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# \* THE CANADA STAMP AND COIN JOURNAL. \*

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VOL. I.

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, SEPTEMBER, 1888.

NO. 3.

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## "UNCLE SAM'S" DEAD LETTER OFFICE.

BY CLARA R. BUSH.

IN the days of our childhood, the Dead Letter Office was to us something mysterious, ghostly and solemn. Even when our awe-struck questions received the reply that it is the bourn to which all uncclaimed letters are sent, either to be destroyed or by means of internal information forwarded to the owners, it seemed as though it must be a dark, sad place. Of course, as we grew older, our childish ideas vanished, to be replaced by the adult indifference to all offices of the kind not directly concerning ourselves; and never again did we try to picture to ourselves the place from which occasionally some letter returned to us bearing the cabalistic letters D. L. O., signifying that strangers had first read the thoughts intended for ourselves. But this office is one of the objects of interest to a Washington visitor, and should be entertaining to all readers of Washington descriptions.

The D. L. Office is contained within the general post-office, located on the corner of C and F streets, and forming a handsome block of white stone with iron trimmings; the lower story is in pilasters and the upper stories in Ionic columns. Ascending to the second floor we found ourselves in a long hall, and announcing the object of our visit to the scribe seated there, we were directed to a door labeled "Museum," and thus informally admitted to a large, sunny room, furnished with immense glass cases, two chairs and a table at which was seated a pleasant-faced man, who kindly answered our questions, and gave us many suggestions.

We learned that the heterogeneous collection in the cases is articles received in the mail and detained, either because of deficient postage or address, or excessive weight, which must not be over four pounds. Many of the articles are not mailable, as fluids, uncess packed in tin-foil, explosive substances, live animals, or anything that may injure the regular mail, or endanger the lives of the postal employees. When it is possible to find the address of the owner of an article, he is notified to send for it, and instructed as to the reason of its detention, or else the article is kept in this museum till the annual auction sale sometime during the holiday weeks. Printed catalogues are made of these things, so if the article has been received at the office the owner inquiring for it and proving his right, can very soon gain possession of it.

An hour may be spent in viewing this collection. We noted quantities of cards for Christmas, and other holidays, card-cases, medicines in boxes and bottles, the Lord's Prayer printed in forty-four languages on an inch square paper, mirrors, stuffed birds, false teeth, a life-size washboard, saw, hatchet, hand-drill, Sandwich Islander's dress which when it arrived was mistaken for a fancy ball dress, as it was of gray cotton printed all over with playing cards. They only dangerous articles received were seventeen live rattlesnakes and a loaded revolver; the snakes were speedily killed.

For the auction sale the articles are made into apparently indiscriminate lots, and the catalogue afforded us so much amusement, we copied some of the items into our note book. We give them in their order. One lot, brown wall, worsted trimming, garters, and corset. Do., one and a half pounds of pug tobacco, eleven pairs gent's hose. Do., gent's overcoat, cotton shirt, pair silk cuffs. Do., two horse-blankets and a zither. Do., lady's dress, child's dress. It must, indeed, have been a hopeful person who confided a

horse-blanket to the mail-bag. Judging from the number of siled cuffs, etc., many a country youth sojourning in a city attempts to send his "washing home to ma," by means of the government valises. The average annual number of "lots" is 3,700, each containing from three to nine articles; 156 pieces of jewelry appeared in the catalogue, but were disposed of singly and at a separate sale.

Having finished the glass cases, our attention was directed to a screen-door through which we could look into a larger apartment a few steps lower, where the inspection of the letters, etc., is conducted by men and women clerks. Visitors are not allowed to enter this apartment, but may watch as long as they please from this communicating door.

Letters that bear no outside information of their owner, are opened and searched for some clue. If it is found, the letter is returned enclosed in an official envelope that is exempt from postage. When no clue can be found, the letter is cast into the nameless heap upon the floor and soon gathered up by men who pass up and down between the desks collecting these letters into two bags for the paper mill.

It would seem that a person dispatching anything of importance would be careful about the address and postage; but blank envelopes, and many minus the name of the town, or State, containing money arrive on the average of 66,137 annually. The amount of money in checks, drafts, etc., something over a million; one year the amount in bills and stamps alone was \$32,000. This money is sent to the U. S. Treasury; if no owner can be found and proved, it is used for the nation; generally 35% is returned to the owners.

The clerks are, of course, assigned their special work, and those who correct the defective addresses, become so expert that they can often supply the hiatus without consulting the directories, and surprising skill is displayed in deciphering original spelling. Some of these addresses are preserved in albums, a corrected envelope having been substituted. We remember one envelope upon which the State was written "fur Goine." One of the bright clerks spelling it

phonetically discovered that the place intended was Virginia.

The average number of letters returned from hotels because the parties have departed, neglecting to give new addresses, is 78,605. Letters not addressed, 175,710. Packages of goods not allowed in the mails, 1,345. Books received, 906. Photographs, 35,160.

There is something pathetic in the sight of so many letters and remembrances destroyed and sold to strangers, while some anxious, loving heart, is watching and longing day after day for their coming. Who can count the heartaches, the life-long separations, the financial troubles starting from these lost letters? Yet the fault is simply and altogether that of those who write and send the letters, or packages, and one can learn a lesson in the Dead Letter Office never to be forgotten. That is, always be careful to write the full address and name both of the sender and desired recipient upon every letter, and in some way attach the same to every package whatever it may be; also to be sure of the proper postage, and the legality of the article sent. If the person lives in a city, the name of the street, and number of the house should be added in the lower left-hand corner; when one does not know the house number, or even the street, one may add to the person's name, in parenthesis, his business, or whatever can assist in finding him. Letters sent to transient residents should add the word "transient" to the residence, or post-office number. This should be the confirmed habit of every person, no matter how unimportant the letter, or parcel, may seem; in this, as in all things else, whatever is worth doing at all, should be done with care. It is a rule of etiquette that the desired recipient's name and address must be added in full to the most informal letter, the lower left hand corner for friendship letters, and at the beginning of business or formal letters. The writer's name should always be at the close, his address at the top. "Never sign initials, it suggests a wish to be unknown, or to escape the possible consequences." The reasonableness of this etiquette reveals itself in the Dead Letter Office.

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## HINTS FOR THE TYRO.

BY NEMO.

IN these few lines it shall be my endeavor to give the main points of my experience in philately, for the edification of my young friends who are just about to enter the philatelic arena; and perhaps some more advanced collector may find herein some brief item worthy of his notice.

Of course you have already purchased a standard catalogue. No? Then you should do so immediately; the selection of a suitable one I shall leave your own judgement, as knowing best to what particular line, if any, you intend to devote your especial attention. "Scott's Standard Postage and Revenue Stamp Catalogue" was my first purchase, and I have never had occasion to regret the small outlay since, at I am satisfied that it has saved me twenty-five to seventy-five per cent on nearly all of my purchases, although I have never had any dealings with the publishers. I would not advise the purchase of an expensive album at first, as it is certain to be discarded ere long on account of the many new issues. Or perhaps you may be able to obtain one through exchange; by this means I was enabled to obtain two good cloth-bound albums, the "International" and the "Improved," which answered my purpose very well. Never paste your stamps solidly in your album, as it spoils it and depreciates the value of your collection. Hinge them in by means of gummed paper, which can be bought of most dealers for this purpose; or you can make it yourself by covering a thin sheet of paper with a strong solution of gum-arabic, which does not injure the stamps. Some valuable collections have been destroyed by using bad gum.

If you intend to accept all used specimens of stamps, you might now buy a few good-variety packets, as well as a small quantity of mixed stamps, among which you will generally find some useful ones, which may be worth as much, or more to you than the entire assortment cost.

The next best thing for you to do will be to purchase a number of cheap sets, as near complete as possible,

taking care to first find out of whom you can get genuine specimens of the required stamps the cheapest; after you have done this you will find yourself in possession of a number of choice duplicates, which you can exchange with some brother or sister collector, taking care not to accept any which are marked too high, however tempting they may be. If you are interested in any other branch of collecting, you may be able to exchange other specimens for stamps; thus your opportunities will be increased manifold.

You are now far enough advanced to order a few sheets on approval, and I would advise you to order sheets at as large a discount as possible, and when you receive them to compare the prices with your catalogue, and accept none but those which are marked at or below catalogue prices, and only such as you may need to complete the sets which you have already commenced. By this means you will be enabled to make all your purchases at, at least twenty-five to fifty per cent below regular market value; what you make in this way is your own gain, but let me implore you, act honorably in all things, and you will find in the end that your collection has increased far more rapidly than it would otherwise have done.

Furthermore, if you patronize the exchange column of some reliable paper, you will receive numerous sheets unsolicited, which will save you the trouble and expense of sending for them.

I am only a tyro myself, and I must acknowledge that my means are very limited; nevertheless, by means of the instructions here laid down, I have been able to make up what I consider a very fair collection.

Last, but not least, you will want to subscribe to a few good papers devoted to the subject, and I would suggest that the CANADA STAMP AND COIN JOURNAL may head your list.

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—"What postage do I collect on this weekly, Heavenly Tidings?" asked the clerk. And the postmaster scratched his head thoughtfully for a moment, and then told him to rate it among the "foreign newspapers."

EDITORIAL REMARKS.

The first annual convention of the Canadian Philatelic Association will be held in Toronto Sept. 10th and 20th. Our ticket for the coming election is as follows, and we ask the support of all our readers who have a vote :

- President,— Henry Hechler, Halifax,
- Vice-Pres., Nova Scotia,— A. J. Craig, Pictou.
- “ “ New Bruns.,—Henry S. Harte, Salisbury
- “ “ Ontario,— Geo. Walker, Peterboro,
- “ “ Quebec,— R. A. Baldwin-Hart, Montreal
- “ “ P. E. Island,—W. Brown, Charlottetown
- “ “ B. Columbia,—J. H. Todd, Banf.

- Secretary,— Geo. A. Lowe, Toronto.
- Treasurer,— H. L. Hart, Halifax.
- Exchange Supt.,— F. J. Grenny, Brantford.
- Librarian,— J. A. Leighton, Orangeville.
- Counterfeit-Detector,—H. M. Trill, Toronto.
- Purchasing-Agent,— H. F. Ketcheson, Belleville.
- Official Editor,—Theo. Larsen, Halifax.
- \*Official Organ,— Halifax Philatelist, @ \$24. 75 year.
- Executive Committee,—J. C. Niesser, Toronto ; C. Morreny, Quebec ; F. C. Kaye, Halifax.
- Convention, 1893,—Halifax, N. S.

BE SURE YOU VOTE THE FULL TICKET !

\*At the request of many members, the Halifax Philatelist has decided to act, if paid at least two dollars per month.

The 1888 edition of the American Philatelic Press Directory has been received, and shows a marked improvement over the issue of last year. Besides giving lists of all the papers now published in America, with subscription and advertising rates, and other information of interest ; it also presents lists of the leading foreign, and of all the “dead” papers. Price, 25 cents. Geo. H. Richmond, Publisher, 5 Beckman St., New York. Or, this office.

Mr. W. C. Stone, Springfield, Mass., is hard at work preparing a history of the philatelic societies of America, and would be glad to receive any information that will assist him in his difficult task.

At the convention of the the American Philatelic Association, the following officers were elected :

- President, J. K. Tiffany ; Vice-President, W. C. Vanderlip ; Secretary, S. B. Bradford ; Treasurer, H. B. Seagrave ; International Secretary, Joseph Rechert. A very suitable selection.

SAL VADOR speaks to the point in his article in the International Collector, for July. We have not a complete list of stamps, among the many that are published. He suggests that a committee of reliable dealers be chosen to prepare such a list as will be complete in every respect ; to include adhesives, postals, envelops, newsbands,— in fact everything used for postal or fiscal purposes. He further suggests that such committee be members of the dealers association, and that collectors help them by every means in their power to make the work perfect. It is the only plan for a complete work, and we hope to soon see it put into practice.

Many publishers seem to think it advisable to make a change in the size of their paper every few months. They do not consider how difficult it will be for subscribers to bind the volume when completed, nor how clumsy an appearance it will present. Should a change be thought necessary, it were surely better to wait until the commencement of a new volume, before effecting it. The best plan, however, is to settle on some handy size of page, and continue to use it until the “grand finale.”



This afternoon, at 4 o'clock, at the Tabernacle, Harrison L. Hart, boot and shoe dealer, Gottingen St., was married to Miss Edith Graham, daughter of the late James Graham. A large number of the friends of the happy couple were present to witness the ceremony, which was performed by Rev Mr. Miller. \*\*\* [Recorder, Aug. 28th.

The gentleman referred to above is the popular treasurer of the C. P. A., and N. S. P. A., and we wish both himself and lady unbounded happiness for the future.

Mr. E. B. Sterling evidently intends to let everybody know what he has done, is doing, and is going to do. He is one of the most persistent advertisers in the stamp trade, using the columns of the philatelic press freely; and the price lists and circulars issued by him, are a model of neatness. His latest idea consists of a one hundred and twenty-four page pamphlet, pages the size of this journal, containing all the press notices and testimonials he has received during the past five years, in connection with Sterling's Standard Stamp Catalogues. The pamphlet is issued in the usual neat style, and may be had free, by application to Mr. Sterling, Trenton, N. J. The mailing charges are ten cents.

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Unsettled health and press of business have forced the editor of this journal to send in his resignation as a member of the C. P. A. Executive Committee.

To the illness of the editor is also due the delay in publishing this issue of the CANADA STAMP AND COIN JOURNAL.

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PHILATELIC SQUARES.

E. R. MARSHALL

—The Swiss Cantonal stamps are nearly all very rare.

—The ten-pence Canada, 1852, bears the portrait of Jacques Cartier.

—"Yubin-hoka," on the Japanese envelopes, means "postal envelope."

—The Cheever & Towle local was issued in 1850, and was in use but a few months.

—The stamps of Nicaragua show the most artistic beauty of any series of stamps ever issued.

—The 1847 issue of the United States were printed by Rawdon, Hatch, Wright, & Edson, of New York.

—Spain has issued 182 regular-issue adhesives. The rarest is the 2 reales, red, 1851. It is worth about \$20.

—Turkey has issued two newspaper stamps,—a two paras blue in 1875, and a two paras, blue-red, in 1885.

—The stamps of Madagascar are not affixed to letters but are used as vouchers for the postage paid, by the post-officials.

—The registered letterstamp of the U. S. of Colombia is the philatelic giant. It measures five by two and one half inches.

—Heligoland is the smallest stamp-issuing country in the world, but it is not behind in the number of stamps issued, by any means.

—The stamps of Turkey surcharged "R. O." were for use in Eastern Roumelia. The letters stand for "Roumelia Orientale." They are quite rare.

—The 1879 issue of Bolivia are issued annually by stamp dealers who had the control of printing them. But few, even of the cancelled ones, have ever been used for postal purposes.

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This is the first of a series of illustrations representing the Nova Scotia tokens. Other cuts will follow, from month to month.

They will be found useful for reference, and especially so by our foreign subscribers.

A list of the tokens appeared in our first two issues.



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—The movement to restore the Flemish speech in Belgium seems to be making some progress. Coins of this year do not bear the old French motto "L'union fait la force," but have something in Flemish in its place, while instead of "Leopold II, roi des Belges," the inscription runs, "Leopold II, koning der Belgen."—[Free Press.

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CORRESPONDENCE AND QUERIES.

Subscribers are at liberty to use this department as a medium to obtain information on subjects relating to philately and numismatics.

—H. C. K. (Iowa.) Says: "Your article in No. 2 just suits my views exactly, in reference to the C. P. A. Official Organ. I voted for it, but expected to see it increase in size and contain more news. There was some reading in it before it was elected official organ, but hav'n't seen much since, outside of reports of officers. It seems as though whenever the editor got a communication from one of the officers, he set it up in type, and when another one came along he set that up and chucked it under the other, and when printing day came around, run off whatever he could, and let the rest go. I think he had better wake up, or he can't get my vote; and I don't think I'll trust it with him, anyhow."\*\*\* (Glad to see we are not alone. By "we" I mean the "Halifax grumbles." This gentleman lives 'way out West. —Ed.)

—L. W. R. (Quebec.) No, we do not publish any works on the Canadian coinage. As you say, it is a pity that we have no first-class works on the subject. We would be willing to undertake the publication of a complete manual, could we get the right man to compile it. We shall give, from time to time, cuts of the Nova Scotia tokens, and we make a start in this issue.

—G. N. C. (Kentucky.) Says: "I wish to agree with you in one thing, and that is:— I think the Toronto Philatelic Journal about as poor an excuse for our official organ as it well could be. Will not the members have something to say on the subject, at the coming convention?\*\*\*

.....| 22 |.....

—"History of the Dollar." next month.

—The silver coin minted in Canada for the year 1888, amounted to 225,000.—[Mail.

—There is a new perfecting printing press which prints 18,000 postal cards per hour.

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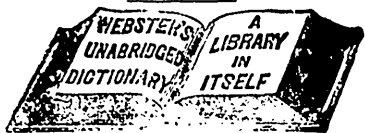
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