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PROBLEMS OF THE HOBBY ; THE STAMP FRAUD

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With the rapid increase of Philately in the last few years, there have arisen questions which confront both dealer and collector. In a series of papers, it is our intention to deal with these from a standpoint, as far as possible, entirely unbiased. The first question that claims our attention is the stamp fraud.

Those who study such things divide criminals of all classes into two great and well marked divisions, the occasional criminal and the habitual criminal. So also we might divide stamp frauds into two like classes, the stamp fraud who, from surrounding circumstances, keeps stamps, and the fraud who endeavors to retain all the sheets which chance places in his possession. In their methods, these two classes are very different. The occasional fraud, perhaps, retains only one selection of stamps, and is never heard of again. The professional fraud, on the contrary, does not scruple to use an alias when sending for sheets, if his true name happens to be well-known to the public. The occasional fraud does not operate from any particular motives, but rather appears not to see the moral aspect of his actions, in fact, the line that separates my possessions from thy possessions, is but dimly perceived by him. The habitual fraud, unlike the occasional, is usually influenced by a moving passion, generally a love of gain, in acquiring other people's stamps. As we have said, the methods of the latter fraud are more complex, and, in their planning and carrying out, exhibit a higher degree of mental ability. Chiefly in these respects do the two frauds differ.

It is possible for a non-habitual fraud to become an habitual one if treated wrongfully on the occasion of his first offence. The applicant may have lost the sheets or had them stolen while in his possession. The dealer writes and, naturally, if no explanation be offered, regards the silence of the writer as that of the professional fraud. Unless the stamps be of some considerable value, the dealer hardly ever sends the delinquent a special letter, but, after a card or two