

THE STAMPS OF HYDERABAD—III

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(Continued from page 13 of the January No. of the "P.A.")

The "Skeleton" Issue of 1871 (S.G. 2 and 3).

In 1870 it became evident that values other than the one anna were necessary, and plates for a new set consisting of seven values were ordered from Bradbury, Wilkinson & Co. The Hyderabad Post Office anticipated a considerable time-lag between the ordering of these plates and their arrival in Hyderabad, and therefore authorised the production of locally-made plates for $\frac{1}{2}$ a. and 2a. stamps. Because of this makeshift character, and the extreme simplicity of the design, these two values are known as the "skeleton" issue. It would seem doubtful, though, whether they were really necessary. According to Holland, two plates for each value of the main set were sent out to Hyderabad in August, 1870, so that these stamps could presumably have been made available to the public towards the end of that year. As it was, the "skeleton" issue itself did not appear until January, 1871.

These two stamps were engraved locally on unwatermarked native paper with very faint indications of horizontal laid lines. The design is simple, consisting of an upper and lower label



Type II (right hand stamp showing Variety "A")

extending in curves across the stamp, the upper label bearing the words " Post Stamp " and the lower label their equivalent in Urdu. Around the central field are four smaller labels showing the value in various languages—in Telugu in the N.E. corner, in Urdu in the S.E., in English in the S.W., and in Marathi in the N.W. The central field has the inscription " Government of Asaf Jah " in Arabic characters and the Hijri date 1286 (corresponding to the period 1869-70) in Urdu numerals.

Each stamp was engraved separately, and although each one differs in slight detail from its neighbour it is remarkable that there are so few errors in this issue. There are, of course, many examples of misplaced characters, but a study of complete sheets of the two values reveals only one major variety—in the central field of the 230th stamp of the 2a. plate the two diamonds after the character resembling a figure " 1 " in the middle line are missing (Variety " A "). The colour of the $\frac{1}{2}$ a. stamp is a constant shade of brown, while the 2a. occurs in olive-green, sage-green and yellow-green. The normal perforation is $11\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{1}{2}$, but both stamps are known imperforate.

Both values were re-issued for postal purposes in 1880 on unwatermarked white wove paper, perforated $12\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$, and in colours which differ considerably from those of the original issue. The $\frac{1}{2}$ a. appears in a pale red-brown shade (sometimes so pale as to be barely visible) and the 2a. in blue-green and bright green. The $\frac{1}{2}$ a. plate cracked and was broken between the 7th and 8th horizontal rows, the 1880 re-issue being printed from the lower part only.

The " Post Stamp " Issue of 1871.

Four plates were produced by Bradbury, Wilkinson & Co. for each of the seven values of this issue— $\frac{1}{2}$ a, 1a, 2, 3, 4, 8 and 12 annas. The general design, while similar in many respects to that of the " skeleton " issue, contains much elaborate detail which varies in each value. There is, unfortunately, no plate number or other mark on the sheets to indicate from which plate any particular sheet was printed, so that, although it is necessary to allocate plate numbers in order to distinguish between the varieties that occur, it must be understood that such numbering is purely arbitrary.

Apart from the ordinary imperforate proofs on card, proofs perforated $12\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$ were also prepared for all seven values on deeply-blued laid paper. The normal perforation of this issue is $12\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$, but there are a number of " rough " perforations ranging from $7\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ to $11\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{1}{2}$. These latter, except for the $\frac{1}{2}$ a. value, are rare, and I have seen too few to warrant my making any considerable alteration in the existing catalogue list (S.G. 6-12).

The $\frac{1}{2}$ a. Value, Perf. $12\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$ (S.G. 13-16 and 34).

Colour : Of the three main problems facing the philatelist—perforations, watermarks and colour classification—the latter is the most difficult. Perforations and watermarks are at least definite, and can be identified once and for all. But colour shades are dependent to a very great extent on the personal element. A collector can spend many hours trying to interpret such shades as “brick-red” and “apple-green” and in the end find himself in a greater quandary than before. It is equally difficult to decide whether a particular stamp, viewed by itself, is “yellow-green” or “pale yellow-green” or “dull yellow-green”; and after a comparatively short spell the collector probably finds himself “shade-blind” and incapable of distinguishing any shades at all.

This difficulty approaches its maximum in the $\frac{1}{2}$ a. stamps of this issue. On various occasions in the last two years I have isolated over fifty quite distinct shades of this stamp; but, by dint of sorting them into “shade groups” rather than individual shades, I have now narrowed the list down to 17 entries. One of the causes of this great variation lies in the composition of the ink, the consistency of which was changed several times during the 35 years that these plates were in use. Sometimes the ink was exceptionally thick, as in the case of the dark brown and deep red-brown stamps; sometimes it was distinctly oily, as in the deep orange, vermilion, rose-red and purple-rose stamps; at other times, as in the case of the remaining 11 shades, it assumed a normal consistency.

So far as I know, no attempt has yet been made to work out the periods during which the various plates and shades were in use. It is reasonable to suppose that red-brown (the colour of the “rough” perforations) was one of the earliest shades used, and an examination of the postmarks on several hundred stamps in orange and orange-red shows that these shades were prominent between 1900 and 1906. It is worth noting here that, although the $\frac{1}{2}$ a. in magenta is listed in the catalogue as an “error of colour,” it was in magenta that the imperforate $\frac{1}{2}$ a. proofs were prepared in 1870. This magenta stamp is, incidentally, considerably rarer than the present catalogue price would infer. The stamps in scarlet and purple-rose are equally hard to obtain.

Varieties : Stamps from all four of the $\frac{1}{2}$ a. plates show a large number of distinguishing marks; in fact, with the aid of blocks and pairs it is a comparatively simple matter to reconstruct complete sheets from each plate. Holland has done much towards plating these stamps and the results of his work were published in the *Philatelic Journal of India* during the latter half of 1945. It is proposed to list here, however, only those major varieties which, in the opinion of the present writer, are worthy of catalogue status :



Variety "B"



Type III



Variety "C"



Variety "D"



Left-hand Stamp shows Variety "F"



Variety "E"

- Plate 1. The second of the two diamonds after the character resembling a figure "1" in the central field is missing on stamp No. 135 (counting horizontally row by row). (Variety "B").
The left end of the long central character is missing on No. 148. (Variety "C").
- Plate 2. The diamond over the long central character is missing on Nos. 7, 22, 37, 52, 67, 82, 97 and 112. (Variety "D").

Plate 3. The same diamond is missing on Nos. 3, 18, 33, 48, 63, 78, 93 and 108. (Variety "E"). This can be distinguished from the similar variety on Plate 2 by the fact that, in Plate 3, the small circle opposite the left end of the long central character is also missing.

Plate 4. The left quarter part of all characters in the central field is missing on No. 26. (Variety "F").

Assuming that all four plates were used to about the same extent, a variety such as "F," which occurs only once in four plates, is therefore some 960 times less common than the normal stamp. The "missing diamond" variety, on the other hand, occurs altogether 16 times in the four plates and is therefore only 60 times less common than the normal stamp.

In a considerable number of these stamps the meshwork in the central background is either entirely absent or only just visible. This was, presumably, caused by the wearing of the plate; but, in some of these "plain centre" varieties, the rest of the design is so bold that it is not easy to understand how the meshwork could be so completely worn away, leaving the main central characters wholly untouched. "Plain centre" stamps are most commonly found in the pale rose, orange and orange-red shades. Stamps in brown and red-brown are occasionally found imperforate and part-perforated either horizontally or vertically.

A word of warning about the following list. It does not pretend to be complete. It covers only those stamps and varieties of whose existence I am certain; there is no reason to suppose that the varieties detailed above do not occur on stamps other than those listed here.

1871. Type II. Perf. $11\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{1}{2}$. 21. $\frac{1}{2}$ a. deep red-brown.

White wove paper.

No wmk.

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| 4. $\frac{1}{2}$ a. brown. | 22. $\frac{1}{2}$ a. red-brown. |
| (a) imperf. | (a) imperf. |
| 5. $\frac{1}{2}$ a. red-brown ($12\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$) | (b) imperf. between pair. |
| 6. 2a. sage-green. | (c) variety 'B.' |
| (a) imperf. | (d) variety 'C.' |
| (b) variety 'A.' | (e) variety 'D' or 'E.' |
| 7. 2a. olive-green. | (f) variety 'F.' |
| 8. 2a. yellow-green. | 23. $\frac{1}{2}$ a. pale red-brown. |
| 9. 2a. blue-green ($12\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$) | (a) variety 'B.' |
| 10. 2a. bright green ($12\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$) | (b) variety 'C.' |
| | (c) variety 'D' or 'E.' |
| | 24. $\frac{1}{2}$ a. ochre-brown' |
| | (a) variety 'F.' |

1871. Type III. Rough perms.

from $7\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ to $11\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{1}{2}$. 52. $\frac{1}{2}$ a. orange-brown.

White wove paper.

No wmk.

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| 11. $\frac{1}{2}$ a. red-brown. | (a) variety 'D' or 'E.' |
| 12. 1a. blackish-purple. | 26. $\frac{1}{2}$ a. deep orange. |
| 13. 1a. grey. | (a) variety 'D' or 'E.' |
| | 27. $\frac{1}{2}$ a. orange. |

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| 14. 2a. green. | (a) variety 'D' or 'E.' |
| 15. 3a. ochre-brown. | 28. $\frac{1}{2}$ a. orange-red. |
| 16. 4a. slate. | (a) variety 'D' or 'E.' |
| 17. 8a. deep brown. | 29. $\frac{1}{2}$ a. vermilion. |
| 18. 12a. dull blue. | (a) variety 'D' or 'E.' |
| Same, but perf. $12\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$. | 30. $\frac{1}{2}$ a. scarlet. |
| 19. $\frac{1}{2}$ a. dark brown. | 31. $\frac{1}{2}$ a. pale rose. |
| (a) variety 'D' or 'E.' | (a) variety 'D' or 'E.' |
| (b) variety 'F.' | 32. $\frac{1}{2}$ a. rose. |
| 20. $\frac{1}{2}$ a. brown. | (a) variety 'D' or 'E.' |
| (a) imperf. | 33. $\frac{1}{2}$ a. rose-red. |
| (b) imperf. between pair. | (a) variety 'D' or 'E.' |
| (c) variety 'D' or 'E.' | 34. $\frac{1}{2}$ a. purple-rose. |
| | 35. $\frac{1}{2}$ a. magenta. |

(To be continued).

British Varieties and Discoveries

The Philatelic Adviser for December, 1945, contained a note on page 3 regarding the 10d. Irish Free State Dollard overprinting shown to us by Mr. C. W. Meredith. This stamp, as far as we knew at the time, showed an hitherto unrecorded variety, namely the broken frame at left. Since the above appeared in the *P.A.*, Mr. Meredith has had the good fortune to secure a second mint copy but without the Irish Free State overprint. The variety is identical with the one first described, that is to say this further copy shows a complete diagonal break in the outer frame line on the left-hand side about one third of the way down.

Mr. Meredith has also another interesting variety in his possession known as the "Crescent Moon." It is found on number 6 stamp of a booklet pane of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. 1912. It is shown on the design about one third down on the left side, and is thought to be constant.

Mr. G. A. Dawson, of Liverpool, has shown us a very interesting 1d. red cancelled with a No. 1 and also No. 10 in Maltese Cross. This is the first specimen like this we have seen and should like to know whether any of our readers have seen similar items.
