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Stamp Albums.

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When our albums cease to be a living issue, when we don't care what sort of a store-house our collection has, it will be time for us to entertain serious fears that our interest in stamps is diminishing.

As things are now, the collector has his ages of albums, not exactly the "seven ages" of Shakespeare, but an approach to it. First we have a "blank album(!)"—generally a nickel memorandum book. Then we get a quarter printed album, then the same in better binding, then a large book and finally we venture to aspire to the blank album. But our aspirations in the latter line don't generally come till after our collection has wholly outgrown a printed book.

It is my opinion that there is much radically wrong with all the printed albums now on the market, unless the collector has a boundless store of money. For a collection up to 1500 varieties or so, the half-dollar book is good enough, but beyond that the ideal album is blank one of good quality. I will give my reasons, in brief, for this opinion.

In the common printed album, an ordinary collection of three to four thousand varieties is absolutely lost. If you desire to display your stamps to an outsider he is generally far more struck by the abundance of empty spaces than by the good stamps,

that come few and far between. He often gives vent to admiration of what in reality is nothing but a cut of a stamp, but which he supposes to be the real thing. That, you say, is not much of a reason for using a blank album; just to produce an impression on non-collectors.

But I have other, and still more weighty reasons for advising you to part with your old album and get a blank one, if your financial condition allows. If you desire to be a true philatelist you can not be tied down to what the album maker ordains about what to collect and the manner of arrangement. One can, of course, disregard the spacing in the printed book and put his stamps in where he pleases, but what sort of an appearance does an album, treated like that, present? It bears a decided resemblance to a piece of patch work carelessly fastened to the page of the book. The collector that does not give attention to the looks of his album is one who needs some prodding in his philatelic conscience.

Another reason why we should desire a blank album, is one somewhat different from the ordinary. It has long been a superstition, revered on account of its age, like some jokes, that we must have complete sets no matter what it costs, the complete set must and will be obtained. Certainly, it looks well to see long unbroken lines of stamps but too often there are some scarce ones in the set, whose purchase