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Surcharged Stamps.

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It seems to be a necessary evil of collecting of all kinds, that its votaries should be beset with objects more or less spurious, which not only occasion great difficulty to collectors themselves, but are liable also to bring discredit upon their pursuit. Stamp collectors appear to be peculiarly liable to be troubled in this way, for there are several classes of these objects that we have to deal with, some more, some less, difficult to decide about.

First of all, forgeries, or fac-similes, or whatever their makers or purveyors may choose to call them; there is no difficulty about these in one respect, we do not admit these into our collections if we can help it. I know of one European dealer, of the very highest class, who advertises imitations of great rarities, but I believe there is very little sale for these, as such: the great majority of the forgeries that are sold are sold as genuine stamps, by or to persons who know no better; we do not, as a rule, collect imitations. I remember in the old days, say five and twenty years ago, seeing fac similes advertised of what were supposed then to be very rare stamps: and it is possible that in the future photographs of rarities, more especially of such stamps as the Sydney views, early Philippines, and Mauritius, which exist in a number of varieties of type, may be collected, but they will probably be kept separate from the stamps which they represent, and retained principally for reference.

Second, reprints; these are of more doubtful interest, many collectors admit them, as the next best things to original impressions, but I confess that, personally, I would as soon have a good photograph of a rare stamp as a reprint. There are various classes of them, some are close imitations of the originals in color, paper, perforation, &c., and can hardly (if at all) be distinguished from them: these may be said to be, from one point of view, as good as the originals, from another, and I think the correct one, they are simply exceedingly dangerous imitations which cause a reduction in the value of genuine unused specimens. Others again, differ from the originals in almost every respect except the type; these are quite as valuable to collectors as the former class, and are free from some of the objections which attach to them.

A third species was very prevalent in the days when anything resembling a stamp was eagerly sought after, and when the number of known rarities of real stamps was very much more limited than it is now; I refer to *essays, proofs, &c.*, which are hardly looked at by the general collector at the present day, but with which at one time we were overwhelmed; they have had their day, the fittest of them survive in the collections of specialists, and the interesting designs, engraved for the special delectation of