

THE "NEW" STAMP COLLECTING.

How the Weakness of the Philatelist is Worked.

The account in the newspapers the other day of the new stamps of San Marino gave only one instance of the way in which officials and private persons trade upon the amiable weakness of the philatelist.

The smallest variation in design is enough to make the philatelist buy; so one enterprising local post-office in Russia has added a thirteenth to the twelve bees which formerly appeared on the design; nor are the officials without their reward.

Guatemala is really witty. It has conceived a post-card "which must not contain any written matter except the address" not a very useful piece of stationery, you will say—stupid! don't you see you can print on the back, and it makes another post-card for the collector to buy!

The "error in printing" is a simple but effective device. You order a set of stamps to be printed in certain colors. After the first few sheets you find the colors are wrong, and change them. The collector buys both lots. The "surcharge" dodge can be used, of course, without other limit than human ingenuity: One of the most startling of recent times is a bold D. T. on the face of some Greek stamps. It is not a reflection on the sobriety of the officials. It signifies a particular method of delivery. It is one of the few out of the thousands or surcharges that have some use.

An African territory recently issued a fine set of stamps. A sheet was recently found of which each one was surcharged with the name of a month. "The owner said it cost him two bottles of gin to get it done."

President Ezeta, of Salvador, prepared stamps for 1895. He went out of office before they came in. But his stamps remain—for sale to collectors.

There are a few buildings on the coast of the Red Sea which are called Djibouti, and boast themselves a French colony. They boast also a colossal stamp—value 25f. No specimen could ever be wanted for real use.

Chilgit on for many years without unpaid letter stamps. Suddenly the need was felt—so suddenly that "provisional" labels had to be issued while the real stamps were being engraved. The collector treasures a "provisional" above most things.

Official post-offices are bad enough, but what shall we say of the writer of this letter (published in Messrs. Stanley Gibbons' Monthly Journal):—Dear Sir,—Knowing your firm as the greatest dealers in post stamps, I take the liberty to ask your attention for the following business:—On my trip on the Upper Congo I entered in a tract of friendship with a free Arab King, and bought from him the concession to make stamps for his Kingdom. As I should like to sell the concession, I offer it to you for two years at the price of £100. Awaiting your answer as soon as possible.—I am, gentlemen, yours truly, etc."

Another traveller has recently obtained a like concession from the Sultan of Brunei (North Borneo). He is not less frank:—"Let me explain," he says, "that it was I who suggested to the Sultan that he should issue stamps, and I have arranged the whole thing. He and his Postmaster have no idea of the way to conduct any business. I assure you that the delay in sending the stamps to you is caused by the illness of the Postmaster's wife—

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