

Written for THE CANADIAN PHILATELIST.

TALES OF A PHILATELIST.

I.—The Missing Albums.

BY R. S. WALTERS.

MY uncle was a strange man, at least in the opinion of all except his most intimate friends, and as he was a man of a thoughtful and reserved nature, these latter were few in number. Rich beyond measure, there was no wish he could not gratify; yet he lived simply, on his estate which was situated a short distance from London. He was single (happy man! I would that I were again in that blessed state), and a man who had graduated from Cambridge with the highest honors, and who might have signed himself "Geo. A. Walters, B. A.," had not his plain and simple nature caused him to leave off the degree. He never mingled with the social world, as it was to him only an empty void.

As I have before said, he lived quietly on his estate, his only attendants being an old negro and nigger whom he had brought with him from South Africa, where, among the diamond fields he had accumulated the greater part of his large fortune.

I was one of the intimate and occasional companions, of which he had so few and saw even less frequently, and I know not but that if it had not been for a certain tie that united us we would have seldom met. We were both enthusiastic stamp collectors and consequently the bonds which united us were of a permanent nature.

Regarding my own collection, I once told the readers of *The Canadian Philatelist*, how by a fortunate occurrence while at school, I made some very important additions to it. A period of some six years had elapsed between the time referred to and that of which I am writing, and having just completed my college course, and had again turned my stamps which, although I had only about three thousand varieties, contained a few stamps which might be considered rare.

My uncle's collection was, on the contrary to my own, very large. Unlimited means at his disposal and years of travel had given him exceptional opportunities of procuring many rare varieties, such as are longed after by many collectors but possessed by few. Briefly, there were but few vacant spaces in his albums. He, happy man, lived before the day of "Seebecks" and annual issues. His collection was one of the greatest pleasures he had, and no amount of money would have induced him to part with it. I had frequently spent a pleasant afternoon looking through the two large volumes between whose covers rested so many priceless gems.

On one occasion a few weeks after I left college, I was spending an afternoon with my uncle looking over his albums. I noticed that he was not in his usual spirits. He seemed worried over something. On my inquiring as to what it was he replied: "Bob, I cannot tell you what it is, for I do not know myself. I am in my usual health, yet I feel that something is hanging over me, and that I may not be alive to-morrow."

"Nonsense," I answered, "we all have such feel-

ings at times, they are but clouds that precede the sunshine."

"Well," replied my uncle, with an attempt to laugh, "you are probably right; a good night's sleep may set me right again."

We parted soon after, and as I rode away he called after me, "Bob, you might drop in to a few of the large dealers and see if they can fill any of my wants."

This was the last time I ever saw my uncle alive. The next morning we received a telegram informing us of his death.

The day after the funeral my uncle's will was read and by it he left almost his entire estate to my father, while on me he settled £1,000 a year and his albums.

We took possession of our inheritance a short time after, but although the old mansion was searched from cellar to garret, no trace of the albums could be found. After a couple of almost ceaseless weeks of searching, one night I gave it up in despair and threw myself down in the old leather arm-chair, which, with all the rest of the furniture of my uncle's library, had been left undisturbed out of respect to his memory when alive, for it had been his favorite retreat. Completely exhausted I fell asleep and slept soundly until the tower clock struck two when I awoke. The light was burning dimly, and as I was about to rise to leave the room, I heard footsteps outside the door which opened noiselessly, and as I looked a sudden chill passed over me, for before me stood my uncle. Raising his hand he motioned me to follow him, and I instinctively followed him up the large oaken staircase and through two long halls, until he entered that room which had been his sleeping apartment, which was situated on the extreme left wing of the building. He entered, moved to the side of the room and pressed some hidden spring and a door sprang open, and lo! there on a shelf lay the two lost albums. A sudden dizziness came over me and all became a blank. I was awakened at about ten o'clock the next morning by the sun shining brightly and casting its rays into my face as I lay across the bed.

How I got on the bed was a mystery, when I lost consciousness I was in a remote corner of the room. I cannot explain how I got there, unless my uncle carried me thence after I lost consciousness.

I sprang quickly up and looked toward the part of the room where the hidden vault (for such it was), was situated. The door was still open and upon the shelves lay the albums. I was overcome. Taking them from the vault I replaced the panel and proceeded to my room, where I spent the remainder of the morning turning over in my mind the strange event of the night.

At dinner I rehearsed the night's adventures to the family, who turned the laugh upon me and informed me that I had been dreaming, and that finally I had become so engrossed in my dreams that I had begun searching for the albums in my sleep and had entered my uncle's room and had run against the wall and had touched the hidden spring which had disclosed the missing treasures.

I could not be led to believe that my adventure had been a mere dream. I am certain that my uncle appeared to me from beyond the grave, and that it was only through his aid that I found

THE MISSING ALBUMS.