

A PHILATELIST'S MUSINGS.

BY ROY F. GREENE.

When dusky darkness hovers
O'er meadows all about,
I come from work all dusty,
And completely tired out;
But supper over, I'm content,
From cares and troubles free,
I take the big old rocker—
Rest my album on my knee.

You may talk of royal castles,
And the riches they contain;
You may picture gloating misers
As they count their greedy gain;
But these titled lands and castles,
Lying far across the sea,
Wouldn't rest my tired muscles
Like this album on my knee.

The student spends his evenings
O'er his text-book and his slate—
Burns the midnight oil in study,
Working early, working late,
Parsing grammar, solving problems—
Some he never finds the key—
But I find my greatest comfort
In the album on my knee.

There's the love-sick youth and maiden
Leaning o'er the garden gate:
He has just proposed, and, anxious,
Waits for her to speak his fate—
She has promised to be faithful
Whatever life may be;
That's bliss, but not such as I find
In the album on my knee.

I rest my tired muscles,
I soothe my aching head
In musing o'er my treasures
Ere I retire to bed;
I see no dreary moments,
Life's sweet, from troubles free,
And I owe my greatest pleasure
To this album on my knee.

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CENTRALIZATION SHALL END—
WHERE?

"EKS. PLUSTOO."

THE student of philately to-day is lost amid the maze of new issues, surcharges, re-issues, and reprints; and as he watches month by month the almost endless additions to an already too sumptuous bill of fare, he, nauseated by the very bountifulness of the supply, and discouraged by the impossibility of attaining even a fairly complete collection of stamps of the world drops his favorite pastime, or seeks a satisfaction in specialization, generally the latter.

But, "One golden day redeems a weary year," and centralization or consolidation of states, and provinces is the golden day that has been redeeming, and will continue to redeem this weary multitude of new stamps.

Many of the collectors of twenty-five years ago will remember the pride with which they used to show their stamps of British Columbia and Vancouver Island; those of United Canada, Upper and Lower; New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island stamps, each arranged under its heading as an independent colony. But time passes, and brings its changes, and things little dreamed of have brought about the confederation of these provinces, and their centralization as the great Dominion of Canada, with one issue of stamps common to all. Thus the old series have been made obsolete, their values greatly increased because of their rarity, and proud indeed, and happy is he whose album pages are full of them!

Let us turn over an old collection. Under the heading Modena we find stamps with an eagle between two olive branches; Parma gives the Fleur-de-lis in a crowned circle; Naples with its strange coat of arms—white horse and legged head; Sicily with profile of Ferdinand II; the crowned lion and shield of Tuscany; and the tiara and keys of the Roman States, all under their respective titles, but to-day they seem to become strangely mixed with the stamps of Sardinia, and finally emerge with the profiles of Victor Emmanuel and King Humbert as the stamps of a United Italy. These changes tell the story of wars and rumors of wars, of struggle, and bloodshed, and havoc; of desires vainly cherished, and at length fully satisfied; of a country for centuries parcelled out in fragments, each the pleasure ground of a paltry despot; but now a great and united nation, in full enjoyment of constitutional liberty, with every natural advantage—a fertile soil, a genial climate, an ample seaboard and easy communication with all the world. Centralization has done this much for Italy, and it has relegated to the catalogue of rarities the stamps of the once separated provinces.

And why need I refer at length to what this tendency to centralize had done for Germany? Has it not formed the mightiest empire of Central Europe? And has it not, and is it not making more valuable each day the obsolete stamps of the majority of its now united provinces or states? Still later we have the work of centralization, in the retiring of the stamps of Antigua, Montserrat, St. Christopher, Nevis, Virgin Islands and Dominica by the one single series of the Leeward Islands.

Now where shall this tendency to centralization end? No one who has considered the matter will charge me with dreaming when I state that ere long Australia will yield to its power. She is so well suited to form, if necessary, by her geographical position, a confederacy of her own. Australia now consists of five separate colonies:—New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland. All these are provinces of one vast island, the largest island in the world. Even New Zealand and Tasmania might naturally form part of a great Australian confederation, with one series of stamps for all.

And is there not something more than mere conjecture in the statement that England, Ireland and the states that now are colonies, may form a wider and a grander federation? Why should Canada, Victoria, Cape Colony, Natal and all other British colonies not form an Imperial Federation, with an Imperial Parliament, and a common voice on questions of foreign policy, of peace and war, and postal conveniences?

And dare I even whisper that a Universal Postal Union may evolve a universal postage stamp? Centralization shall end—where?