions; these were termed *postage currency*.

Before stamps are printed, it is usual to take off from the plate one or more impressions on common paper, and in ink of different colors from those in which the stamps are officially used, to see if the plates are in a condition to print, so that none but perfect stamps should be issued, and that the government may not be cheated by these prior impressions being used as postage stamps. Such impressions of an unusual color have been called *proofs*—they are so in a printer's use of the word, but not in that of a collector of engravings.

The post-office department issue specimen stamps to the post-offices to show what are in official use. In England the stamps so sent are marked across with the word "specimen," to prevent their being used for postage purposes. In Germany they circulate for this purpose stamps which are printed in black or some other colour not officially used. Such stamps were at one time catalogued as *stamps of identification*.

Some Societies that supply their members with stamps, handprint on the stamp the sign or initial of the society, while some firms and corporate bodies have their initials printed on the stamps. In Western Australia the stamps supplied to the government officials are perforated in the centre, to prevent their being used by them to prepay private letters.

Stamp collecting now numbers its followers in almost every part of the world. It possesses also a literature of its own, including several catalogues in different languages, works on forged stamps, and well-conducted periodicals; besides which numerous albums, compiled by experienced amateurs, have been published. These facts indicate the undiminished attraction which stamp collecting still exerts, and which, as a beneficial recreation, it will continue to do.

The man's an ignoramus,  
Or, lower yet, a scamp,  
Who writes for information  
And sends no postage stamp.

### The Originator of Postage Stamps.

The cable brings news of the death of Sir Rowland Hill, in the 85th year of his age. The author of the penny postal system lived to witness the full realization of his dream of cheap inter-communication. His life has terminated in an era when the telegraph and telephone play an important part in business affairs. Born of lowly parents, Sir Rowland Hill steadily rose to important positions in the Empire. Shortly after holding the position of Secretary to the Commissioners for the colonization of South Australia, Mr. Hill published a pamphlet developing the cheap postal system. In 1810 his plan was carried into effect, the author receiving an appointment in the Treasury. A change of Government having taken place, Mr. Hill was, in 1842, removed from office on the alleged ground that his services were no longer required. He was forthwith considered an ill-used man, and the British public showered tokens of esteem upon him. He was presented with a testimonial of the value of £13,360, and other gifts. Subsequently he was reinstated in office, knighted, awarded a pension of £2,000 a year, and a Par-

His remains are interred in

Westminster Abbey. The British empire mourns the loss of a public benefactor—the Philatelic world grieves as for a personal friend.

### THE RAREST OF ALL COINS.

(Continued from last issue)

After a while, for it was hot work, five of the men rolled dead in the dust. Only two of us were left. The other man is still at Bokhara. He agreed that I should come to Europe to sell this bit of gold. Since it was found I have always carried it under my arm. There are, I understand, more skilful thieves in England than in Bokhara. They all say in London, those who have studied old gold: money, that this coin is a forgery. I know better. Will you buy it, my lord?"

The expert looked at it again, and satisfied himself of its authenticity. It was an antique. More than that, it was a numismatic prodigy. Its weight was nearly 5 ounces, or 20 staters, and its value in gold about \$110. On one side was the portrait of Eucratides, King of Bactria, who lived 185 B. C. The bust of the monarch was crowned with a helmet, ornamented with the horn and ear of the bull, a peculiar attribute of the kings of Bactria. On the reverse were the Dioscures, Chastor and Pollux, galloping on horseback, with the legend in Greek, *Basileus Melannoy, Eykratidoy*, (the Great King Eucratides). There was a defect, something like a line running across the field of the piece. This defect was the glory of the coin. This showed the number of blows which were required to strike such a big piece. The die with which that coin had been stamped must have been broken after this piece was made. The numismatist was wild with joy, for certainly this piece was unique. It was the first, may be the last, of its kind, and there never would turn up in this world another piece of gold like it.

"Ask him what he wants for it," inquired the expert, with concealed indifference. "It is worth something, of course, its weight, say, in gold." The Bokhara man's eyes twinkled—they were black, snaky eyes. "I will take £5,000 for it, my lord, and nothing else," said the man, coolly, as he picked up the coin, slipped it into the bag, and was about putting it under his arm.

Now came the moment of trial. The expert lighted a cigarette and smoked to calm his nerves. Then, blowing the smoke from his lips, he said, "I tell you what I will do. I will give you, right now, my check for £1,000 for the piece. If the coin is not mine in twenty minutes, I shall offer you £800 for it, and so on until I get to £500. If you don't close with me to-night, to-morrow I will not take it at any price."

"Twenty minutes passed," said the expert, "like an instant. The Bokhara man seemed immersed in deep thought. Then he turned on me suddenly," continued the expert, "pierced me through with his black eyes, and put the much-coveted coin in my hand, while his long bird-like fingers were bent like talons to take the check. The coin was mine. I slept," said the expert, "with that coin under my pillow; that is, I tried to sleep, but so excited was I that I never closed my eyes that night."

The numismatist took the earliest conveyance across the English Channel. This medal was not for common collections. It was a piece for the French museum. The Emperor Louis Napoleon heard of it, as did the Minister of Instruction. M. Feuardent considered an offer of 30,000 francs for the medal as an imperative command that the coin should remain in France. So stay it did, though 50,000 francs, just double what it cost, were offered for it. This coin of the Bactrian Eucratides is now the greatly-prized ornament of the Cabinet des Medailles. To-day it lies in a glass case all by itself. There is a little handle coming out of the box, which permits the public to turn the coin so that both sides of it may be seen.

"This," said the expert to the writer, "is the rarest coin in the world, and the one for which the highest price has been paid. Since it cost the lives of five men, I do not think any thing more was really paid for it than it was worth. It ought to have been saved for the delectation of numismatic amateurs in all times to come, even had fifty or one hundred lives been sacrificed,