

THE EVOLUTION OF THE STAMP ALBUM, FROM LALLIER TO MEKEEL.

BY LEWIS G. QUACKENBUSH.

PREFACE

In presenting this monograph to the readers of this journal, I make no pretension of having treated the subject with the thoroughness which it deserves. Life is short, and philatelic history is long. The story of the evolution of the stamp album could be elaborated by a skillful word-painter into a fifty-chaptered volume; but I prefer (and I believe my readers will prefer it, too) to dispense with the less important details, and to tell the story as briefly and concisely as it is possible to do, without sacrificing any of the facts necessary for a logical and continuous narrative.

The theme is one of absorbing interest, and has never been adequately treated. I cannot hope that this sketch will cover the subject so fully as to leave no room for future investigators. On the contrary, I firmly believe that this attempt at picturing the rise of the stamp album, will induce some writer or writers better equipped for the task, to treat the subject more thoroughly than I have done.

It has seemed to me that such a work as this could not fail to be of great interest to every album user in the land, and I have used every means within my power to make it as reliable and readable as possible. A lack of trustworthy records of the early albums must be my excuse for the inaccuracies which I fear will be detected in the first part of the work. Although I have carefully looked over all the available philatelic literature issued prior to 1870,

and noted all references to the pioneer albums, no doubt a great many of the minor books, especially those of European manufacture, have been overlooked.

Some unimportant albums have been omitted intentionally; and our information in regard to others is too scanty to admit of detailed reference to them. On dates, too, I am forced to confess, this work is but too fallible. I have consulted many of the older class of collectors in regard to the years in which the first edition of Lallier's, Oppen's and other early albums appeared, but the testimony is so conflicting that it is really of little value. The dates given in the text are those believed to be correct by the best authorities, and are probably not far from right.

In assuming the role of critic in relation to the leading albums of the present day, I am aware that I am venturing on dangerous ground. Many will, no doubt, differ from the conclusions which I have reached after a careful study of the merits and demerits of our most popular albums.

It is not my purpose to advertise any one particular make of album; or to decry any other. I think I am entitled to be called an impartial critic, not being a member of the trade, or in any way interested in the selling of stamps or albums; I feel justified in pointing out the merits and the faults of our modern albums, because such candid criticism may be valuable to inexperienced collectors, uncertain which album to choose.

I wish to heartily thank all my philatelic

telic friends who have helped in any way in gathering the material for this work. Without their kind assistance, I am afraid I should have given up the Herculean task long ago. It often seemed too discouraging to be continued, and I can assure them that their aid, as well as their kindly words of encouragement, is thoroughly appreciated.

I wish in particular, to express my indebtedness to John K. Tiffany, Esq., of St. Louis, and J. Walter Scott, Esq., of New York, for valuable information.

Again asking the leniency of my readers in regard to any errors which may have crept into this sketch, undetected, and with the hope that everyone who reads this brief contribution to philatelic history may gain added knowledge of philately's early days, I will ring the bell for the overture, and step off the stage as the curtain rises.

THE ALBUMS OF LALLIER AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

A book is the natural, as well as the only satisfactory repository for a stamp collection. True, there are here and there philatelists who prefer to frame their specimens and hang them up on the walls of library or study; and there are some few collectors who disdain to place their treasures in a mere book, and keep them in boxes and drawers instead.

But such cases are few and far between. From the very birth of philately, stamp collections have been mounted in books of one kind or another. Even before the era of printed albums, the early collectors anticipated the album by placing their specimens in books, which they themselves prepared for the purpose by allotting a page or pages to the stamps of each country, and then, with pen or pencil, apportioning off a certain space for each issue.

These private albums are occasionally to be met with today, being still used by some liberal souls, who cannot bear to be confined by the spaces of a printed album, but since there are in the market a number of blank albums, prepared especially for the use of those who do not find a printed album exactly suited to their needs, there is but little

need for anyone to turn album maker.

No doubt the albums of amateur manufacture first suggested the printed album. History, with her usual carelessness, has failed to record the name of the first album maker, and we are therefore unable to tender him his need of praise for an invention, without which philately could never have gained its present prestige.

Paris claims to be the birthplace of philately, and even at the present day is generally considered the philatelic capital of Europe, though London is a formidable competitor for the honor. According to the best reports, philately is a native of the gay French capital, a Parisian fashion, so to speak; and in due time, like all Parisian fashions, it spread to London and New York, and gradually around the whole civilized world. Paris was also the home of the first stamp album. Almost all philatelic authorities agree in saying that the first printed albums appeared at Paris early in the year 1862. There were several different books issued at so nearly the same time that it is not conclusively known which was the first to appear.

The most noted of these early works, and the one generally believed to have been the pioneer album, was published either in February or March, 1862, by Justin Lallier, a noted French archæologist. This work, viewed today, seems crude and primitive in the extreme, yet we can easily imagine the enthusiasm with which it must have been greeted on its appearance. Its success was instantaneous, and so great and so universal was the demand for it that no less than seven editions of the work were sold in the first five years of its existence.

The first edition of this album contained spaces for about twelve hundred stamps. No room was provided for varieties of perforation, or of watermark; in fact, no attention, whatever, was paid to either of these at that time. It contained no illustrations, and the arrangement of the book was very imperfect, indeed, practically no provision being made for future issues, and the pages being very much overcrowded. The

spaces designed for the reception of the stamps were small, and if the collector did not desire to have his specimens overlap each other, he was obliged to trim off the perforations, and sometimes even a part of the stamp itself.

The spaces for stamped envelopes were round, and collectors were expected to cut their envelopes to fit the spaces. Very many valuable stamps were destroyed by being cut in this way, and many an old time collector who carefully clipped off all traces of perforation on the stamps he then possessed, now groans in anguish at the thought of the money which he threw away by so doing.

So great became the popularity of Lallier's albums that English, German and Spanish editions had to be published to meet the demand. Lallier's English edition was the leading album on this side of the Atlantic for many years; and no doubt many of the old-timers can recollect the position which it occupied in its palmy days.

The fourteenth and last edition of this notable series was published in 1876. Lallier himself had died some three or four years previous, but the work had been carried on by other hands. It is exceedingly unfortunate that so little information should have been preserved regarding Lallier's life and works. Many strongly contend that his was the first stamp album ever issued. Whether it was really the first or was preceded by some less meritorious work long since forgotten is really of little moment to the student of philatelic history. His were by far the *greatest* of the early albums and will be remembered long after the mediocre works of his contemporaries have been forgotten. His albums were, for their time, remarkably meritorious, and their influence in the advancement and building up of philately can hardly be over-estimated.

The only other French album, contemporaneous with that of Lallier's which need be mentioned here, is that of Laplante, believed by some to have been issued prior to Lallier's. There is no proof to be found that it is really an

older work; on the contrary, there seem to be very good reasons for believing that it did not appear until full six months after Lallier's first edition; it bearing such a strong resemblance to that work as to induce the belief that it was merely an imitation, though less pretentious and far inferior in everyway. Information in regard to this album is very meagre; but it evidently never proved a very dangerous rival to Lallier's.

E. Requard, also of Paris, a well known dealer of the '60s, is believed to have issued an album at about the same time though no definite traces of it now exist.

There is good evidence that no albums were published in Germany until the latter part of 1862. Ludwig of Leipzig was the publisher of the first German album; this was followed a little later by a work of similar character issued by a stamp dealer named Wallig, of the same city.

I have been unable to procure copies of these albums for examination, and am, therefore, unable to give a detailed description of them. To judge, however, from comments in the stamp journals of the time, they did not differ materially in make-up and arrangement from the French albums of Lallier and Laplante. Both Ludwig's and Wallig's albums reached great popularity at the time; but they have been supplanted by other works and are at present practically forgotten.

In 1864, J. B. Moens, of Brussels, who might fitly be called "the grand old man of Philately," and who had, as early as 1860, published a *Manual for Collectors*, issued an album which all authorities agree in pronouncing it one of the best books that had yet appeared.

In 1866, the first edition of Oppen's album was published in London by one, Stevens, probably a London stamp dealer. Oppen's was the first English album. Prior to its publication, the British collectors used French albums with English title pages, and some of the earlier German albums with a double text. Oppen's album does not

appear to have gained very great popularity in America, but in England it became at once *the* album, supplanting almost entirely the French and German works heretofore used. Oppen's album was followed in the same year by the Mulready album, and then after an interval of a few years came the albums of Alfred Smith & Co., and Stanley Gibbons & Co.

As these English publications cannot be of so much interest to American readers as the home album in which we are more directly interested, I will not take the space here to describe the books issued by these two firms. The reader is of course not to believe that the albums mentioned in this chapter are the only ones which might be noted. It has been my aim to deal only with the more important works, since a catalogue of all the albums used in England and on the continent in the past thirty years could be of little interest to the average reader. I will therefore leave the subject of old-time European albums, having spoken of the most important of the earlier works with as much detail as space would allow. The modern English albums will receive treatment in another chapter.

THE FIRST AMERICAN ALBUMS.

America was not far behind Europe in recognizing the value of the stamp album. Dealers in those days were few and far between, but the few who did make a living by the selling of stamps were quick to seize the opportunity of furnishing their customers with desirable books in which to place their specimens, and considerable quantities of the Lallier and Laplante albums were imported and sold the very first year of their existence.

Information in regard to the early American albums is much more trustworthy and much more easily secured than facts regarding the pioneer albums of Europe. There is not now the slightest doubt that Appleton's was the first American album. It is not, however, I believe, generally known that there were two entirely separate editions of Appleton's album; the edition of 1863, generally understood to have been

the pioneer album of America, and a smaller book very hastily and imperfectly compiled, which was probably published about December, 1862. The claim of this latter work to the honor of being called the first American album rests almost wholly on the memory of certain New York collectors, who profess to remember that the small album was on the market for some months before the large book was published. I have been unable to ascertain the exact facts of the case from the Appletons themselves (D. Appleton & Co., the famous New York publishers) since the house has no records showing the exact date of issue of either work. The testimony of some of the oldest employes of the firm, however, who recollect the time when the books were issued, tends to confirm the belief that the smaller edition of Appleton's album preceded the larger and better known work by some months. It was small enough to be carried in the pocket without inconvenience, and contained spaces for less than a thousand stamps. The authorship of both of the Appleton albums has been attributed to J. Walter Scott, but he has never plead guilty to the charge, and in a list of his albums with which he has furnished me, neither of them are mentioned.

The large edition of Appleton's album was published early in 1863. I have been fortunate enough to secure a copy of this work and find that it well repays a careful perusal. It was made of rather cheap paper, and presented a cheap appearance in every way. The title page is embellished with a cut of the globe, evidently borrowed from some geography. In fact the whole work bears a strong resemblance to the old time geographies. The countries are not placed in alphabetical order, but under the heads of the different continents. North America comes first, then South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Oceanica in the order named. The British, French, Spanish and Danish possessions in the West Indies come under different heads. At the beginning of each subdivision is a map of the conti-

ment whose stamps fill the succeeding spaces. These maps and pictures of the coats of arms of a few of the United States comprise the only illustrations to be found in the book. At the beginning of each country is the name, area, population and name of largest city, as well as a brief catalogue of its stamps. Following this information come the spaces for the stamps. These spaces are not exactly square, but better described as oblong, and give ample room for the stamps without any portion of them being clipped. There are twenty-four spaces to a full page, and the entire book contains spaces for nearly four thousand varieties. On the whole, the book is about on a par with the albums for young collectors, sold at the present day for twenty-five cents; yet the collector of the '60s eagerly purchased these books at the remunerative price of \$3.00 apiece.

Either in 1863 or the year after, the first edition of Hill's Boston album, a work far superior in every way to the Appleton album, was issued. The publishers were W. H. Hill and Co., booksellers, of Boston, and the author was Mr. M. Bennett, Jr., of Hartford, Conn., who is still living in that city, though no longer interested in philately.

This album was somewhat similar in style to the Appleton, but far superior in make-up and arrangement. Here is an advertisement of this album taken from the *American Stamp Mercury* for February, 1868.

"Hill's Boston album contains places for three thousand stamps, including United States Revenues; is divided into countries, each country having sufficient squares for all past, present, and future issues, with places for the coat of arms and flags of each country. It is printed in carmine ink, on extra fine paper, and is the best album published in America, cloth, gilt sides, \$3.00; post free, \$3.25." The italics are mine. Fancy the short-sightedness of the compiler who could imagine that a book containing spaces for only three thousand varieties, would be sufficient for "all past, present and future issues." What can he think to-day, when he views the modern al-

bums whose many thousand spaces are all too few for the needs of advanced collectors.

A second edition of Hill's album, revised by S. Allan Taylor, appeared in 1865. The publishers, however, neglected to employ sufficient care in reading the proofs, and this oversight resulted in some of the most egregious blunders to be noted in the history of album making.

In 1865, Mr. Willard K. Freeman, then and now of New York City, issued the album bearing his name. It never attained much popularity, and we know less concerning it than about any other of the early American albums. Tradition says that it was a handsomely designed book, but very incomplete and unsatisfactory in many ways. Like too many albums of modern times, more attention was paid to a handsome cover than to a correct arrangement of the interior of the book.

Several other works of less importance were issued in the '60s, but none of them need be mentioned here. Appleton's, Hill's, and Freeman's albums were the only ones used to any extent, until in 1868, J. W. Scott, the "Father of Philately," brought out his American album. The albums of Mr. Scott have been and are of sufficient importance to justify their consideration in a separate chapter.

THE ALBUMS OF J. WALTER SCOTT.

John Walter Scott opened an office in New York City as a postage stamp dealer either in 1863 or '64. It was not until 1868, however, that he entered the list as an album maker, and at once distanced all of his competitors. The American Postage Stamp Album, the first edition of which came to light in that year, proved better suited to the needs of collectors than any work then in existence. The American almost wholly supplanted the Appleton and Hill albums. The publishers of both of these works had lost money on their ventures, and both soon went out of the business altogether, leaving Mr. Scott in sole possession of the field.

The American album had no illustrations, that custom only coming into

vogue on the publication of the Common Sense album some four years later. Like all of the early albums, the American was considerably wider than it was high, and in shape somewhat resembled Scott's Imperial album of the present day. In general arrangement it bore great resemblance to its forerunner, Appleton's; in fact, the resemblance was so striking that many philatelic historians look on it as simply an imitation of the earlier work. The paper, however, was much better than that used in Appleton's, and it was far more satisfactory to most collectors from the fact that it was more "up to date," to use another slangy word which has gained considerable currency of late. It contained spaces sufficient to hold all the stamps issued up to the time of its publication, whereas Appleton's only contained room for those issued up to 1863. There was one feature of the American album which did not prove popular. The book was printed in green ink, which, as may be imagined, gave the pages a very inartistic appearance.

The American album ran through four editions in as many successive years, the second edition being issued in 1869, the third in 1870 and the fourth in 1871. In 1872 the fifth edition came out under the name of the Common Sense Stamp Album. Just why the name should have been changed, it is rather difficult, at this late date, to determine. Probably, however, some unscrupulous competitor appropriated the original name for the benefit of some inferior work, and wishing to avoid confusion and trouble, Scott changed the name of his album to the Common Sense. Mediocre works, too trivial and unimportant to be noticed here, were all the while being brought out by aspiring dealers, and nothing would be more likely than that some one of these should coolly appropriate the name of its great phototype, hoping thereby to also secure some of its prestige.

Some radical changes seem to have been made in this edition, too, the most important of which was the introduction of illustrations. The wood cuts which adorned the pages of the

first edition of the Common Sense were exceedingly crude and rough; but it was an important step in the evolution of the stamp album, nevertheless, and Mr. Scott ought to have been heartily thanked by the collectors of that time for so valuable an innovation. Just how many editions of the Common Sense were issued before the work was finally abandoned and the International album took its place, is a matter of considerable doubt. The International was issued in 1875; hence no more than three or four editions of the Common Sense, at the utmost, could have been issued. I am of the opinion that only three editions were published, one each in 1872, '73 and '74. Several prominent collectors, however, claim that four editions were issued, one early in '75, before the International was projected.

The issuance of the International album marked the beginning of a new era in album making. It was far ahead of any similar work on the market, and at once became the leading album of America, a position which it has succeeded in holding through many years of strong competition until very lately, it has been left far in the rear by the Mekeel albums. Until the Mekeel's entered the race the International had triumphed over all its competitors, and had practically monopolized the album trade on this side of the Atlantic. Eleven editions of the work have been issued, including the new 1894 edition, recently put on the market. As, of course, most of my readers know, Mr. Scott, himself, has had nothing to do with the later editions. He severed his connection with the firm, who at present publish it, about eight years ago, and disposed of the copyright to them out right.

The present owners of the copyright have done little to increase or even maintain its prestige. While their competitors are constantly introducing novel and advanced ideas into their albums with the most gratifying results, the International publishers are content to drift along without inaugurating any improvements in an album which badly needs a thorough renovation, if it hopes

to compete with such magnificent works as Mekeel's series of albums.

The International album is so well known that any attempt at description in these columns would be absolutely superfluous. It is not a bad book in its way, and has done good service in years gone by. But its day has passed. Other and better works are in the field, which are bound to prove more attractive to collectors. Anyone who takes the pains to compare it with such a book as Mekeel's Album of the World, will at once recognize a strong contrast in favor of the latter. There is no comparison between the two. The Mekeel album is incomparably the better book, and has already superseded the other to a large extent.

Great things were promised for the 1894 International in the way of improvements, but now that the book is out and collectors have the chance of examining it, there is a very general feeling of disappointment that Messrs. Collin & Calman did not prove themselves equal to the occasion and strengthen their work along the same lines that have made the Mekeel albums so popular.

J. W. Scott's Best Album, his latest work, is more satisfactory in some respects than the International, though it still lacks much of being up to the Mekeel standard. His long experience and practical study of album making has borne fruit in this last album, which is in many ways an admirable book. The Best Album can boast of one feature absolutely unique, namely, the printing in each space of the actual market value of the stamp intended to occupy it. The obvious intention of the author was that the book should be made not only an album but a catalogue as well. It is to be regretted that the continued fluctuation of stamp values has rendered the prices current at the time of publication (which were even then considerably criticised) so unreliable as to be no real guide to the present market value. The small and lightly printed illustrations of the stamps, which the author considered a great improvement over the larger wood cuts, have proved to be directly the opposite. Cuts of so

small size cannot give an adequate idea of the appearance of a stamp, and the use of cuts the exact size of the stamps they are intended to represent is therefore to be preferred.

The Best Album is better in general arrangement than its predecessor. The pages are artistically and systematically laid out, and none of them are overcrowded—one of the great drawbacks of the International. Taking all in all, I consider the Best Album a superior work to the International, though wholly unworthy of comparison with either of those phenomenally and deservedly successful works, Mekeel's Universal Stamp Album and Mekeel's Album of the World.

Beside all these Mr. Scott has compiled and published several smaller works: the Philatelist and Challenge Albums, both small beginner's books; the Imperial album, a work of a little higher grade; the National Album, a book for U. S. stamps only; and a revenue album issued at the same time as the first edition of the Common Sense, and uniform in style and arrangement with that work.

MODERN ALBUMS — AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN.

The modern European albums are as "numberless as the sands on the seashore," but few of them are more than names to the collectors of this continent. The mention of most of them here would be entirely unnecessary, but there are a few of so commanding position that they cannot be passed by unnoticed.

Senf's album is unquestionably the greatest work of its kind published on the continent. It emanates from the well-known firm of Gebruder Senf, of Leipzig, on whose shoulders the mantle of Ludwig and Wallig has certainly fallen. The house of Senf is one of, if not the greatest, of its line in all Europe. It deals very extensively in all kinds of postage stamps, envelopes and cards, at both wholesale and retail, and publishes the best of the German stamp magazines, the *Illustriertes Briefmarken Journal*. Senf's Illustrated Postage Stamp Album, compiled by Richard Senf, has long been a standard work in Europe, and there are even some few of the books in use

in America. In general plan it does not differ materially from our great American Albums. It is printed on one side of the paper only and contains spaces for all the ordinary varieties, but it does not provide room for as many of the varieties of paper, perforations and watermarks as it should.

This disregard of all except the most pronounced varieties is accounted for by the fact that specialism has never gained much headway in Germany. Philatelists are the most of them generalists, and hence Germany can boast of no work approaching anywhere near our best American albums in completeness. Senf's albums are all of them artistically arranged, and the overcrowded pages so common to American works are largely avoided. It is an expensive work, and even its cheapest editions are sold at higher prices than albums of the same grade here. Nevertheless, it has, for a long time, given the best satisfaction to the philatelists of Germany and, indeed, of Europe generally.

At the Paris Philatelic Exhibition of 1892 it captured the highest award for albums, and thus scored a very material triumph over its French and English competitors, who were well represented at the exhibition. Singularly enough, the French albums are works of comparative mediocrity, and in the competition mentioned Senf's album had no difficulty in winning the highest award, leaving two French albums, those published by Ives & Tellier, and E. Bernard & Co., to divide the honors of second place.

Were Queen Victoria to follow the example of those two distinguished princes, the Dukes of Edinburgh and York, and take up stamp collecting as a pastime and a study, there is great probability that Stanley Gibbons, Limited, would be appointed album makers to the Queen, for their albums certainly hold the leading place among English works of similar character.

The first edition of the Imperial album was compiled and issued by Mr. Edward Stanley Gibbons, the founder of the present firm, about the year 1870. Even

this work was not the first album which owed its existence to Mr. Gibbons. The V. R. album, a book of little worth, preceded the Imperial by a year or two. The Imperial took the place of this primitive book, and has kept the even tenor of its way ever since. It is a conservative work, and in all the twenty-four years of its existence, has run through only six editions, the sixth and latest having been issued in the fall of 1892. The long intervals between editions have been bridged over by the issuing of frequent supplements. The supplement idea has never been looked upon with much favor on this side of the Atlantic; though it seems to have been fairly successful in England. The publishers of the International album are now attempting to make their album a permanent one by the issuing of annual supplements. How the experiment will result remains to be seen; but the consensus of philatelic opinion seems to be that it will be a very unsatisfactory way of achieving permanency.

Some radical changes have been inaugurated with the sixth edition of the Imperial. Major Evans, one of the greatest of living authorities, has taken charge of the work, and a great improvement has thereby resulted. The Stanley Gibbons catalogue has been taken as a basis, and space provided for many varieties of watermark and perforation, omitted in previous editions. The improvement is praiseworthy as far as it goes, but, unfortunately, does not go nearly far enough. So thorough a student of philately as Major Evans, would be expected to produce an album almost ideally perfect, but he has not done so. The work has, of course, some imperfections from the fact of its being the first album which the Major has ever actually compiled, though he has written handbooks and catalogues almost without number. The seventh edition of the Imperial will doubtless be far more meritorious, though even the present edition is far ahead of any other album published in England, which is rather behind-hand in album making, to say the least.

The same firm also publishes several

other works; of which the Philatelic, a blank album for the use of advanced collectors, to be fully treated later, and the Improved an album for young collectors, which has run through twelve editions and seems to have good prospects for twelve editions more, are the most noteworthy.

Alfred Smith & Son., the pioneer English stamp dealers, publish the Permanent album, a good book for advanced collectors, as well as several less pretentious works intended for the use of beginners, and Bright and Son, another large English firm, have quite a list of albums, none of which, however, are of dazzling originality or merit.

When we turn to the modern American albums, we find that, outside of the works of Scott and Mekeel, there are very few on the market, and as Mr. Scott's albums have already been thoroughly commented on, and the Mekeel albums are to monopolize a considerable portion of the next few pages, I must be excused for devoting so little space to the other American works.

H. F. Ketcheson's Cosmopolitan Album is a book intended for the use of advanced collectors, and is, I believe, extensively used in Canada. The publisher has made little or no effort to push it in the States, and even its name is probably unfamiliar to a majority of American collectors. The Permanent Album of the Staten Island Philatelic Society is a work of sufficient importance to justify its treatment under the heading of blank albums. Henry Gremmel's Unique Albums, of which little has been heard lately; the Young America, a book for beginners published by E. F. Gambs, of San Francisco; Lohmeyer's Postal Card Album, the best work of its kind extant; and juvenile albums published by the Bogert and Durbin Co., of Philadelphia, and Edwards, Peeke & Co., of Chicago, complete the list of the less important works.

BLANK ALBUMS.

From the time of the very first albums up to the present day, the printed book has been more or less unsatisfactory to

the most advanced collectors. In the making of an album, most authors aim to fill the needs of the average collector, and it is inevitable that such a work will be inadequate for a collection rich in the minor varieties. Blank albums are a comparatively recent innovation. Until the publication of Mekeel's Blank Album in the United States, and the Philatelic Album of Stanley Gibbons in England, those who did not find the printed album exactly suited to their needs, were obliged to have special books made to hold their collections or content themselves with blank books intended for other purposes, and but ill adapted to the use to which they were put.

The Philatelic Album, the leading work of its kind in England, is now in its third edition, and is used by most of the advanced collectors of John Bull's island. To American eyes, which are perhaps unduly prejudiced in favor of home productions, it seems a less admirable work than either of the American albums of similar scope, namely the Permanent Album of the Staten Island Philatelic Society, or the blank album published by the C. H. Mekeel Stamp and Publishing Co. The Philatelic Album is arranged in such a way that the leaves may be removed and replaced with the greatest ease. The pages are, of course, blank except for a neat border and are covered with a network of *quadrille* lines, designed to assist in the arrangement of the stamps. Besides postage stamps it can be used for the reception of postal cards and entire envelopes. It is so bound that it opens flat, and is made of very durable material.

Messrs. Stanley Gibbons, Limited, have also announced that a new blank album is now being prepared by Major Evans, which will be the most expensive work of the kind ever published. Each page is, I believe, to have a sunken centre, the raised margins of which will prevent the specimens from rubbing against the opposite leaf. The price of the cheapest edition is to be \$25, and it is, of course designed for the wealthy and fastidious members of the philatelic four

hundred. There may be a field for such a sumptuous work in England, but there is certainly none in the United States, and I am inclined to believe that these enterprising English publishers will find such a book a drug on the market.

There are quite a number of so-called "permanent" albums issued on the continent, the most noted of which is Schanenburg's World's Stamp Album, published by M. Schanenburg, a dealer and publisher of Vienna, Austria. Victor Suppantachetsch, the author of this album, is one of the greatest of German philatelists and known all over the globe as an authority on philatelic matters. It is a very elaborate work, comprising no less than six volumes and contains, in all probability, more space than any other album in existence. It is, in common with almost all other continental albums, however, wholly unknown here, hence I will not take the space to give it a detailed description.

The Staten Island Philatelic Society's Permanent Album is modestly advertised as "the only perfect album in existence." This egotism may, perhaps, be pardoned by those familiar with its sterling worth, for it certainly is as near perfection as an album can be. All things considered, I consider it just a shade superior to the Mekeel Blank Album, though on account of the exorbitant price at which it is sold, it can never gain the popularity of the latter.

Its only point of superiority is in the interchangeable leaves, which can be easily taken out of the book at any time, for examination or rearrangement. In all other points, the Mekeel Album is superior, and gives besides a five-hundred page book at about half the price charged by the Staten Island Society for their work of two hundred pages. Just who is mainly responsible for the authorship of the Staten Island album I am unable to state, all my inquiries on this line have been evaded by the statement that all of the members of the society assisted in its compilation, and that it is the joint work of the entire membership. There are reasons for believing that two of the most noted members of the society, Messrs.

Henry Clotz and August Dejonge were the originators of the idea and prime movers in the work, though many others doubtless assisted. J. W. Scott is a member of the society, but it is very improbable that he had anything to do with its authorship.

Mekeel's Blank Stamp Album is a handsome book, well bound and well made in every respect. The paper used in this album is of an exceedingly fine quality (as, indeed, is the case with all the Mekeel albums), and for durability the book is unexcelled. The plan of this album all my readers know. As the name indicates the pages are perfectly plain, except for a border and a space in which the name of the country is to be placed.

The advantages which collectors even moderately advanced derive from the use of such a book as this, in place of the ordinary printed album, are obvious. To the philatelist of artistic tastes, the work is a boon, since he can arrange his stamps on its pages in novel and artistic designs. Some very beautiful pages can be made in this way, and a good collection can be displayed to great advantage. Even a small collection presents a better appearance in a blank album than in a printed one, from the fact that there are not so many vacant spaces to draw attention from the stamps themselves. Yet only a small proportion of those actively interested in stamp collecting prefer a blank album to a printed one. I have often wondered why this should be the case, and the only plausible explanation seems to be that the exact arrangement of a printed album minimizes the labor of mounting a collection.

In giving the album at present under notice a careful examination, one cannot fail to be impressed with its superiority over most works of its kind. It seems admirably suited to the needs of those for whose use it was designed. The stamp mounts, which are furnished with this album, are a noteworthy innovation and a great improvement over the usual methods of hinging stamps to the page. As is well known, John K. Tiffany, President of the A. P. A., and the greatest

of American philatelic authorities, is the inventor of these mounts, having first used them in his own collection.

The Blank Stamp Album was the first album published by Charles Haviland Mekeel and has now been in use for some years. The work is being constantly improved, in accordance with the policy of its energetic author, and it bids fair to long retain its present popularity as the leading blank album of America.

THE ALBUMS OF C. H. MEKEEL.

No name is more universally known and honored by American philatelists than that of Charles Haviland Mekeel. The story of his rise, in less than twenty years, from a school-boy dealer to his present place as president and general manager of the largest stamp firm in America, is a most interesting one, and plainly shows how great are the opportunities which the stamp business offers to men of energy and talent.

That C. H. Mekeel, however, possesses more than the average share of these two requisites for success, no one acquainted with his record for enterprise and his executive ability, will deny. He has built up from the very foundation a stamp company which has distanced the most formidable rivals in the struggle for trade. He has established and directed the policy of a brace of philatelic periodicals, each of which stands unexcelled in its own field. And to crown all his achievements, he has given to American philatelists a series of albums more thoroughly practical and better suited to the needs of collectors than any similar works on the market.

Mr. Mekeel is understood to be the author of all the albums published by his company, though he may have received assistance from his associates in the business. His first work of the kind was the Popular Stamp Album, intended for the use of beginners and young collectors generally. This album was first issued quite a number of years ago, and has enjoyed a wonderful sale. It was Mr. Mekeel's aim then, as now, to give more for the money than any

other publisher in the field; how well he succeeded a comparison of the thirty cent Popular Album with other juvenile works sold at the same price, will readily tell.

The Popular Album is an oblong book, ten inches long by seven inches high, and contains spaces for 3,000 stamps. It is issued in three distinct grades: a thirty cent album, with board covers; a fifty-five cent book, printed on better paper than the first and bound in cloth; and a seventy-five cent edition, of still better paper and binding. The usual information and statistics are to be found under the head of each country and illustrations of the different issues serve to familiarize the young collector with the appearance of stamps which he has perhaps never seen. It seems to me to be the best book for young collectors extant, and I always advise beginners to try the Popular.

The Blank Album, already fully treated, was the next work, and then, for a long time, no effort was made to add to the firm's list of albums. Within the last two or three years, however, the Mekeel Co., feeling themselves in a position to compete with any firm of album makers in the world, have gone into the business in good earnest. The first issue of the new series of albums which has done so much to add to the prestige of its publishers, was Mekeel's United States Postage Stamp Album, which made its debut in March, 1892.

The continual increase in the number of American specialists had long rendered the need of a work especially designed for U. S. stamps very noticeable, and the new departure was at once successful. The issuing of this book has, no doubt, given a great impetus to the collecting of United States stamps. Prior to its appearance, Scott's National Album was the only work designed especially for this class of collections; and even that had become antiquated and out of date. The U. S. Album is therefore a boon to specialists, and it is proving in every way suited to their needs. Each year it is taking a firmer place in the affections of those for whose benefit it was issued, and it is one of the best

selling books of a series for which there is a great and constantly increasing demand.

To give a description of the work, it contains about one hundred pages, printed on one side of the paper only. In the matter of typography, no more neatly printed album was ever issued. The paper is of splendid quality, and the pages are laid out with due regard to artistic arrangement. It is plainly, but durably bound, and altogether is just such a work as we would be proud to place on the tables of our drawing rooms or our libraries. It contains a number of blank pages intended for the reception of new issues, revenues or locals, in case the inclination of the collectors leads him to include the latter classes of stamps in his collection. The book, of course, contains no cuts of the stamps, as the government prohibits such illustrations; but the space which each stamp is to occupy is rendered sufficiently clear by a full description, with the aid of which the stamps are easily placed.

In August, 1892, Mekeel's Mexican Album, a companion volume bearing a great similarity to its predecessor, both in binding and general arrangement, made its appearance. The Mekeel Co., probably possess the largest and most complete stock of Mexican stamps in the world, and it was therefore peculiarly fitting that they should undertake to compile an album for the reception of Mexican stamps only. The enthusiasm with which it was greeted was almost as great as had been accorded its predecessor, and collectors making a specialty of the stamps of Mexico were found to be far more numerous than had been supposed. The book not only contains spaces for all the postage stamps issued by our neighbor Republic, but for all of its revenues as well; and much of the interest felt by advance collectors regarding Mexican revenues is due to the publication of this book. The general plan of the book is practically the same as that of the U. S. album, though it differs from that work in being illustrated. The binding and paper of the two books are equally

meritorious, and specialists in these countries should fervently congratulate themselves that there exist books so well adapted to their needs.

The third in this notable series of specialist's albums is Mekeel's American Postage Stamp Album, with spaces for the stamps of all countries in North and South America, as well as the West Indies, and also room for the revenue and telegraph stamps of the United States and Mexico. Although it is necessarily a much larger book than either the United States or Mexican albums, it is printed on one side of the paper only, and is uniform in style and binding with the smaller works. Further description is unnecessary.

The influence of these three books in the development of specialism in stamp collecting can hardly be overestimated. Their issuance was a radical departure from established methods, and marked the beginning of a philatelic revolution. Specialism has been gradually gaining ground for a decade past, and a few mediocre albums intended for the use of specialists had actually been issued prior to the entrance of the Mekeel's into active competition as album makers. But none of these albums had proved satisfactory to specialists, and as the three Mekeel albums rapidly followed each other into the field, the philatelic world at first startled, was soon forced to admire the thoroughness with which the author had done his work. Thousands of specialists have found the Mekeel albums just the books which they have long desired, and many of those who have heretofore mounted their specimens in blank albums, are transferring them to one of these books, the objections to a printed album not having so much weight with specialists as with generalists, on account of the more limited field of the former.

While I cannot attempt to advise collectors as to which albums to buy, knowing that my personal recommendation of a book would have no more weight than that of any other impartial outsider, I can say that were I a specialist (which I am not), I certainly would avail myself of the advantages

offered by the Mekeel albums. As to the generalist, if he will possess his soul in patience, he will find something to interest him in the following lines, in which the Mekeel general albums, the best and most complete works of their kind are to be fully treated.

No one acquainted with the enterprise of America's leading stamp firm believed that its directors would rest content with the triumphs won by their albums for specialists. Specialists are, after all, but a handful to cater to, as compared with the hosts of those who impartially gather in the emissions of all five continents, and it was therefore with little surprise that philatelists read the announcement of Mekeel's Universal Stamp Album, and Mekeel's Postage Stamp Album of the World. The philatelic world was surprised, however when it came to carefully examine these works and compare them with other books in the market at the same price. They were a revelation as to the possibilities of album making. Collectors to a man, marveled that such admirable albums could be sold so cheaply.

The Album of the World in particular may be said without exaggeration to have taken America by storm. It was so far superior to any work of the same grade ever before published that the collecting world went mad over it. Critics vied with each other in chanting its praises; stamp dealers everywhere were eager to handle it; and collectors everywhere just as eager to buy. Every reader will readily remember the furore created over the debut of this album in January, 1893. Nothing else was talked of in philatelic circles for awhile, and the book met with an enormous sale. Nor was its popularity temporary. On the contrary every month has served to establish it more firmly as the leading album of its grade in the world. It is *the* album for a collector of moderate means, and its author is a philatelic benefactor in placing within the reach of those who cannot afford high priced albums, a moderately priced work, containing all the meritorious features of books doubly as expensive, as well as many innova-

tions of value of which no other work can boast.

No candid critic can look over Mekeel's Album of the World and deny that for a book of its size, beauty and durability, it is a marvel of cheapness. I have a copy of the new edition for 1894 before me as I write, and as I turn its pages, I cannot fail to be impressed with the philatelic learning and acumen of its author, to which every page of the book bears open witness. No collector could ask for a work better suited to his needs, and it is as near perfection as any album is likely to be, at present at least.

The harmoniously blended colors of its artistic cover, make it a beautiful book, and the interior does not in the least belie the good impression given by a glance at the exterior. The paper is of most excellent quality, even that in the cheaper editions being far heavier than that used by other publishers for albums of the same class. The book is typographically perfect, and stamp the Mekeel Company as artistic printers of the first grade. The spaces intended for the mounting of the stamps are artistically and symmetrically arranged, and overcrowding of the pages, so common a fault in a stamp album, has been carefully avoided. The wood cuts used for illustrations are fairly good and there are so many of them, and the arrangement of the stamps so plain from the descriptions given in each space as to its rightful occupant, that the veriest tyro would experience no difficulty in arranging his collection in this book.

One of the most satisfactory points about the volume is its completeness. The Mekeels never do a thing by halves, and in aiming to make this book the most satisfactory work of the kind, it was wisely decided to include many varieties of type, color, paper and watermarks, for which no spaces are provided in other albums. This renders it peculiarly suited to advanced collectors, most of whom collect the minor varieties. That this class of philatelists appreciate the superior character of the book, the enormous sale of

No. 4, the highest priced edition of the work, fully proves.

The 1894 edition of this album is fully up to date, and contains spaces for stamps issued as late as Nov. 1, 1893. There are a few sins of omission and commission to which the book might have to plead guilty, but they are so comparatively few that we are inclined to be forgiving. A few stamps for which spaces should have been provided are notably absent, and a few other issues are recognized which might well have been omitted, as for instance, the emissions of the Central American Steamship Co. But we can hardly expect perfection even in a stamp album in this world of imperfections, and critics can overlook these minor drawbacks in consideration of the album's general excellence.

Mekeel's Universal Stamp Album preceded in point of issue the Stamp Album of the World by about a month. It is a more costly work than the other, but like all of the Mekeel publications, is well worth its price. Although designed for a more advanced class of collectors than the *clientele* of the cheaper book, it has met with nearly as great success, and it is very hard to say which of them has really proved the most popular. They are, however, in no sense rivals, but are, rather, the complements of each other. The different editions of the Album of the World range in price from \$1.50 to \$7.50 each; while the cheapest edition of the Universal costs \$4.00 and the most expensive, \$15.00.

The Universal Album comes in two volumes, the first of which is intended for the stamps of the Western Hemisphere, and the second for those of the Eastern. It is printed on one side of the paper only, and the higher priced editions have a number of blank leaves bound throughout the book to provide for future issues.

It is printed from the same plates as Mekeel's Album of the World, and therefore being identical with that work in arrangement, needs no further description here. For those who desire an album, richly bound and lavishly fur-

nished, yet are not exactly suited with a blank album, no better work could be found.

The Universal completes the list of the Mekeel Albums, and a wonderful series it is.

THE ALBUMS OF THE FUTURE.

I have now completed my review of the past and present. Little more remains to be said before the curtain falls. But I cannot conclude my remarks on the use of the stamp album, without lingering for a moment, to speculate as to what developments in album making may be in store for us in the future. It is easily said that attempts to draw aside the veil of the future are profitless; but it is not so easy for us to withdraw from the contemplation of interesting possibilities and fascinating fancies.

As we contrast the crude works of Lallier, Laplante and Ludwig with the magnificent albums of to-day, we cannot help wondering whether another thirty years will witness as great changes. What will the albums of 1924 be like? Will there be radical changes and improvements in album-making as the years go by, or, are our albums about as perfect to-day as they can ever be. I am inclined to the latter belief, though I recognize the futility of any attempts at prophecy.

There may, of course, be discoveries in the art of printing and book making which will revolutionize the album trade, but it is unlikely. Improvements of note there doubtless will be and perhaps we may even expect an album which will rightly deserve the name of permanent. Of permanent albums, at present, there are none, and those bearing the name have no right to the title. Permanence is the *desideratum* in album making, and it has yet to be reached by album compilers. The permanent album is looked on by many as a chimera, which will never become a reality, but who can say? The old-time collectors would never have believed that albums so far superior to their own, would be in use a quarter century later.

If the number of collectible varieties continue to increase in the same ratio

as in the past few years, the specialist's album will be the album of the future. If such be the state of affairs, we may expect to see the list of special albums indefinitely extended. There will be albums for separate countries, and albums for continents, and albums for groups of countries, *a la* Major Evans Philatelic Catalogue, and the general albums will be obliged to take a back seat. But if, on the other hand, the international stamps becomes a reality and takes the place of all national issues,

then the necessity for specialist's albums will be largely obviated, and the general album will retain its present place. There seems to be no immediate prospect of the adoption of an international stamp, yet its ultimate adoption is more than a possibility and would certainly affect philately in one way or the other. All prophecy, however, is mere speculation. Why waste more time over it, when the albums of the present day have proved so well suited to present needs?

THE 5c STAMP OF THE FRENCH COLONIES WITH THE HEAD OF NAPOLEON.

By G. A. KUNKEL.

A few years ago I read in an Italian philatelic journal an article concerning these 5c stamps. Being much interested I began some investigations for myself. I felt able to do so because for several years I had made a specialty of collecting French stamps, so that I possessed in my collection all the material necessary for such a study. It is a fact that very many well posted advanced collectors know almost nothing concerning this stamp, and I think they will be interested in the result of my researches.

I do not think that there is any dealer or collector who has not been asked more than once, the question: What is the difference between the 5c stamp used in France and the stamp of the same value used in the French Colonies? The answer to this question is usually that there was no stamp issued specially for the Colonies, and that the



cancellation mark only could tell us whether the stamp came from the Colonies or not. When unused it was impossible to distinguish this stamp from that of the metropolis. Most of the early handbooks (Senf-Moschkau, Sindinberg, etc.) adopted this view, while many albums do not mention that stamp at all. Many philatelists also say that it is useless to write a whole article for the special purpose of establishing the identity of one single stamp. These collectors settle the matter by saying that the 5c. stamp, green, unperforated, with the head of Napoleon III, was in use in France from November 4th, 1854, to the end of September, 1862, and that all at once, on December 1, 1871, after the Republic had been established for fifteen months, these stamps made their re-appearance in the Colonies.

The partisans of this theory also say that we cannot speak of different issues of this stamp, but that those in the Col-