

SOME PHILATELIC TRIFLES.

BY E. E. K.

I SUPPOSE there are many collectors who, like myself, are not as familiar as they should be with everything that pertains to the stamps they meet with, and who are sometimes puzzled to account for this or that feature of certain specimens. It was a long time before I understood why British Guiana has the values of its stamps denoted in *cents* while in other British colonies which lie near to it these values are expressed in shillings and pence—the money of the mother country. On looking the matter up one day I found that in British Guiana all public and mercantile accounts are kept in dollars and cents, the value of the dollar being equal to 4s. 2d. sterling. That all accounts should be kept in a currency which is not in use among any of its neighbors is somewhat mysterious, and still more strange is the fact that its stamps do not bear the regulation head of the Queen as do those of all the other British possessions, with rare exceptions. The absence of Her Majesty's portrait is of course not the result of accident or oversight, but whatever may be the consideration to which it is due, a knowledge of the same would be of interest to philatelists.

The first issues of Ceylon had their values expressed in shillings and pence, but in 1872 the rupee was adopted as the standard of value and the English money gave way to the new currency in which one hundred cents are equal to one rupee, or two shillings, or forty-eight cents of the money of the United States and Canada.

The stamps of Labuan and Hong Kong, also bearing the good Queen's portrait, (or what was her portrait half a century ago) likewise indicate in cents the amount of postage they will pay, but this cent is double the value of that of Ceylon. This currency was no doubt adopted by these colonies on account of its convenience in commercial transactions with their neighbors, or with those countries with which they have their principal trade.

For a long time I was unable to fully understand those peculiar surcharges found on some of the stamps used in Porto Rico, but I finally came across an odd philatelic journal in which, to my great satisfaction, the matter was explained. Until sometime in 1873, Cuba and Porto Rico used the same stamps, but at this period the authorities of the latter island noticed a considerable falling off in the postal revenues. An investigation brought to light the fact that a large proportion of the stamps used in Porto Rico were obtained in Cuba, where they could be bought with the depreciated currency of that island, while in Porto Rico they had to be paid for in gold or its equivalent. To make sure that the stamps used in paying postage were purchased only in Porto Rico, they were surcharged with the *paraphe*, or ornamental flourish, which followed the signature of the chief authority of the island. Subsequent events made it necessary to add the *paraphe* of another official, and the theft of a large quantity of the 25c. and 1 peseta stamps thus surcharged, obliged the authorities to surcharge the remaining stock of these values with a third *paraphe* horizontally, it being a duplicate of that of the Governor-General.