

Written for THE CANADIAN PHILATELIST.

SUGGESTIONS, ETC.

In many cases it is very difficult to distinguish the watermark of a stamp. In some cases it cannot be done. The best method to bring out the watermark, if one exists, is as follows: Firstly, see that every particle of paper, gum and dirt is removed from the stamp by means of soaking, then lay the stamp between the blotters to dry. This generally shows up the watermark sufficiently plain, but in case this does not suffice, the watermark can be made to show more plainly by laying the stamp, face down, on a piece of black paper.

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A suggestion which is probably wasted on the greater number of the readers of this paper, will, however, not be out of place, for it is not by any means, improbable that this paper will be read by many beginners and young collectors. Never paste or glue stamps into your album. Always use hinges, which can be obtained of nearly any large dealer, for 10c. per 1,000, or thereabouts. By using hinges you avoid discoloring the stamp and make it a simple matter to substitute a better specimen or shift the position of the stamp.

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Another warning especially for the use of our younger readers, that is: Never cut stamped envelopes to *shape*. This is a mistake made by hundreds of beginners. The best way to keep your stamped envelopes is to preserve them entire, but in cases where it is inconvenient to keep in this state, they should be cut square, leaving wide margins on all sides of the stamp. An envelope cut to *shape* has but little value. Even the rare kinds are worth but a small per cent. of their value as square cut envelopes.

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Even though you are not an advanced collector, it is advisable that you collect any distinct or marked shades of a stamp. Many rare stamps are nothing more than shades of an issue, caused by the ink not being properly mixed.

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In bidding by mail at auction sales, we append a few hints, as follows these were copied verbatim from a contemporary journal, on account of their excellence, but more especially for their brevity: "Send in your bids early; not only to avoid the rush, but because they are given the preference in the order of receipt, other things being equal. Be prompt also in paying for your purchases. Never fix your limits carelessly, or higher than you believe to be the actual value of the stamp. If there are only two such bids among the many received, the stamps will sell high and somebody get stuck. The actual value may be more or less than catalogue price according to quality, condition and popularity of the stamps. It might pay to buy a few priced auction catalogues and carefully study them. In the bright vocabulary of the catalogues, there are no such words as poor, miserable, undesirable, etc. Specimens of this class are usually described as 'fair.' Bear this in mind when bidding on such lots. If you are like everybody else and want the choicest specimens offered, of rare and desirable stamps, you will have to go everyone else one better, or you won't get them. It is useless to make other than liberal bids on such goods, but should you ever wish to sell you may expect good prices in turn. In the case of a series of lots of the same kind, place a reasonable limit on all of them with instructions to buy but one. Prices re-

alized for such lots often vary from low to high. It sometimes pays to employ a professional to examine the stamps and execute your bids, especially when buying mixed lots. Catalogues cannot minutely specify the condition of such, and the value may vary widely from this cause." The above rules are especially useful to those purchasing at auction. In addition to the above, we would say that buying at auction is on the whole a very satisfactory method, as you have a chance to secure the goods you desire at your own price. In regard to priced auction catalogues, we would say that as an epitome for determining the real value of a stamp, auction catalogues are unequalled, for the average price realized by the said stamp at various sales will be very close to its real value; therefore to a person who handles or purchases any quantity of rare stamps, a few priced auction catalogues of the leading sales will prove useful. These catalogues can be procured at close of sales, neatly priced, for 25c. to \$1 each. Prior to the sales, catalogues may be had of the cataloguers or auctioneers on application. We do not know of any firm that charges for them.

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When purchasing stamped envelopes for use in your correspondence, it is wise (that is if you desire to please your correspondents) to avoid the common papers, and get the blue, buff and manilla amber when the same can be obtained. Owing to the few colors of paper used they prove very acceptable to your correspondents.

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When sending parcels or letters which require a large amount of postage, do not use the stamps of the ordinary values more commonly used. Canadian collectors should, if possible, in such cases avoid using the common one, two and three cent values, and use in preference the half cent, five and six cent and higher denominations. These are less used and consequently the more welcome to the recipient of the letter or parcel, as the case may be. United States collectors we might advise to use stamps of the three, six, fifteen cent and higher denominations, in preference to the one, two, four, five and ten cent denominations, which are common. For a registered letter a combination of the three and six cent values is acceptable.

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Never soak the stamps Native India, early Russian or Russian Levant, but lay the reverse side on a wet cloth and the paper will easily peel off. Be very careful not to handle the face except on the edge, as damp fingers will remove the water colors, which are used in the printing of these stamps.

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Never soak the stamps of Japan or Austria, as owing to the thick and greasy quality of the gum, the stamps are usually in worse condition after soaking than before. We state this for the benefit of those soaking large quantities, who might thoughtlessly throw some thousands into a basin of water to soak, and as a result have a rather difficult task on their hands. A single specimen can be soaked with considerable attention; after the paper has been detached from the back, carefully wash all the gum from the back, this will prevent the stamp from curling up and becoming as good as useless.

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Soak your stamps in warm water in preference to cold, as it detaches the paper from the stamp more rapidly.