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A reference book about philatelic literature

[*Ein nachschlagbuch über philatelistische literatur*]

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A REFERENCE BOOK ABOUT PHILATELIC LITERATURE

In the October 1887 issue of the *Philatelic Record*, I attempted to show what benefit could accrue to philatelic students through the publication of a manual or reference book dealing with philatelic literature. The article in question was intended mainly for English and North American philatelists and I intended to express my opinion in a German magazine as well. I now have the desired opportunity to be in a position to offer a modest contribution to my fellow readers of *Postwertzeichen* and I am doubly gratified as this issue will surely appear in a large circulation. Thus, my proposal will be read and examined by a large number of devotees of philately, notably Germans.

Before I express myself further concerning the publication of the reference book, it will be well to remember that the best work about philatelic literature has sprung from the pen of **Mr. John K. Tiffany** who in 1874 published his book *Philatelic Library: A Catalogue of Stamp Publications* in which is found an almost complete enumeration of the philatelic publications printed in the many countries of the world. This same philatelist continued to occupy himself with the literature of philatelic knowledge, not just because he collected everything published in that connection, but also because he incited at the same time the devotees in other countries to bibliographic investigations in the field. I find, by the same author, in *The Stamp Journal* (New York, Volume 3, Issues 5 and 8; and Volume 4, Issues 38 and 39) a compendium of philatelic publications that had appeared in the various countries in the years 1876 and 1877; as well as in the *Philatelic Journal of America* (St. Louis, Volume 2, Issue 12) an enumeration of those published in the year 1886 in the United States.

Following this first precedent on the part of **Mr. Tiffany** one continued in France regarding French and Belgian literature. The work in question by **M. Philippe de Bosredon** appeared in the *Bulletin de la Société Française* (Volume 1, pp. 101, 131, 221 & 283) and was reprinted later as the second volume of the *Bibliothèque Timbrologique* (1878). It is known to most collectors and is of recognised high value, so that a recommendation of the same seems to be completely unnecessary.

As regards Germany, we need only mention the articles by **Dr. Moschkau**, found in the *Deutsche Briefmarken-Zeitung* (1871, Issue 12), in *Moschkau's Magazin* (1872, Issue 9) and in the *Illustriertes Briefmarken-Journal* (1874, Issue 5 and 1876, Issues 30, 33 & 36), the latter article having been reprinted in 1878 in the *Geschichte der Briefmarken und der Philatelie*.

Spain possesses a thoroughly researched and valuable effort whose author is **M. P. de Figueroa**, known under his pseudonym **Dr. Thebussem**. His *Literatura Philatelica de Espana* (Seville, 1876) can be considered to this very day as an almost complete manual, as in the last decade Spanish philatelists have published little in the way of philatelic knowledge, with the exception of the significant work by **A. F. Duro**, *Reseña de los Sellos de Correo de España* (Madrid, 1881).

(Translator's note: The title reads *Succinct Description of the Postage Stamps of Spain*. The **Dr. Thebussem** of the article is **Mariano Pardo de Figueroa**: see the portrait on the Spanish 5 peseta air mail stamp of 12th October 1944.)

A catalogue of the philatelic works of Latin America has not appeared so far, and it would be desirable if such a task were undertaken soonest by a South American club of philatelists, e.g. the one at Lima which, with its *Catalogue des Timbres de Perou*, has become known to its advantage.

Likewise, Great Britain does not up to now possess a manual of its philatelic works, but the now articles that have appeared in *The Philatelist* by **W. Dudley Atlee** and more so yet those of Messrs. **P. J. Anderson** and **W. H. Earl** in the *Philatelic Record* (Volumes 7 & 8) in which these gentlemen deal with the oldest English publications in the philatelic area will facilitate the work for anyone who might devote himself to such a task.

In the matter of Italian literature, in the *Guida Illustrata del Timbrofilo* (Volume 2, Issues 16 & 17) one will find a listing of the same by **Mr. Leoni**.

Of the works not so far mentioned regarding philately in Switzerland, the Netherlands, Denmark, etc., there is no listing other than those by **Tiffany** in his previously mentioned book.

Having shown what sources are available to the philatelists who desire to gain knowledge about the science of postage stamps in literature, there remains for me the task of explaining to the readers my project about a manual or reference book as I have designed it.

The undertaking would be divided into two, that is to say, a general and a specialised section. The first part would concern postage stamps generally, their value as objects to be collected, etc. To give an example, under the heading *Organisation of the Collection* there should be a collection of numerous articles that have appeared in connection with such organisation and I would suggest to list these chronologically, classifying however according to the languages in which they were written. In addition to the title listing of a book, title of the article and similar, the name of the author would have to be listed, as well as the date and place of publication. With articles, the name of the journal in which they appeared would have to be mentioned as well. In this general part the following would have to be included: title of articles etc. about the importance of collections as viewed from different perspectives; diverse systems concerning the arrangement of stamps as proposed severally; envelopes, postal cards, postal wrappers into albums, about kinds of paper used for production of stamps and

watermarks in these; about colours, perforation, collecting unused or used postal values, and such-like. In my opinion the contribution furnished by German philatelic literature is the most significant by far for this general part, but I doubt that this part should be regarded as the most important.

The Second part of the work - which in my opinion would take shape as a very interesting one, notably for advanced collectors, also for those who wish to consult special works about certain stamps, as well as for editors of manuals and of special periodicals - would contain a list of the several works under the name of every country that has issued postage stamps. With these arrangements the chronological series could be maintained, similarly as in the case of part I grouped under the languages in which they were written.

In this section, in my view, Germany would not occupy so outstanding a position as Belgium, Great Britain, France, and the United States; nevertheless it would come into prominence as a result of some significant works that belong here. To emphasise the entire interest, the entire usefulness, which such a work must offer, it will suffice to remember that for some time now collectors have endeavoured to build special collections rather than those of all countries. For devotees of this category it would be important indeed to learn which articles and discussions are significant for them, with the help of a complete, well-edited reference work. Also, when such a philatelist is not satisfied to establish a specialised collection but prefers to write a study or series of articles about it, a bibliographic manual would immediately offer him a state of affairs in literature about his subject; nor would he need to waste time to peruse the indexes of philatelic journals - which are often rather poor - to discover whether the subject of interest to him already offers a basis for his essay or not. A glance at the manual would suffice and a more careful perusal would show which postage stamps have never been dealt with, so that every collector would know immediately to what subject he might devote himself preferably.

Another significant advantage of the book would be that when some outstanding article would be published in a specialised journal, it would not be condemned to be forgotten, thus remaining unknown to a majority of philatelists. In this connection I have referred to the local postage stamps of Baden in the *Philatelic Record* as an example - regarded by several catalogue and album publishers as a kind of rural stamps even, to be sure, following publication of an article (See Bulletin de la Société Française de Timbrologie, 1879, Volume 2, p.12) which contained the official decree about the issue of these stamps, and as a result of which it was shown that these are postage due stamps. This incorrect designation is found in English and French catalogues which are otherwise first-rate, while German manuals are satisfied to designate the postage stamps in question as "rural post stamps", which is not saying enough.

(Translator's note: The 1862 Baden stamps in question are both rural in nature and postage due, as well.)

Far more remarkable yet is the example offered by the Lady McLeod stamp issued in 1847 by the Steamship company of Trinidad. Described for the first time in *The Stamp Collector's Magazine* (October 1867, p.154), it remained unknown for the following 15 years and was then "rediscovered" and its authenticity proven - that could have been done already in 1867 - and now this, by the way very rare stamp, could find its honourable place in some elite collections.

All this proves that these and similar errors could not have happened, had a philatelic literature lexicon been in existence. With the help of such, the publishers of catalogues would,

I might add, see their tasks considerably simplified. Their publication would meet with less difficulties, and errors might be reduced to a minimum.

As soon as such a reference work is published, its usefulness could be heightened perceptibly if all philatelic clubs, following the example of the ones in Munich and in Dresden, decided to make it available to all its members (reimbursing postage expenses), in the same way as the entire contents of the clubs' libraries. An exact list of the works contained therein could be easily drawn up.

The idea suggested by me regarding a philatelic reference work and also the proposed scheme I developed was initially supported by **Mr. Anderson** (See the most recent November number of the *Philatelic Record*) who also took corresponding steps with the Philatelic Society, London which, it is to be hoped, will yield favourable results. In connection with the gentleman named I myself took steps at the Société Française in Paris with my proposal. With the task I am facing, I turn to the numerous German philatelic organisations with the request that they form a committee for a preliminary compilation of German philatelic works and specialised articles. This would have to be compiled according with the plan adopted by **Tiffany** for his *Philatelic Library* and by **A. de Bosredon** for his previously mentioned opus.

It may be unnecessary to add here that the petty jealousy which exists among otherwise very decent German clubs must not be an obstacle for the execution of the task which is to be undertaken by men working in union. Besides, the usefulness to be had by all philatelists as a result of the publication of the manual is so meaningful that all the minor frictions should cease.

The uppermost direction should be entrusted to one person, just as suggested by **Anderson**. That person would decide upon the division of labour and the results would have to be submitted to him by every single collaborator. For that purpose a uniform system for the compilation should be adopted, and it seems to me that the best by far, as reported by **Anderson**, is that of **W. J. Poole**, librarian of the public library in Chicago.

For the post of director no one certainly would be more qualified than **J. K. Tiffany**, and I am convinced that the choice could not be for a more competent person, as shown by the first-rate works he has had published and which would easily justify such a distinction. I might add that the task would be facilitated considerably for **Tiffany** as President of the American Philatelic Association. I could add many a point to clarify my project even further, but hope to return once more to the subject in a later number of the *Postwertzeichen*. Finally, I can add only that philately would be considerably promoted with such an opus, and that other sciences that are far older than ours, already possess similar works.

Such an undertaking would also prove once again that philately, even without being of the first importance, deserves nonetheless a place beside the study of seals, coins, medals, and the like.

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