

Concerning C.A. "Officials."

By I. J. BERNSTEIN.

THE fact that the *Fortnightly* chronicled in its last number that a pair of these stamps were sold at auction for 16/- impels me once again to attempt to open the eyes of the philatelic public to the exact status and value of these stamps.

As long ago as last March I read a paper before the Manchester Philatelic Society, which was subsequently published in the "Philatelic Record," and afterwards in a revised edition as a Handbook on Official Stamps of Great Britain, in which I, on the authority of the Crown Agents, assigned these stamps to their proper place. Notwithstanding this and the fact that both here and on the Continent philatelic journals have again and again referred to the subject, auctioneers offer them for sale and Exchange Clubs circulate them, and what is more curious, a gullible public is found to buy them. You may therefore be doing a service to the philatelic public if you once more open your columns to expose their true character and worth.

The 1d. King's Head stamp with the overprint C.A. is once and for all not an Official stamp. It is simply an ordinary penny stamp bought by the Crown Agents at the most

convenient post-office, and the "CA" is printed on by their printer merely to save them the trouble of writing Crown Agents when cancelling the stamp for fiscal purposes and to prevent the stamp being used for postage. This kind of overprint is used by many big firms, Corporations, etc., on all their receipt stamps, and is merely what one might call a pre-cancellation for fiscal stamps. The mystic C.A. is therefore of just as much worth as a rubber stamp impression or the scribbled initials of Tom, Dick and Harry, and instead of adding to the value of the stamps, robs it of its original face value, as it prevents it being used for postage, and further marks it as a fiscal stamp, the property of the Crown Agents. I am officially informed that the 6d. lilac King Edward stamp is overprinted in the same way for use on agreements. It is curious that none of these have ever been offered as great rarities. It follows that postmarked copies of these stamps have either a forged cancellation, have been cancelled by favour by some obliging Post Office official, or have been passed through the post by accident.

I am not a fiscal collector, so cannot say definitely, but I should think the prices asked for these stamps would be nearer their true worth if it were per ton and not per stamp.

Our Review of Reviews.

Syndicate of Stamp Collectors.

An idea occurs to us (says the writer of the philatelic articles in "Hobbies") which is suggested partly by the formation of special collections by Philatelic Societies. One of our foremost societies, the Birmingham, has made great headway with its own fine collection of stamps, which is the property of the members in common; and many other societies have been quick to follow Birmingham's lead. Why should not such a movement lead to a greater co-operation among philatelists of particular districts? The many collectors who foregather at the fortnightly or monthly meetings of their philatelic club or society are united, of course, by the bonds of good fellowship and a common interest, but otherwise there is no real co-partnership between them. Their acquaintance is practically non-existent apart from these periodical gatherings. Why should not collectors so placed form themselves into little coteries and syndicates for the formation of what we may call "specialised general collections"? Two heads are proverbially better than one, and presumably twenty heads are still better than two. Twenty philatelists, acting in unison, and each taking up certain chosen countries, would speedily form a magnificent general collection which would probably more than repay them for their time, trouble and expense. Such a collection would march towards completion at a far greater rate than any individual effort, because all the members of the syndicate would naturally engage in friendly rivalry, each striving to make his own country or countries the best. Besides this there would be the great advantage of mutual help and assistance, for at any rate it might happen that A would have the offer of stamps useless to himself, but of the greatest value and interest to B, and vice-versa. There would, in fact, be a continual comparing of notes for the

general advantage. The possibilities of such a scheme will be apparent to anyone who gives it a minute's thought, and we are hoping that the idea will be given a practical test.

Restoring the "Curled up" Stamp.

In "Gibbons' Stamp Weekly," of recent date, is given the following method for treating stamps which have "buckled" or curled up, as mint specimens are very apt to do when exposed in a heated room. A correspondent of our contemporary writes:—

On one of the recent very hot days, when there was a deficiency of moisture in the air, clearly shown by the wet and dry bulb thermometers, I left a page of Northern and Southern Nigerias in mint state exposed to the air (No. 1, the £1, single CA, was unfortunately not there). Returning some time later, I found the stamps badly curled up, so that it was impossible to shut the book, the gum having of course contracted. After a natural period of hesitation, I placed the book open in a drawer with a wet sponge in the corner, and in an hour or so had the satisfaction of seeing the stamps in their right mind again, the moisture having been restored to the air enclosed in the drawer.

Our Newest Contemporary.

A new journalistic candidate for public favour has recently reached us. The "Post Card and Stamp Collectors' Journal" hails from Adelaide, South Australia, and claims to be "the only journal of its kind published in Australasia." Unless it greatly improves its literary contents, we think it unlikely that any rival paper will contest the claim. There is a great deal about picture postcards, but the philatelic information in the issue before us is a negligible quantity.

The "British & Colonial Printer & Stationer," of November 22nd, contains a long illustrated account of Messrs. Whitfield King & Co.'s stamp dealing and philatelic publishing business at Ipswich. Many good illustrations are given, including one of the well-known "stamp room" with its philatelic wall papering.