

**Stamps
for
Collectors.**

One of the best editorials we have seen for some time past on the matter of surcharged stamps is that which appeared in the *Philatelic Record*, of Oct., 1893. As the editorial is one of interest, and may prove acceptable to our readers, we have taken the liberty of quoting it entire: "We believe that to Louis XIV. must be attributed the origin of the phrase 'a nation of shopkeepers,' which that magnificent sovereign applied to the Dutch, and which was subsequently borrowed by Napoleon I., and used as a complimentary description of the British nation. The shopkeeping, however, does not seem at present to be confined either to Holland or Great Britain, for its principals appear in many countries to invade some of the business of the state itself. The administration of the post office is supposed to occupy itself solely and exclusively with the transaction of social and commercial business for the benefit of the community, but of late, in very many cases, it has started a fresh line, that of manufacturing postage stamps, not for the benefit of the community, but for sale to stamp collectors; and the qualifications of a Postmaster General appear, in many cases, to be considered in the eyes of his superiors as weighed, not so much by his successful administration of his office, as by how much he is able to make in the way of profit. We are aware that in some countries the post office does not pay its way, and that there is a deficiency which has to be met out of other sources of revenue; but that is no excuse for taxing collectors to make up the deficiency, though this appears now to be the ruling idea with certain postal administrations. From the great republic of the United States down to the principality of Montenegro, and at the insignificant station of Nossi-Bi there is the same readiness to accommodate collectors and provide them with palatable food. Not long since, the Governors of the French Colonies ordinarily prefaced their decrees by lamenting the non-arrival of supplies of stamps of a certain value, say 1 centime and that it was only on account of their anxious desire for the public convenience that they were induced to order a certain number of stamps of 1 franc, to be transformed into stamps of 1 centime. Speculators knew how many there were that had been so treated, and bought the lots up. We lately, however, saw a decree of the Governor of a small colony, who, we suppose, considered this joke about the public wants had become rather stale, and who had the honesty to say that he had ordered the stock in hand to be over printed in order to get rid of it, and so the old stamps were furnished up with new trimmings. But this was honest and honestly done to assist collectors in filling up their albums. To look, however, nearer home, what an extraordinary number of 2 cent rose, of the Straits Settlements must be found in the collections of those who have been diligent enough to collect

all varieties of overprint and surcharge which that unfortunate stamp has been subjected to. In some cases it appeared to be hopeless, unless the collector took the whole sheet of 60. The Indian Native States that have issued postage stamps are an example of another kind. What a first-rate trade the post office of Her Highness Nawab Shahjihan Begam, of Bhopal, must have carried on, for which H. H. is much indebted to the engraver, who could not spell correctly, twenty times running; while in Sirmoor, the postmaster has been so tormented by collectors, that it appears he has been obliged to have the stamp of 1879 imitated, not from an original, but from an imperfect wood engraving, which first appeared in the *Timbre Post* for August, 1879. This state of things is anything but an agreeable one to collectors who desire to collect postage stamps, and not those made specially for them. They find their gems smothered in a heap of rubbish. The late Mr. Tapling never did a wiser thing than when he drew a line and would have none of the modern stuff, concentrating his energies on collecting stamps made for use, and not manufactured or dressed up for sale to collectors. We do not quarrel with states surcharging their stamps, when an alteration in the rate of postage either finds them without the value required, or with small states, which have a stock on hand that would otherwise become useless, because these latter cannot probably be able to put up with the loss consequent on destroying it. These are legitimate, but it is with the manufacture of the overprints and surcharges, that have no earthly purpose except to get rid of the stock to collectors, that we are at war. For instance, we recently chronicled a post card of Portugal, overprinted with 'Valido, 1893.' The card has never been demonetized, and was available for postage purposes before the overprint, and yet they must gild the gold. The Portuguese Government appears to have been in such a hurry to get money somehow that they issued values of the new series long before the old stock was exhausted, and now, in order to make the old stock saleable, they dress it up with all the talent a French cook could have displayed, instead of making a clean sweep of the whole lot. We always exclaimed against the mistake that our Government made when they allowed the old stock of Inland Revenue stamps to be used for postage purposes. The innocent framers of the clause, in the Act of 1881, had only the small Inland Revenue stamp in view, and little thought what a lot of old ones would be rummaged out to the bewilderment of the stampers, who, in despair, stamped anything and everything, for the draft and receipt stamps of 1853 and 1855 were not available for postage under the terms of the Act—*Philatelic Record*, Vol. 5, page 169. But the framers of the notice to the public, who possibly are the authors of that blind guide called *The Postal Guide*, in their omniscience, thought to