



EDITORIAL

THE stamps, specially overprinted for use on official correspondence, of most of the Australian Colonies have lately been withdrawn, as was done some little time ago with all British official stamps. But instead of doing away with official stamps altogether, these Colonies use various denominations of the current issues "punctured" (we use this word for want of a better one, and to prevent confusion with the word "perforation," which is generally understood as referring to the indentations *round*, instead of through, a stamp) with certain letters to show that they are only to be used in franking official correspondence. This is by no means a new departure, for the only special stamps used on

PUNCTURED STAMPS.

Board of Trade correspondence in England were punctured with a large crown over the letters "B.T.," and the earliest Sudan official stamps were punctured with the letters "S.G." instead of being overprinted. Though these varieties have been known to, and collected by, the specialist, the ordinary collector has not bothered about them, chiefly because he has been unaware of their existence. This class of stamps has now been brought to public notice by the number of them emanating from Australia, and their advent has raised the question as to whether they are collectable varieties or not.

One or two of the gentlemen we are wont to speak of as "leading philatelists" assert that they should not be collected; but the reasons adduced for this opinion are so puerile as to be hardly worthy of serious refutation. Then, they are not mentioned in Gibbons' catalogue, though that very inconsistent work contains full lists of all the Tunis stamps punctured with a "T," for use as postage-due labels!

With the ever-increasing number of new varieties, it is far from our purpose to advocate any unnecessary lengthening of existing catalogue lists, but at the same time we cannot see how these punctured official stamps can be ignored on the grounds of philatelic importance, consistency, or anything else, if surcharged official stamps are admitted into the catalogue. The "punctures" *in every way* restrict the use of the stamps, and answer exactly the same purposes as a surcharge does.

One "weighty" argument, brought forward by a philatelist who really ought to know better, against punctured varieties is that the punctures spoil the stamps. This is particularly childish, for one might say exactly the same about surcharged, or even used, stamps; and it would not be hard to prove that a bisected provisional is even more spoilt. Then, again, we are told we should not collect these varieties because the punctures might easily be forged. Ye gods! One might say the same of any and every stamp in existence, and with almost as much reason. The danger from this source is so remote that it is hardly worth discussing.

These seem to be the two most powerful arguments adduced against the collection of officially punctured stamps, and we think readers will agree with us that they can hardly be considered of much importance. On the other hand, we have one very powerful argument in favour of their collection, and that is the fact that stamps so punctured are every bit as much "official" stamps as if they were of special design, or bore a

surcharge. The punctures are made under official authority, and the stamps so treated can only be used on departmental correspondence. Can more be said in favour of any other class of official stamps?

We are, therefore, of opinion that, as a matter of consistency and common sense, if official stamps are to be catalogued and collected at all, exactly the same treatment should be accorded to the punctured ones as to the surcharged ones.



STAMPS OF THE MOMENT

NORWAY

BY BERTRAM W. H. POOLE

IV.—THE 1863-66 ISSUE

ON the death of King Oscar I., in 1859, his son, King Charles XV., ascended the throne. This monarch had been reigning for about four years before the set of stamps bearing his father's portrait was replaced by a new issue. The Norwegians were never thoroughly satisfied with the 1856-7 issue, and they did not consider the design appropriate, too, to have the stamps manufactured in their own country, so in 1862 the authorities invited offers of designs suitable for the purpose, with the result that they were able to enter into an agreement with Schwenzer's Lithographic Works, situate in Christiania, for the production of a new set. The new series comprised five different values, ranging from 2 to 24 skilling, and the first

