

The Literary Circle.

By RAYMOND S. BAKER.

In looking over the stamp magazines of five or ten years ago one is struck with the continual change of actors on the literary stage. It is not that the drama differs very materially but the players with the exception of one or two brilliant "stars," are all new men. While it is true in all walks of life, that the passage of time is forever placing the governing power in new and sometimes inexperienced hands, yet philately in many regards seems to be the acme of mutability. Indeed so various are the vicissitudes, so rapid the departures, that not infrequently is it a strain on our memories to recall the name of one who half a decade ago was recognized as a facile and pleasing writer. There are reasons for this, as there are for nearly everything else under the sun. The principal explanation lies in the fact that stamp collecting has not yet become established as a national recreation and on account of its journalistic limitations, is but made the stepping stone to a higher sphere in the world of letters.

John Deveraux Kirke, if not a very classical, was certainly the most prolific writer of his time. The majority of the readers of this magazine are probably familiar with his name, and remember him as a member of the younger school of philatelic writers. In fact it is only three or four years since he ceased to contribute to our stamp papers. His productions were entirely of an abstract character as he never attempted articles, which in their nature are purely philatelic. As an essayist however he is entitled to credit and his work is certainly worthy of remembrance.

The literary circle has decided that typographically, the PHILATELIC ADVOCATE is the Canadian model. While it is admitted that this statement might not have been made some months ago, yet the Berlin journal has improved with every issue and well exemplifies the saying, "never despise the day of small things." There has however been no small number of despisers, but in spite of all, the ADVOCATE has worked, and is working, out its own salvation. The circle appreciates the better paper, the careful arrangement, and most especially the literary improvement.

One of the highest and most laconic of writers was Walter A. Withrow. In these qualities lay the greater part of his success. His contributions were always read with interest, being popular with all classes of collectors. Mr. Withrow had the happy faculty of coming right to the point and of clothing his ideas in forcible and appropriate language. He said what he had to say and that was the end of it. Philatelic writers as a rule are occasionally guilty of stretching out their article to an undue length. It should be remembered that "reiteration is the thief of space" and that "brevity is the soul of wit."

The literary circle is surprised to learn that the "Pennsylvania Philatelist," which has reached the comparatively ancient age of seven years, will with the September number cease publication. At one time the loss of this original journal would have certainly been felt, but of late years the literary contents has been of so poor a quality that its suspension will hardly be noticed. The "Penny" first came into prominence when editor Kissinger waged his vigorous but unsuccessful war for the Presidency of the Sons of Philatelia.