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WHAT SHALL WE COLLECT!

In our first number, we advocated the study of watermarks and perforation, but in doing so, we would not wish it to be understood, that we recommend collectors going to such extremes as the editors of the European publications do. Our plan of collecting varieties is, as a general rule, to accept all those differences which are *plainly* evident to the eye; there are of course exceptions to this, which we will explain as we proceed. Before continuing our subject we would say a few words to the leaders of the different systems, or schools, as they are usually called;—let every man enjoy his own opinion, why should an American collector be despised by an English, because he does not happen to see through the latter's spectacles? or why should an American editor use all the hard names and slang terms he can think of, towards one across the water, because the Englishman devotes his columns to the description of varieties? What is wanted by almost every editor is *impartiality*, and as soon as they have it, the science of Philately will be able to expand, to a much greater degree, than it ever has heretofore.

To return; we would advise all collectors to include watermarks. We think we hear someone say "You break your rule at once, as watermarks are not plainly evident to the eye," which we immediately deny, as the back of a stamp is of as much importance as the front, in fact the Greek stamps have a design (a simple one, but yet a design) upon their backs; if only one side is to be looked at, which side of the above mentioned stamps is to be left uppermost? In recommending the study of watermarks we do not think it necessary, to include, either differences in the quality and thickness of the paper, or errors of watermark; this forms one exception to our rule. Our reasons for rejecting errors of watermark, are that they are, so endless, there are inverted watermarks, reversed watermarks, and watermarks used for the wrong stamp, so that if the collector can obtain a complete series of each proper variety, we think he can leave out the errors.

With regard to perforation, we would be very sorry to go back to the time, when the only varieties were perforated and unperforated, but would include varieties in the size of the holes, when they can be easily distinguished, without applying the two centimetre scale. Of course stamps perforated by *roulette* should be distinguished from those perforated in the ordinary manner.

We now come to the last division of varieties, namely shades. Much can be said for and against the collection of varieties of color, but when a variety, which is not changed by any cause, other than official, can be secured, we think it is perfectly deserving of a place in our albums.

We hope that from our remarks, no new beginner will imagine, that we wish him to immediately commence variety collecting, for such a wish would be absurd and foolish. When a collector begins to really know something about stamps, when he can see the value of collecting, then it is time for him to decide what varieties he will include and what reject.

Under our heading we might very well treat of locals, revenue stamps, telegraph and official stamps, besides a great variety of disputed points, but as space will not permit us we will have to write separate articles on each subject. However we must find room to express our disapproval, of the practice, of selling to collectors, such worthless rubbish as the Hamburg locals, not one of the 116 varieties was ever used, and the sundry packets of 100 or 200 U. S. locals, most of which are the manufacture, of that bright genius, S. A. Taylor, whose vile dealings in forgeries, we are happy to say, have now been almost entirely stopped.

The only way, in which this practice could be checked, would be for dealers, who have the cause of philately at heart, to agree neither to sell nor buy any such trash, and for the compilers of albums to leave out the spaces for them; the latter especially would have a very beneficial effect.