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ED. BEE'S LETTER

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To the Editor of the Ontario Philatelist.

DEAR SIR: I had a chance the other day to see one of the finest collections of proofs and essays of the United States stamps that there is in the country, and I am going to tell you about it. I suppose you will publish this letter, and so I will explain a little, as I have no doubt but what there are lots of your readers who do not know what a proof or an essay is. There are two kinds of proofs—die and plate. Die, or hub plates as they are sometimes called, are impressions taken from the die when first engraved, and before the plate has been made. They are distinguished from the ordinary plate proofs by having large margins, much larger than is possible from a plate. Plate proofs are impressions from the plates that the stamps are printed from, hence they have but small margins, simply that which is perforated in the original. Most of the die proofs are printed on India paper, and the others, plate proofs, are

printed on India paper and fine cardboard. Essays are designs for the stamps, supposed to have been submitted to the government and rejected on account of not filling the qualifications in the estimation of the officials to whom submitted. Many of them are as handsome as any of the stamps ever issued by the United States government. Some it is next to impossible to procure; and others, owing no doubt to the plate or die being in existence, can be bought for a mere trifle. A few years ago proofs and essays were seldom seen even in the finest collections; but now, owing to philatelic influence and the persistency of the pages in the house of representatives, who had a pull with the members of Congress, in a measure no doubt increased the interest in them and the money in the pages' pockets as well.

I think the essay specimens are the most beautiful of all philatelic treasures, and I will simply mention a few of those I saw: 1st—Large "3" in centre, "postage" above, "cents" below in lathe work oval, die