

A reader is informed that the initials, O. U. S., in red on the one penny red of Great Britain, signify, Oxford Union Society. The following paragraph from the pen of an English specialist, speaks of the circumstances under which names and initials were printed, for a time, on the back, usually, of certain of the stamps of Great Britain: "Three, consisting of the names of private firms, etc., are of several varieties, and may be termed official and unofficial. The official had the firm's name, or name and address printed on the backs of the stamps before the gum was applied and the stamps were ready for use. The imprint was in the color of the stamp, red for the  $\frac{1}{2}$ d, 1d, and  $1\frac{1}{2}$ d, and blue for the 2d. The unofficial were of much less interest and were applied to the stamp after it was brought from the postoffice, on the back over the gum or perforated through the stamp by means of needles, in the latter case usually consisting of initials only. The reasons for having the firm's name on the stamps was to prevent their being stolen and re-sold by employees. For this reason, unused copies are almost unknown. . . . The earliest in date and the best known is the 'O. U. S.' used by the Oxford Union Society on all letters posted at the Oxford Union by members who had the privilege of having the postage of their letters paid by the Union. At first, the Union imprinted their stamps on the front, themselves, but, the government objecting to this, a compromise was effected by which the imprint was placed on the back under the gum, so that no washing away of the gum would affect the imprint. Several firms took advantage of this to have their names placed on the stamps. . . . The following are the various

Moore, Crampton & Co., London,' on back only. 'J. & C. Boyd & Co., 7, Friday street,' on back only. 'G. E. R., (Great Eastern Railroad), on back only. 'Vickers, Son & Co., Limited, Sheffield,' on back only."

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