

are engaged, by giving the outside world tangible evidence of an earnestness in our philatelic service that no effervescent or shallow pastime could possibly inspire. If our national societies had done nothing else to merit the applause than to breed respect for philately in the minds of the now philatelic critics who judge it, as they judge all else, by external evidence of its prosperity, those societies would have amply justified their existence.

But that is not all they have done, or all they are doing, or all they will do. I maintain that the society does more to foster philatelic enthusiasm than any other single factor, with the sole exception of the philatelic press. Those of our organizations that are officered by active, practical and enthusiastic collectors, in contra-distinction with the fossils who guide the destinies of some so-called societies, serve as a waking potion to those lukewarm members that are in danger of relapsing into the monotonous slumber of philatelic indifference. The society that lives and moves and does not vegetate, is, to its fortunate members, a quivering, livening, inspiring force, whose value in keeping the philatelic thermometer at fever heat can scarcely be overestimated.

But apart from all these benefits of a passive character, every philatelic society worthy of the name confers upon its members certain direct advantages worth to the active collector many times the cost of membership. That the worth of these privileges is considerably underestimated by outsiders, need not seem strange when we recollect that in every large society there are many members who wholly fail to patronize the various departments instituted for their aid.

Among these sub-divisions of society usefulness, the Exchange Department, of course, is the most important. This department is the backbone of every well-regulated and prosperous stamp society, and no philatelic organization

whose department of exchange is in a diseased or dormant condition can hope to be even ordinarily successful. Too much pains cannot be taken to insure the proper working of this department, for, when ably conducted, it is a veritable boon to its patrons. Every active philatelist accumulates duplicates, and the society exchange system enables him to offer these stamps to a large number of stamp buyers in succession, and on a well arranged circuit, it is seldom that a good specimen, reasonably priced, fails to find a market. Thus, a reliable exchange department provides its members with a convenient means of disposing duplicates, and of entire collections, in case an owner for any reason wishes to sell. On the other hand, and more important still, the exchange books or sheets of the department, filled with all sorts and classes of stamps, offer a tempting field for selection to the eager buyer, especially as specimens are usually priced lower on exchange sheets than they would be on the sheets of a dealer. Therefore, he who wishes to dispose of his duplicates, he who wishes to secure specimens for his collection, and he who wishes to do both, can make use of the exchange department with pleasure and profit. This one feature alone is, in the best societies, worth ten times the expense of membership.

The purchasing department is also of great value to those who desire to buy new issues as fast as they appear. The purchasing agent is usually a dealer whose faculties for procuring the new issues are naturally greater than those of a collector, and who, by buying for a number of members at once, can furnish the new issues at very low rates, to say nothing of the time and inconvenience saved members by this method.

The counterfeit detector is another exceedingly useful official, whose duty it is to pass upon the genuineness of all stamps of doubtful authenticity submitted to him by the members. To the