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WAR COMES TO THE PHILATELIST

BETTER not throw out that old stamp collection just yet. The war has sent stamp values soaring, and while it may be some years before a used 1940 New Zealand halfpenny is worth even its face value, you may have an investment that will stand up magnificently to the slings and arrows of slumps. In fact, the world-wide demand for stamps is such that it is evident that many shrewd people consider them an asset just as substantial as gold or precious stones.

In New Zealand at the present time, owing to war regulations which restrict the sending of used stamps out of the country, philately is in the melting pot, but that does not affect the general position. It is well worth while blowing the dust off your old album and getting it re-valued.

All over the world, in Britain, in German-occupied countries, in neutral countries, the business of philately is going on, affected often by war and censorship regulations, but carrying on almost without interruption. A catalogue which reached New Zealand recently shows that not only have there been few drops in value, but there is heightened demand for previously unpopular issues. Even the smaller South American Republics, whose philatelic history has not been above reproach, are coming into their own.

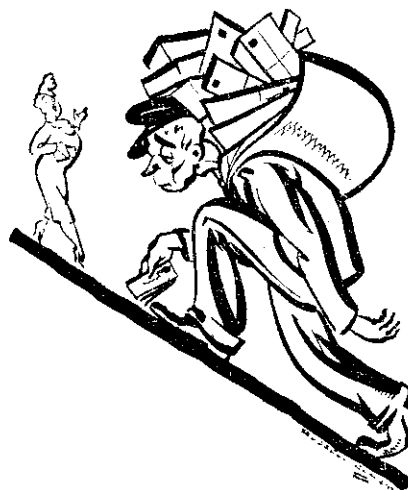
Activity in New York

One way the war has influenced philately has been through fluctuations in currency, the British Government's drive for dollar credits, for instance, resulting in many big London dealers opening branch offices in New York. Seven dealers are now operating in a building in Fifth Avenue where there was only one previously. It is also noticeable in New York that dealers are moving from Wall Street and the financial centre of the city to more fashionable business areas.

Until after the war, at any rate, Germany and German-occupied countries must remain forbidden territory for British stamp collectors, though news of what is happening in the German philatelic world filters out through Switzerland.

Stamps in Germany

Apparently German dealers are buying for all they are worth, possibly for one of two reasons—confidence in ultimate German victory or anxiety to secure an asset which will retain its value during the inflation period following defeat. Whatever the reason, some fantastic prices are being paid, highest for Austrian issues, and highest of all for a special issue bearing a portrait of Dolfuss.



As far as can be gathered the Nazis have issued few stamps to commemorate their victories in Western Europe. The Danzig Senate's declaration of unity with the Reich gave birth to a stamp boldly inscribed "Danzig ist frei," and a special issue was put out in occupied Poland, but otherwise there has been little of note.

Dealing in German stamps, of course, has been prohibited since the outbreak of war, under the trading with the enemy regulations.

Bad Reputation

The increased value of stamps of the Central and South American Republics will be good news to the small collector, as pictorially these are among the most attractive issued. The bad reputation of South American stamps dates back about 40 years to the time when an enterprising New York printer entered into an arrangement with half a dozen republics whereby he printed their stamps free of charge on condition that he was permitted to change the design every year and print off "remainders" to sell to dealers. For the countries concerned it was a useful method of helping along public finances, but such stamps soon became unpopular with philatelists.

Of recent years there has been little selling out of "remainders," but nevertheless the number of commemorative stamps issued (another way of making stamp collectors finance public works and unemployment) has been unfortunately large.

To New Zealand collectors the most interesting events of recent years have been the air-mail covers issued at various times, more especially for the initial trans-Pacific clipper flights. Owing to the number carried, these covers have, as yet, only about twice the face value of the stamps. Of considerably greater value are covers carried on experimental flights made recently to Suva and Tonga by trans-Tasman flying boats. Few were carried, and they have an added value if autographed by the Commanders.

A Remarkable Issue

The air-mail stamp in which dealers are most interested, however, is an American 24-cent stamp with an inverted centre, issued in 1918, one of which recently realised 4,250 dollars at a New York auction. The stamp has an unusual history. Years after its issue a clerk found a whole sheet stowed away in a pigeon hole in the Washington Post Office. He bought the sheet for a couple of hundred dollars, and within a few days had sold it again to a Philadelphia dealer for 15,000 dollars.

The sheet was bought intact by the late Colonel Green, one of the most spectacular philatelists of all time. He had intended to retain the whole sheet, but dealers pointed out that unless there was a certain amount of buying and selling of the stamp it would have little value. So Colonel Green broke up the sheet, retaining several specially marked stamps for his own collection.

After a brief but meteoric career as a collector (he started with five dollars' worth of stamps and ended with a collection worth hundreds of thousands of dollars) Colonel Green died two years ago leaving several State authorities to wrangle over succession taxes. Stamp dealers the world over are accordingly looking forward to the selling up and dispersal of his vast collection.

N.Z. AIR-MAIL STAMPS ARE VALUABLE

New Zealand air-mail stamps have a distinguished place in the world of philately. Certain covers, according to a catalogue published in 1934, are worth well over £20. The first covers were carried as early as 1919, but the most valuable are those carried by Kingsford-Smith and Ulm on their early flights across the Tasman. Of covers flown over in the Southern Cross in 1928 there are only ten in existence, and these, which are autographed by the two flyers, are probably worth £30 each to-day. Most of them are in the hands of American collectors. Many trans-Tasman flyers, including Jean Batten, carried a small amount of mail, principally as a source of revenue.

Collectors also place a high premium on a unique series of earthquake flight covers. The first occasion was during the Murchison 'quake of 1929, when relief 'planes carried a few letters in and out of shattered Murchison. These are worth approximately £10. Further "earthquake covers" were flown during the Hawke's Bay earthquake in 1931, and these are worth from £3 to £10.

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