

Written for the CANADIAN PHILATELIST.

GENERAL COLLECTING vs. SPECIALISM.

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I notice in the CANADIAN PHILATELIST, an article headed, "Specialists and Specialism," by a subscriber, which is very good as far as the *pros* are concerned, but is the contrary as to the *cons*, which, by the way, is crowded out, (perhaps for lack of space.) Mr. Subscriber begins with the steady advance of price in the older issues of nearly every stamp-issuing country in the world, and that the cause of this is the decline of general collecting, and the rapid increase of specialism. Now that may be the case as far as the advance of stamps is concerned, but the increase of specialism is *not* the cause. As a rule, as every one with common sense knows, it is certainly the older issues that advance in price. Surely no one expects the stamps of the present issues to advance. So the older issues advance, not because it is a result of specialism, but simply because it becomes older and therefore rarer year by year, thus Mr. Subscriber's theory is not correct. I cannot, in any way, see the great advantages the specialist has over the general collector. I daresay that no collector can form a complete collection of all countries; but that is no reason to turn to a special country so as to obtain a complete collection of that country. Now, supposing that the specialist has gratified his wish and is the owner of a collection of a *certain* country; has he gained anything in knowledge? in science? in historical or geographical culture? or in anything else worth mentioning? He has, without doubt gained in wealth (?) *selling* his stamps, which have increased in price, at the end of five or ten years. But such is not Philately. It has never been meant as a money-making scheme. It has a nobler aim than that—far more noble. The real pleasure of Philately it not found in the attainment of a complete collection, but in the pursuit of the same. Specialism frames stamp-collecting in a hobby, a child's play, and, outside of possessing a few pieces of paper that will bring in money at a future date, it is a mere nothing. As specialists, we can never term Philately by its true name—a science—which we are so proud of mentioning. It turns its back to the hobby of some time ago. Do you think then, that specialism is the right promoter of Philately. I think it is not. It is a tendency to the opposite of any welfare of Philately, as every one will

decide at once. The writer goes on to say that the reason why collectors turn away from general collecting is because, in their grasp for everything, they neglect the older issues that so rise in value. That, I think, is true of the inexperienced and selfish collector who is so ready for his grasp. The wise collector, however, is not so foolhardy, but only moderately reaches over for the older issues before they advance, and leaves the present issues, *if he has not the means to include them also*, to a later date. At any rate, the collector should remember, that, "variety is the spice of life." Not only the beginner and young collector, as the writer of that new doctrine asserts, should be general collectors, but old and advanced collectors must not, as Philatelists, take up any other branch of collecting, but that which is general collecting. There is another objection to this "Specialism scheme," unless the collector has unlimited means, he cannot specialize his collection, if he has that desire. Do you think that if a collector makes North American Stamps his specialty, does he have the advantage of that which we pride ourselves. Fancy the historian, geographer, geologist, or philosopher studying only-part of their respective specialties. That seems absurd, and still more seems specialism in a scientific culture. Or does the specialist who is in South America lay his nest profit any better? Or has the European specialist a better result? No, a thousand times no! They all tend to the same object, and that is, breaking up the ground work of philately, which our more advanced and learned philatelists have spent their energy on. The only point which I admire in Mr. Subscriber's article is his frankness in his criticism of specialists of *too great ambition* (of course they are all ambitious.) He characterizes Monsieur Française, Herr Deutch and Mr. Henglishman in their respective typical styles, and their connections with specialism. And yet he still, in the face of this, strongly persists in his study and lore of specialism. That is a very great example of specialistic ambition which "Subscriber" fails to mention. He has so much ambition, that he lacks the energy of considering in a rightful manner the *pros* of general collecting and the *cons* of specialism, but on the contrary, does not forget the *vice versa* of that. There is certainly no objection for any collector to give more special attention to his own country than to any other, for that is only natural, and indeed shows a good patriotic tendency in the stamp collector's