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STAMPS AND STAMP COLLECTING.

T. PUGH.

THE general impression with the public is, that stamp collecting is only a pastime that should be confined to boys at school, however, there are a few facts in connection with stamp collecting of the present day that may tend to dispel this idea. There is now hardly any large city in Europe or America, that has not a Philatelic Society and amongst the members you will generally find barristers, doctors, and men of independent means constitute the greater proportion. And to show how largely the pursuit is gone in for it may be mentioned that one society on the Continent has over 1500 members, and there are also many other Societies which have over 100 on their list. (The Juvenile Philatelist being strictly excluded from such associations.) When one hears also of the extraordinary prices paid for collections it must certainly dispel the idea of its being considered an amusement not worth while wasting time over. It was only by the last English Mail that I received a letter from a fellow collector in Paris who informed me that a very large collection there had been sold for £8000. It may also be interesting to Australians that one of our wealthy Colonial Baronets disposed of his collection some time ago for £3000.

The collections that have been sold at those high rates are not composed as many people would imagine of dirty, torn, and old post marked stamps but principally of unused stamps and as the *face* value of many of these vary from 5s. up to 20s. each it can then be understood how the collection becomes so valuable, of course there are many of the earlier issues that it is impossible to obtain unused specimens of, and then the collector has to be content with those that are post marked. I do not mean to infer that all collectors confine themselves to unused stamps, for in fact it is the exception, not the rule; but I am certainly of the opinion that a collection of purely postmarked stamps would never become very valuable. For my own part I am a very strong advocate for collecting unused stamps as, I fail to see much interest in a stamp where all colour and design has been obliterated by the post mark, of course there is the exception I have already mentioned of some of the earlier issues, but even nearly all these can be obtained with only a very slight post mark on them which by no means defaces the stamp.

In the earlier issues the design was the chief feature, but in the more modern stamp the colour also occupies a prominent position. Some of the early designs are of a highly amusing nature, and many of them are very grotesque. Her Majesty was very unfortunate in this respect, as many of the stamps which bears her supposed portrait are by no means flattering.