

logues. The stamps are counted by sheets, an elaborate system of checks being used to make sure of avoiding mistakes. In course of counting, watch is kept for imperfections of manufacture. But, as the manufacturers themselves check every detail not only in process but in the finished stamps, complaint of imperfection is almost unknown. Duly counted, checked and certified, the stamps are placed in a great vault, one in which all the safeguards used in the largest bank vaults are carefully provided. From this stock, stamps are taken, to be sent out in response to the requisitions received. There must be no mistake in the contents of any package, and so another count and another check must be used. The packing must be carefully done, for the contents are easily damaged, and damage means not merely the loss of printed matter of the most expensive kind, but a still further and more elaborate count and audit for no purpose except to get properly rid of damaged and utterly useless material.

Not all stamps are used, of course. In the hands of the thousands of postmasters and dealers who keep them to meet the public demand, all sorts of accidents happen. Many are kept awaiting customers who never come, and get shopworn and unfit for use. There are fires to destroy or partly destroy them, unintentional tearings to mutilate them, and other accidents without number. Also, there are perfectly good stamps to be taken back and properly allowed for. A post office is closed, or some change is made which means making a new start. Every stamp for which the office claims credit must be sent back to the Branch, there to be duly taken into account. Sheets of stamps in good condition are taken back into stock, to be sent out again in the course of business. But those detached or shopworn or otherwise not to be handled are made the subject of a special cremation ceremony. Under arrangement, an officer of the Auditor General's Office appears at the Branch to see and to count. Then this officer accompanies an officer of

the Branch to the furnace room, where the stamps that are no more to be used are committed to the flames. A certificate is then given showing that the revenue has been duly protected by this work of destruction.

The Postage Stamp Branch has its offices at the Post Office headquarters in the Langevin Block. Its service commands the labor of fifteen people. These are graded under the law as follows: 1 Superintendent, grade 1A; 1 clerk, grade 2A; 5 clerks, grade 2B; 3 clerks, grade 3A; 4 clerks, grade 3B; 3 packers.

This does not completely represent the organization, for this Branch, like every other position of the post office service, has its share in the work of inspectors. These inspectors, each of whom has a special district, and whose districts as a whole cover every post office no matter how small, no matter how out-of-the-way, are the eyes, ears, and in part the hands and voice of the Department. Their work in connection with the Postage Stamp Branch is varied and invaluable. In this as in all details of the service they carry out the general policy of the Department in a way that makes the whole service one united smooth-working system.

That so few officers are able to carry on efficiently this wide-spread and exacting work of supplying and keeping count of the postage stamps for the whole Dominion is due to long experience and perfect system. As a whole, the officers of this branch go in as juniors and spend their lives in the work. Occasionally one is taken in from some other branch, or even from outside, but experience has proven that to make the machinery work perfectly it is better to have it in the hands only of those who have been accustomed to it from the very beginning of their working lives.