

The Specialist's Error and Its Correction.

BY W. HAMMOND.

In the good old days of fifteen years ago when a complete set of state departments could be bought for \$7.00 and others in proportion, it was the universal practice among collectors to collect anything in the postage stamp line which came their way and as minor varieties were unknown a collection naturally embraced all nations and a collector would point with pride to gems from all parts of the globe.

The collectors of these early days studied and worked as hard as any of the present students of minor varieties but it was in a different way.

They didn't don microscopical glasses and burn the midnight oil to discover if there were really 157,698 hairs in Washing ton's queue or only 157,697 as the catalogue said, or if the exact color of their latest French acquisition was light blue, blue, dark blue, bluish ultramarine, ultramarine, etc., ad infinitum.

The world, however, moves fast. With the discovery of varieties (?) prices have naturally advanced, and they have advanced on the wings of the wind, mounting skyward, until now many are away out of the reach of mortal hands. Then with the rise of prices various countries went into the discovering business, and what did they discover? Simply that they positively must have a new issue every two or three years with a commemorative issue or two on the side to act as a spice to the Philatelic appetite.

These things went on until a collector could no longer hope to get a fair representative collection from all countries so the

great majority became specialists. This is the natural outcome of minor varieties and unnecessary issues. Now what is the natural outcome of specializing? Why the collector studies the stamps of his favorite countries and discovers still other, and more minor varieties (?) and so the work goes on, discouraging all who have not the time to spend deciphering minor varieties.

There have appeared from time to time in the magazines, articles decrying this evil and its effect in driving the young collector from the ranks of Philately and causing his enlistment in the ranks of the numerous other armies of collectors, but I have yet to see the man who has suggested a feasible scheme for suppressing the tendency.

Many are agreed that the only way is to do away with minor varieties, but how? As long as there are searchers? Now I don't advocate sending them to the Philippines or feeding them on "coffin beef" but should use a little gentle persuasion.

These searchers after varieties mistake the true object of stamp collecting. They study the stamp for slips of the engraver's scapel, slight differences in color, etc., but what does this all amount to? What have we learned? It nearly goes to prove the old adage "To err is human" and shows that the engraver and printer are only human, but to my mind the discoverer errs more than the engraver. Certainly no one profits in real knowledge. The dealer profits in a financial way. That is all.

Now to my mind the true object of collecting stamps is to get a better knowledge of countries, peoples, customs, manners, languages, monies, etc., and this cannot be done by seeking for unintentional vari-