

## Postage Stamps.

### The Work of Civil Servants in Distributing and Accounting.—A Fine Organization.

The bulky departmental reports, or even the special inquiries made by Parliament into individual transactions, show only the results of what is done by the several branches of the public service in the Dominion. Best of the actual working of those branches little is known. Should the idea be favorably received, *The Civilian* proposes to publish a series of articles, of which this is the first, in which the attempt will be made to show just how the work of the Civil Service is carried on.

If the Average Man—that wisest of persons—were called upon to name that object which embodies and typifies Government to the greatest number of people, he would unhesitatingly answer—don't you think?—“A postage stamp.”

There has lately appeared a big volume, written by an American philatelist, Mr. Clifton A. Howes, and entitled:—“Canada: Its Postage Stamps and Postal Stationery.” There is more information in it than the ordinary citizen could use in a lifetime. One would think that if anything further were to be written upon the subject, it would only be a series of “dittoes” to what Mr. Howes has said, or certain appendices to keep the facts up to date. And yet—such is the size of the subject or the perversity of the journalistic mind—when *The Civilian* wishes to turn out an article on the subject of postage stamps, it finds itself in a field hitherto untrodden. Not of the first issue of adhesive stamps for postage—A. D. 1851—do we wish to speak; not of the changes made necessary by the enthronement of successive Sovereigns; not of the denominations of Jubilee stamps, or the different colors of sea in successive printings of those in celebration of the “Vaster Empire than has beens”; not of the beauty of the Tercentenary issues or the imprints upon those of noble Edward's reign,—not of such things, the delight of the philatelic soul is a word to be said here. But it must have occurred to any but the most incurious mind to wonder how

many stamps were used in the course of a year, and how the stamps were distributed to the places where they are to be used and how they were kept track of to prevent misunderstandings, losses and frauds. All this is the work of a branch of the civil service, and it is of that branch and its work that this story tells.

First, of the work to be done. With a department that receives practically all its revenues through postage stamps and yet states its surplus alone in seven figures, it can readily be understood that there are a considerable number of postage stamps to be handled. We shall come to the statistics in a moment. And, with eight millions of people more prone to letter-writing than almost any equal number in the world and scattered over half a continent, some of them in sections where the stamps pay for carriage by pack train, canoe or dog sled, it takes no great imaginative power to understand that the work of sending every kind of stamp that may be called for to every point where it may be needed, and of keeping track of all the transactions of the thousands of widely scattered people through whom sales must be carried on, is no small matter.

Including post cards, stamped envelopes and all other forms, the stamps issued for sale by the department for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 1909, the latest report issued, numbered 584,264,774.

This was an increase over the year before of more than 54,000,000. The steady development of Canada is no-