

Our Review of Reviews.

Rarities in British Railway Stamps.

To the new Journal for collectors of all kinds, the "Collectors' Magazine," the Editor of the *Fortnightly* contributes an illustrated article on British Railway Letter Stamps, apropos the purchase of the Earl of Crawford's collection by Mr. H. L'Estrange Ewen. Some specially scarce and interesting varieties are illustrated by means of a special plate, and the descriptive letterpress may be quoted:

City of Glasgow Union.—This is an exceedingly rare issue, of which few copies were ever used by the public. Mr. Ewen, as the result of personal inquiries in 1898, was assured by many Glasgow railwaymen that the company had never availed itself of the stamp-issuing privilege at all, and even the secretary of the company declared his utter ignorance of any issue being made. Certainly none were forthcoming at that time; but ultimately six or seven specimens were found at one of the Glasgow stations and it can only be assumed that the clerk who had been responsible for recalling them when the company's lines became merged into the systems of the Glasgow and South-Western and the North British Companies had either forgotten one of the stations or the clerk in charge had mislaid the stamps. In any case it was a fortunate occurrence for stamp collectors, who, but for this discovery, would never have known of their existence.

Finn Railway.—The stamps of this line, although they were in use as late as 1895, are believed to be absolutely non-existent in the unused condition, while only four used specimens are known.

North-Eastern Railway, First Issue.—This is the only railway stamp ever suppressed by the Post Office on account of its being contrary to regulations. The inscription reads: "To be used only on letters bearing a postage stamp," whereas it should run "Fee for conveyance of single post letters by railway."

Portpatrick and Girvan.—This again is an exceptionally scarce series, obsolete since January, 1895, when the line was acquired by the Portpatrick and Wigtownshire Company. Very little is definitely known of the stamps; the one thing certain is their great rarity. Specimens used or unused are worth £10 and upwards.

North British.—There is a variety showing a curious error of spelling in the inscription at top, which reads "Nurth British."

Metropolitan Railway.—A stamp numbered 1340, and belonging to the Metropolitan Company's third issue, is one that is absolutely unknown in the unused state. Mr. Ewen recalls a curious experience in an unavailing hunt for unused specimens. Having ascertained (in 1899) that the station-master of Waddesdon Manor (the station for one of the Rothschild residences) had on hand a stock of three unused specimens, he tried every argument and entreaty to secure them. All to no purpose. The railway company would not permit them to be sold unused, and at last Mr. Ewen, thinking that a used specimen would be better than no specimen at all, made a journey to Waddesdon Manor and handed in three letters addressed to himself at Norwood, on which the three coveted stamps were placed. "Fortunately," he remarks, "the clerk cancelled them lightly, but it seemed a terrible act of vandalism. No collector, however, can now obtain an unused copy of this issue, even were he to offer a king's ransom."

Overprinted British Stamps.

Mr. C. A. Elliott, in the August issue of the "London Philatelist," reviews and answers the article by Mr. C. F. Dendy Marshall on

"The Status of British Stamps applied to special uses." Mr. Dendy Marshall's paper was reprinted in full in No. 216 of the *Fortnightly*, and in our last issue was commented upon by "Neophyte."

Like "Neophyte" Mr. Elliott calls in question Mr. Dendy Marshall's proposition that the overprint on British official stamps is "a kind of postmark." A thing which obliterates a stamp and destroys its postal value is, he argues, of a totally different nature from that which, at most, limits its use or alters its value. Finally, Mr. Elliott concludes, firstly, that all stamps officially issued with overprint or surcharge may be collected in an unused state by all who consider it desirable to collect everything as issued (omitting all question of *legality*); and, secondly, that all additions of whatever kind made *after issue* should be left alone, being, at most, curiosities.

Here we have the line of demarcation very sensibly drawn. Mr. Elliott, in effect, advises specialists of British stamps to collect all stamps issued in an overprinted condition, such as the British officials, the stamps for the British Levant, etc., and to leave severely alone all those which are modified for special use *after issue*, and this class, we take it, would include all stamps perforated with firm's names, etc.

Are "Perforated Officials" Collectable?

A contributor to the correspondence page of the same number of the "London Philatelist" asks why the "perforated officials" issued for use by the Office of Works, the Board of Trade, etc., are not listed and priced in the catalogues. The Editor, replying to the query in a footnote, remarks upon the obvious ease with which these perforation devices might be counterfeited. "Moreover," he adds, "they mutilate the stamp."

This latter point may be dismissed, since philatelists do not collect stamps solely for their beauty. The danger of forgery has, of course, always militated against the "perforated officials" in the eye of the collector. But why not collect them in the nude condition? Quite recently Mr. Nissen has shown us some fine specimens of the Board of Trade stamps (with the perforated device, a crown and the letters "B.T.") used on portions of the original envelope, showing the official lettering, "O.H.M.S." In this condition we should imagine that the stamps in question are both valuable and desirable. But we trust we shall not be hanged, drawn and quartered for saying so. Merely to mention *used stamps* to some philatelists is equivalent to waving a red rag before an infuriated bull.

The World's Most Beautiful Stamp.

Our newsworthy and noticeable contemporary at the Hub of the Universe, "Mekeel's Weekly Stamp News" to wit, has been asking its readers to name the most beautiful of the World's adhesive postage stamps. They have done so in their dozens, and in great variety. Tastes notoriously differ, in proof of which it may be mentioned that one of "Mekeel's" readers nominates the 25 reis Portugal, Vasco de Gama series, as the most beautiful stamp the world has ever seen. Other selections may be mentioned:—

Gambia, 1869 to 1889	E. Von Nostitz
U.S.A., 2c. Postage Due, 1895	S. V. Sarby
U.S.A., the current 10c. stamp	W. M. Pierce
St. Vincent, 5s., carmine lake	W. G. Grueby
Trinidad, 1896, 10s.	G. R. Perry
Canada, 1c. black, 1882	V. A. Beatty
Congo Free State, 5c. green, 1900	G. D. Crain
Honduras, 2 pesos, 1891	J. A. D. Park
Victoria, 5s. current issue	T. P. Astrom
Nova Scotia, 2c. lilac	W. M. Webb
Nova Scotia, 12c. black	W. H. Field
British North Borneo, 2c., 1893	H. Focke
Newfoundland, 6c. "Cabot" issue	E. Harris

These are just a few. There are others. It is not a little surprising to find such a variety of opinions on the subject. It used to be re-

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