

THE INTRODUCTION TO THE SUBJECT.

A BIBLIOGRAPHY of Philately—such is the work I venture to present to my friends as the seventh volume of my *Bibliotheca Lindesiana*, and as the subject-matter is so different from what I have previously dealt with I feel it incumbent upon me to offer a few words of explanation.

In the first place, am I not right in thinking that many persons will say *What is Philately?* The word will be sought for in vain in the dictionaries of fifty years ago, indeed it was only invented by M. Herpin of Paris, in the year 1865, and then only to fill the growing demand for a better term to define Stamp Collecting.

I can see a smile of indulgence pass my reader's features as he calls to mind his school days, and how he collected, begged, and exchanged stamps, stirred up by the hope of one day having the "best collection in the school," how, when he had passed that stage of life, his collection fell to a younger brother, or got lost when he put away childish things.

In some few cases, however, the spirit of research and acquisition had taken a deeper hold upon the minds of the boys the more especially where they had succeeded in awakening the interest of their parents. This interest, primarily one of sympathy with the child took root in the soil of the earlier generation, one able to bring to bear on the pursuit greater resources, and a wider power of investigation. In my own case, though an ardent collector while at Eton, I ceased to be so after leaving, and I am sorry to say that I cannot recall what became of the collection. Nevertheless, some thirty-five years later (1898), I was at Sotheby's one day to bid for an early MS. (which by the way I lost to the Bodleian), and saw on the shelves a fat volume of stamps, which, out of sentiment, I bought. Ill-health was driving me out of England for the winter months—and the book went with me on the yacht, and I have never repented the purchase. Since then I must have sailed nearly 100,000 miles about the world, and I have always taken on my travels some stamps for study and arrangement, thus providing myself with an interesting and unfailling occupation.

Not only this, but I learnt how widely spread over

the face of the globe was the interest in the subject, and that the possession of a "Stamp Album" was of itself an admirable letter of introduction or passport to the kindest welcome, always extended by the members of this great family, the one to the other.

In the course of fifty years, many and great changes have been brought about in the details of collection and in the methods of arrangement. That which has proved of the greatest value, we owe to a group of collectors in Paris, who from their investigations, have prepared a systematised classification scheme, which has proved itself capable of infinite subdivision, without in any way impairing the original thought.

This School of Paris was soon received into favour by the more advanced collectors of Great Britain, though naturally some objections were raised. The classification scheme above-mentioned is now adopted throughout the world, and is so familiar to all collectors that I fear one is apt to forget to whom we owe so much.

But I must keep to my subject, which is Bibliography, not stamps. The beginner always requires guidance and help in the acquisition of a knowledge of his subject, and his first demand is for books—so was it with me, and I soon found that there was a literature on the subject, on a far larger scale than I had thought possible, but it was not easy to procure, nor were there any booksellers who gave attention to these works. However, I determined to form a philatelic section of the Library. There was in existence such a Library in the United States, which had been formed by Mr. J. K. Tiffany of St. Louis, Mo., one of the greatest authorities and writers on the subject of philately in America. He had endeavoured from earliest times to obtain everything he could learn of, wherever published, and with a very great measure of success. In 1874 he printed a catalogue of his books which has been the standard work of the day. Full of years and honour he crossed the boundary early in 1897, when additions ceased to be made to the collection. It was not until 1901 that a whisper was heard of the possibility of its coming into the market.