THE STAMP-COLLECTOR'S ANNUAL FOR 1881

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THE STAMP-COLLECTOR'S ANNUAL FOR 1881

Trieste

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[See page 44.

THE

Stamp-Collector's Annual

FOR

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FOR 1881

A Year's Stamp Issues.

THE year 1880 has not been so fruitful in new issues as its predecessor, though a considerable number of new stamps, and a whole army of post cards, have been issued in consequence of the changes introduced by the representatives of the Postal Union at the Congress in 1878. These postage-stamp disturbers have not, however, met this year for any other purpose than to examine the possibility of establishing a small parcels rate throughout the Union. The last accessions to the Postal Union are the colonies of Antigua, Dominica, Montserrat, Nevis, St. Christopher, and Tortola, all of which have been fitted out with twopence-halfpenny and fourpenny stamps and penny-halfpenny post cards by Messrs. De La Rue and Co. Of foreign countries, Bulgaria, the Dominican Republic, Peru, and Venezuela have also joined the Postal Union.

The changes that come nearest home are those affecting our own stamps, in which a sort of revolution has taken place. Since the death of the patriarchal penny on the 31st December, 1879, the whole family seems to be at sixes and sevens, and only the threepenny, sixpenny, and five-shilling values up to this moment appear to have sustained the shock. We lament the end of the penny and of his consort the twopence, which was bone of his bone, and was taken out of him originally, like Eve out of Adam; yet it had, to a certain extent, become an anachronism, and was not fitted to the present age. Still, it was the parent of all the postage stamps the world has ever seen, and it had lived to the great age of over thirty-nine years of eventful times, a very Methuselah as compared with the stamps of its own or any other country. How many stamps have survived only for a single year? And even those of ten years old might be counted on one's fingers! During the period that the penny stamp had been employed for franking more than four-fifths of the whole correspondence of England, changes had taken place in almost every stamp-issuing country in the world. Either the sovereign whose effigy figured on the stamp was dead or passed away, or the State had been rent to pieces by internal or external causes, if not swallowed up altogether, as in parts of Germany and Italy. But there are many reasons why we should not have regretted the fall of the penny stamp and all its line-engraved family, had they but found successors worthy of the native

country of postage stamps and of the talent that our artists and engravers are not only supposed to possess, but really must possess, if we judge by the numbers of States which apply to England for their supplies of stamps.

The whole of the supply of postage stamps for the Inland Revenue Department, which furnishes them to the Post-office, has now been confided to Messrs. De La Rue and Co. to print on the typographic system. No better firm in the world could have been selected for this purpose, and some of the stamps it has produced are not only marvels of execution, but are so well manufactured in all the details of paper, perforation, and gumming, as has hitherto defied competition. So far as execution is concerned, the recent re-issue of the two-cent Hong Kong may be cited as an instance which throws the new penny stamp utterly in the shade. Many other also of the colonial stamps are infinitely its superior. Is it that anything is good enough for the mother country; or, is it that the Department is so bent upon saving a penny per thousand that it will not go to the expense of a better design?

Again, and we will not tire our readers with further criticisms, is there any reason why Her Most Gracious Majesty should not partake of the common lot, not only of her subjects, but of other kings and queens, of getting beyond the age of twenty, which was her age when her profile first appeared upon postage stamps. Her Majesty's grandfather was some twenty-two years old when he mounted the throne, and yet he did not continue to be portrayed on the coins struck during his long reign in the same condition as in his more youthful days. We hope that the profile on the present stamps is not intended as a caricature of the Queen, but only as an ideal representation of royalty in the abstract.

The colour of the twopence is changed to that of the twopence-halfpenny before it took its present colour. The fourpence has put off the sickly green hue and has donned a not ineffective brown. The shilling has taken a light red-brown, similar to that of the obsolete tenpence. The eightpence and the two-shillings have been withdrawn from circulation, and no longer figure among the stamps sold by the Post-office. The English Post-office is well supplied with stamps for internal use, but for Postal Union purposes multiples of twopence-halfpenny are required for countries in Class A, and those of fourpence for Class B. A new stamp of fivepence, and the restoration of the eightpenny and tenpenny appear therefore, to be desirable.

If now we turn to other countries we find that though Spain did not supply us with its usual quota for our collections, yet it made it up by its annual series for Cuba, Porto Rico, and the Philippines, adding three values this year for Fernando Po. In Portugal, the 25 reis stamp which appeared at the close of 1879, had but a short reign; it was superseded six months after by a similar stamp, in which a kit-cat portrait of King Luis appears in full dress, while his Majesty has successfully cultivated a considerable amount of whisker in the meantime, and has aged rapidly during the few months which had elapsed.

In Italy, the series with the portrait of the present King has been gradually taking the place of the old values as they are used up. In Russia there is little to remark. The crop of locals does not sensibly diminish, for as one ceases its place is more than filled by others. At one time these stamps seemed interesting from their novelty, and for their air of originality, not being of the utter sameness that distinguishes a herd of other stamps; but they now commence to be somewhat wearisome, especially those which only consist of a type-set design. If one wishes to be extremely accurate it is necessary, in some few cases, to keep a whole sheet, because each stamp differs in some trifling degree from its neighbour. Besides which, the rural posts do not invest much money in providing any large stock, the types, therefore, succeed one another too rapidly to be agreeable.

On the strength of the new position given to Eastern Roumelia under the Bismarck-Beaconsfield Treaty of Berlin, this extract of the former Turkish Empire conceived the idea of issuing a post card, but it appears to have been quashed by the supreme government, and this audacious piece of independence has been nipped in the bud. The latest accounts state that the Sublime Porte insists on the use of its own stamps within this territory.

Roumania has a new series in course of issue, which, so far as may be judged by the values which have yet appeared, is an improvement upon the former one. A new series is said to be in contemplation for Switzerland, and some alteration seems imminent in the stamps of Turkey. The German stamps have all been subjected to the change in orthography, the values being now spelt without the final *e*, and the printing has been somewhat modified. The colours are no longer fast, owing, according to some authorities, to water-colour being substituted for oil colour, and, according to others, to a soluble coating being given to the paper previous to the impression.

If we now turn to Asia there is but little in the way of novelty. The Cabul stamp manufactory seems to have received its *quietus* for the present, but there have been a few fresh importations from Cashmere. The stamps of Hong Kong have been in an unsettled state, and surcharges have been abundant; not made, however, with any view of gratifying collectors as those of the Shanghai stamps appear to be. Some of the best post cards manufactured by Messrs. De La Rue have been those for Hong Kong, but they have no sooner been put into circulation than the surcharging process has been commenced even upon them. Since the issue of the post card and the series of stamps with coloured borders, Persia, where a restless Postmaster-General formerly ruled, has been very quiet. The new issue for Ceylon has been completed by the addition of a very handsome stamp of 2½ rupees. Bhopal has favoured us with another native specimen of engraving and printing, and also with a native specimen of perforation, which, instead of giving to the stamps when separated an engrailed edge, makes them look as if they had been gnawed. Among other natives, Rajpeepla has issued some adhesives, and we are promised an entire series of Bhores.

A new issue for Liberia has made its appearance, and the Gold Coast and Lagos have contributed some new stamps and post cards. Additions have also been made to the stamps of the Transvaal and to those of Gambia, which latter are now perforated, and form one of the most effective series of stamps that we know of.

In America we find the additions of adhesive stamps and post cards, necessitated by the entrance of several British Colonies into the Postal Union, have been carried out by Messrs. De La Rue and Co. The Argentine Republic has introduced us to another of its great men by portraying his features on a news band, while Guatemala has given us a lesson in ornithology by presenting us a picture of the quezal, a beautiful bird, a native of Central America. The two stamps on which this bird is represented are printed in two colours, and, so far as engraving goes, are exquisite specimens of what the American Bank-Note Company can do. But we agree with *The Philatelic Record* that the picture is a mistake, as the Ionic column, which serves for a perch, is quite out of place and out of character with the habits of its occupant, its only object being to show off as much of the bird's tail as possible, though, in this respect even, it is said to answer its purpose very inadequately.

The new Mexican Porte de Mar series, announced so long since, are gradually making their appearance, but are not much more ornamental than their predecessors. Peru, proud of entering into the Postal Union, surcharges its stamps with notice of the fact, and Venezuela has altered the values on its stamps to

decimals of a *bolivar*, equivalent to one-fifth of a peso. A change has also been made in the stamps of the Dominican Republic, consequent on its having entered the Postal Union.

Newfoundland is having its stamps re-engraved, but not to their advantage. The characteristic design of the Virgin Islands' stamp is, we are sorry to say, giving place to the hackneyed De La Rue type, which seems as if it would become naturalized among the Leeward Islands.

In Oceania, we have little to remark except that the art of native postage-stamp manufacture does not show any great progress. The last novelties come from Queensland, where some of the values are lithographed copies of the old design, while others represent royalty in the abstract in profile. Still, if anyone is curious to see how far such caricatures can go, we would advise them to get a copy of the new fiscal penny stamp of Victoria—the penny value, not the five pounds—and there they will see a remarkable specimen of design and execution worthy of Albert Durer or Holbein.

On a review of the whole, we cannot think that the year 1880 shows any improvement in art as applied to postage stamps. One would indulge the hope that a postage stamp, which is destined to travel to the uttermost parts of the earth, might have been made to convey with it some idea of the state of art in the country whence it proceeds. But such, alas, is not the case. Our own government leads the way now, not as it did in 1840 by showing how much it could do, but by showing how little it need do. At how small a cost the object can be carried out. Messrs. De La Rue and Co. have an experienced chemist attached to their establishment; is it that the penuriousness of the employers prevent them from retaining the services of the best designers and engravers, or has such art died with Corbould and Heath?

Our Annual Chronicle.

Europe.

AUSTRIA.—By a decree of the Minister of Trade, dated 17th July, 1880, a Postal Union card of the value of 5 kr. made its appearance on the 1st of August last. The inscription is in three lines, WELTPOSTVEREIN (UNION POSTALE UNIVERSELLE)—CORRESPONDENZ KARTE (CARTE POSTALE), ADMINISTRATION D'AUTRICHE. Below are two long dotted lines, the first preceded by AN in small text hand, and one more dotted line and a thick one with the word IN between them. The arms are in the left upper corner, and a stamp of 5 kr., 1857, in the right. The impression is in black on a buff card, the stamp being in rose. Reply cards of similar design also exist, with the addition of the words ANTWORT (REPONSE). Similar cards have also been issued with the values in soldi. The post cards of 2 kreuzer, for internal use, in German, Italian, Bohemian, Illyrian, Ruthenian, Slavonian, and Polish, have also been supplemented by a series of reply cards of 2 + 2 kr.

AZORES.—The 25 reis grey, figured under Portugal, inscribed PORTUGAL CONTINENTE, was issued surcharged AÇORES. The type subsequently substituted for it, similarly modified, was issued simultaneously with its appearance in the mother country. This latter is violet-grey. The 5 reis black of the same type is also now in use.