

rect, but which, as a matter of fact, it is not, what about the other advocates of general collecting? They could not all have been somnolent and blind to everything around them. I admitted from the beginning that Specialism of one's own country is harmless, and shows patriotism therein, for doth not any geography or history, published in your own country, mention more about it in proportion to its importance than it does of other lands? Most assuredly, and so should you know everything about it. Mr. S. says that Specialism is a more suitable culture for learning geography, history and science than is general collecting. That is the most absurd and foolhardy argument that ever came to me. Certainly, the specialist learns more of his special country than does his adversary, but what knows he of the *world*? Suppose a geographer would only study one country from the many, or the geometrician only a part of his lore, I can assure you that that would not be more absurd than only taking up one branch of Philately. So much for this "grasping-at-a-straw" argument of Mr. S. He further cites the amount of specialist's albums sold. Oh, yes, for are there not many such radicals and reformers as Mr. S. who require them, *for the time being*? But he fails also to cite that for every one of these there are a dozen of general collectors' albums sold, and there are more coming into market daily. If, as Mr. S. says, I have had no opportunity of being at meetings of local societies, and *he has*, I do not see the advantage he has, or if he does have any, he does not exercise it in his teachings.

I may add, in conclusion, that should any other such impetuous remarks made by my opponent appear, they will be answered with the silent contempt they so richly deserve. However, all wellfaring opinions of Mr. S., his co-operators and friends, will be gladly answered likewise; and I further beg all parties of both *cons* and *pros* to give their opinions and views on this important subject, which undoubtedly is the most momentous matter before us, and all errors and oversights in my views will be gladly accepted and reviewed accordingly. Before closing, I have a most important duty to perform, and that is, to thank the most worthy editor of this esteemed journal on account of his liberality in tendering me the necessary valuable space in benefit to Philately.

London, April 30, 1892.

"PREHISTORIC" STAMPS.

In all the roamings of Philatelic authors, perhaps no class of stamps has been so thoroughly withheld from the public as those issued prior to 1840. These surely merit notice, for, as they were used to prepay letters, and were sold for that purpose, they were undoubtedly postage stamps. A brief description of these veterans of the Philatelic army is what we shall attempt in the following lines.

The first known postage stamps were used in France, during the reign of Louis XIV. The post was owned and operated by M. DeVelayer, who stationed boxes on street corners, similar to those now in use, for the reception of letters franked, by having a band of paper tied or sealed around them. Upon this band was printed the inscription—"Post paid the day of 1653 or '54." The price of these slips or stamps was a *sou tape*, and they could be procured at various places throughout the larger cities of France. The same gentleman who established this also had printed a kind of "billets" or notes, somewhat similar to postal cards. One of these is still preserved in Paris, and is probably the oldest specimen of "penny postage" in existence. These slips and cards were not popular and soon fell into disuse.

The Spaniards were the next to see the need of a post, and in 1716 an official handstamp was authorized by a royal decree. This was printed in blue ink, and bore the seal of Castile and Leon. The decree stipulated that secretaries of the crown, etc., etc., would have the privilege of having all letters bearing this seal and addressed to other authorities, passed free. But in 1794 an addition was made to the above rule which limited the correspondence sent in the described manner to official matter. About 1800 the whole thing was abandoned.

In 1758 France again took courage, and a wealthy Parisian, one M. DeChamoussé, established a post for the city of Paris alone, charging two *sols* for postage on letters weighing less than one ounce. Stamps of this denomination were issued, similar in design to the subsequent government issue of 1863. The government, suddenly perceiving the gains to be derived from the new enterprise, took it from M. De Chamoussé for itself, compensating him by an annual pension of twenty thousand francs. But the arrangements made by the new owner were so meagre and impracticable, that the stamps were seldom used, and soon were entirely forgotten.

Italy next put its oar into the Philatelic sea, in the shape of the well-known Sardinia envelopes, reprints of which can be easily obtained. These stamps were issued semi-officially, and were of three values—15, 25 and 50 centesimi. They were first put on sale in 1818, and could be obtained either at the post offices or from vendors of tobacco, who received a commission on their sales. However, they were but little used, and were finally withdrawn in 1836.

An effort was made soon after the issue of these envelopes to introduce a series of stamps into use in Sweden, but the proposition was rejected by an overwhelming majority in the Swedish Assembly.

In 1837 a method for postal reform was introduced into the British Parliament by Mr. Rowland Hill, and, after many stormy debates, it passed on the 6th of May, 1840, and the well-known English Adhesives and Mulready envelopes immediately were issued.

Thus to England rightfully belongs the praise of first making a success of pre-paying letters by means of stamps, although, as we intimated when we began, a stamp is a stamp, be it successful or unsuccessful.

—P. A. L.