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MAURITIUS POSTAGE STAMPS.

(Concluded from last month.)

It may not perhaps be out of place to observe here, that Mauritius was early among the places which issued postage stamps, and was indeed the first British colony which did so; England, as I believe is generally known to be the first country to adopt, in 1840, this system of preparing postage, the rates of which were at the same time very greatly reduced, Sir Rowland Hill being, if not the actual inventor of postage stamps, at all events the first person to bring them into use; Brazil was the first foreign country to follow the example, issuing its first stamps in 1843, in which year and in the following some of the Swiss Cantons did the same; Local stamps for New York were issued in 1844 and in 1845 similar issues were made in other cities of the United States, a general issue for that country only taking place in 1847; Russia and Finland issued stamps in 1845. The above are, I believe, the only places which precede Mauritius in taking this step.

A few specimens are known to exist of certain Mauritius postage stamps bearing the words "Post Office" on the left hand side. These are found in two types only, one for each value, that is to say all the penny stamps of this variety are precisely alike, and all the two penny ones equally so; the stamps more commonly known differ from these in bearing the words "Post Paid" in place of the words "Post Office" and in being found in twenty-four different types, twelve of each value.

There is little or no doubt that these latter were produced from the unproved plates mentioned by the postmaster in his letter of May 1848, and I believe it to be equally certain that the first mentioned stamps were from the single stamp plates mentioned in the letter of September 1847.

Now, herein lies one of the peculiarities of these engravings. The usual mode of forming a plate from which stamps are to be printed, is as follows: the design is first engraved upon steel, from the single die thus engraved, copies are made either by means of electro-typing or by taking impressions upon some soft metal which is afterwards subjected to a hardening process; in this manner a sufficient number of exact copies of the original die, or matrix as it is termed, are produced to form a plate from which whole sheets of stamps may be printed; these plates are printed from until they begin to show signs of wear, and then fresh plates are prepared from the matrix as before, the original steel die therefore, being subjected to comparatively little wear and tear, last for an unlimited period, thus the same matrix has served to produce plates for the English penny and two-penny stamps from 1840 down the present date. The engraver of