

Written for CANADIAN PHILATELIST:

SPECIALISTS AND SPECIALISM.

BY A SUBSCRIBER.

Specialism is the order of the day. The decline of general collecting is evident, and the increase of the former is rapidly causing a steady advance of price in the older issues of nearly every stamp-issuing country in the globe. There are but few countries that have not their following of specialists. Why should not specialism continue to increase until all, or nearly all, of the Philatelic world could be termed as specialists? There have been many objects and advantages that have caused collectors to turn their attention to a few countries instead of attempting the impossible, by endeavoring to make a general collection, embracing the whole stamp-issuing world. One of the many reasons that caused the advance of specialism was the yearly "Seebeck" issues of certain Central American and other countries. Collectors became disgusted with these yearly *made-to-order* issues. Had they not a good reason to do so? Yes, verily, with so many varieties to collect, with no hope of collecting all those that had been issued, and to have some speculative dealers endeavor to force innumerable new varieties on them each year, assisted in the formation of a resolution to collect but a few countries, leaving these speculative new issues out in the cold. Another important reason was: As collectors became moderately advanced, they recognized the fact of the impossibility of forming a complete collection of all countries; then follows a desire to have at least something complete, hence the collector naturally selects a few countries with the intention of devoting his entire attention to them. Again, a general collector, picking up two successive editions of a standard catalogue, and making a comparison of prices, notes the decided advance of price in some of the older issues of certain countries—a 10 cent stamp rises to \$2.00, and others in like proportion. It is with regret that he notes that in his general grasp for everything he has neglected these older issues which are so rapidly rising in value. Take, for instance, the issues of British North America, the United States, the States of the German Confederation, and the older issues of the British Colonies. This last is by far the most important reason in leading the collector to abandon general collecting and take to specialism. The writer does not

desire the above to tend to prejudice collectors (especially young ones) against general collecting. It is, I contend, all right and proper for some individuals, but for some only. In the first place, I strongly recommend general collecting to the young beginner. When starting to form a collection, it is for him a difficult matter to determine properly which countries he prefers to make a specialty of; but as his collection approaches the thousand mark, he will begin to have some idea of his favorite countries, and will then, as a result, be better prepared to enter the field as a specialist than he would have been had he done so at the first. There is another individual to whom general collecting is entirely feasible, that is, to the wealthy collector. With plenty of means at his disposal, it is to him a comparatively easy matter to form a fairly complete collection. But outside the two above cases, I am inclined to strongly advocate the claims and advantages of specialism. It is in the end the most profitable investment to the collector of limited means. Perhaps you, my dear reader, are not a specialist. You ask: "What shall I make my specialty? There is abundant field for choice, but it is best to leave it to the tastes of the collector himself. In Canada and the United States, I believe, the general tastes of specialists have a tendency toward collecting solely (singly or collectively) the issues of British North America, the United States and Mexico. These three countries form an interesting triplet for any collector, as the general issues, postage revenue and local, embracing some minor varieties, comprise between four and five thousand different varieties of stamps, but one of the three above countries will, I believe, form a very sufficient task for the average American or Canadian. Here in Europe, however, our specialties are, to a large extent, very different to those of American collections. In Britain, we find it task enough to form a fairly complete collection of Great Britain alone; but, as in America, the ambition of some of our specialists is greater than their purses, and, as a result, take it in hand to collect. Come over the Channel with me, and I will favor you with an introduction to Monsieur Française, who makes a specialty of France, the happy Republic (?) and her colonies only. He does not become discouraged at the multitude of surcharges with which the generous (?) Postmasters of the Colonies so kindly (?) supply him. If