EGYPT: First issue, 1866, PERFORATION

By Members of the Egypt Study Circle.

WHERE PERFORMED.

It has been stated by Dalwick and by. Melville, apparently on tile authority of Canter Bey, that the stamps were delivered to tile Egyptian postal Authorities in unperforated sheets. Dalwick however records that one proof sheet of the t P.T., "perforated normally" was found at Genoa, in tile old establishment of Fratelli Pellas, some time after the stamps were issued, suggesting that tile stamps of this denomination were perforated in Italy; tile perforating machine and the remainder of the stamps in imperforate condition being sent subsequently to Alexandria.

Dr. Herbert Munk, in Kohl's *Bricfmarken-Handbuch*, gives it as his opinion that tile question of where these stamps were perforated remains unsettled. He considers there is evidence that at least some of sheets were perforated after arrival in Egypt but he stales that a perforating machine as well as perforated sheets of the 1 P.T. were found at the establishment of the printers in Genoa. He affirms categorically that stamps gauging 12½ x 15 were perforated only after the sheets were received in Alexandria. Of the imperforate stamps he believes there is evidence that some were undoubtedly issued to tile post offices in that condition and postally used. He states that these were mainly the higher values.

We have no evidence to add to the above, but perforation of the sheets was certainly carried out in careless fashion and only a small percentage of all stamps of this issue are well centred. Whole lines of perforation. both horizontal and vertical, were omitted on sheets of all values, while many examples of double lines of perforation are known. When gum was applied, subsequent to perforation, it often passed through to the front of the stamps and spread outwards on to tile surface of the design. Such workmanship suggests tile efforts of an inexperienced firm, which may possibly have been Penasson of Alexandria, who had not hitherto produced an issue of stamps and who are not known to have submitted essays for tile first issue of Egypt; but why should a firm such as Fratelli Pellas, capable of turning out good work like the essays they submitted for the 1863 issue of Italy, have supplied stamps in an unfinished state when filling its first contract for a new and important client

GAUGES USED.

Two single line machines were used from the outset. These gauged 12½ and 13.The former was the one in general use and therefore 12½ all round is regarded as tile normal perforation for this issue, but early dated used stamps with compound perforations have been seen by us on entire letters.

The earliest example is tile 10 para, perf 12½ x 13 a single copy on a local letter obliterated with tile rhombus but dated inside, Alexandria, January 1st 1866. (Byam collection).

A third single line machine, gauging 15, was used as early as 1866 to give compounds of 12½ x 15. Stamps perforated in this way, were never taken into general use and probably represent trials by Penasson for the stamps this firm was to produce as the second issue. The 10 para, the 2 and 5 P.T., and the 5 P.T. with error of superscription 10 P.T. are the only values known with this perforation. The 5 P.T. perforated thus with error of superscription, undoubtedly did postal service and all the known postmarked copies are from Cairo. The copy in the Mackenzie Low collection was dated 25.VI.66. that in the collection at Buckingham Palace I.IX.66. The 2 P.T. is in the pale yellow shade characteristic of tile final printings; a used copy was found in the Hubert Lowe collection.

COMPOUND PERFORATION

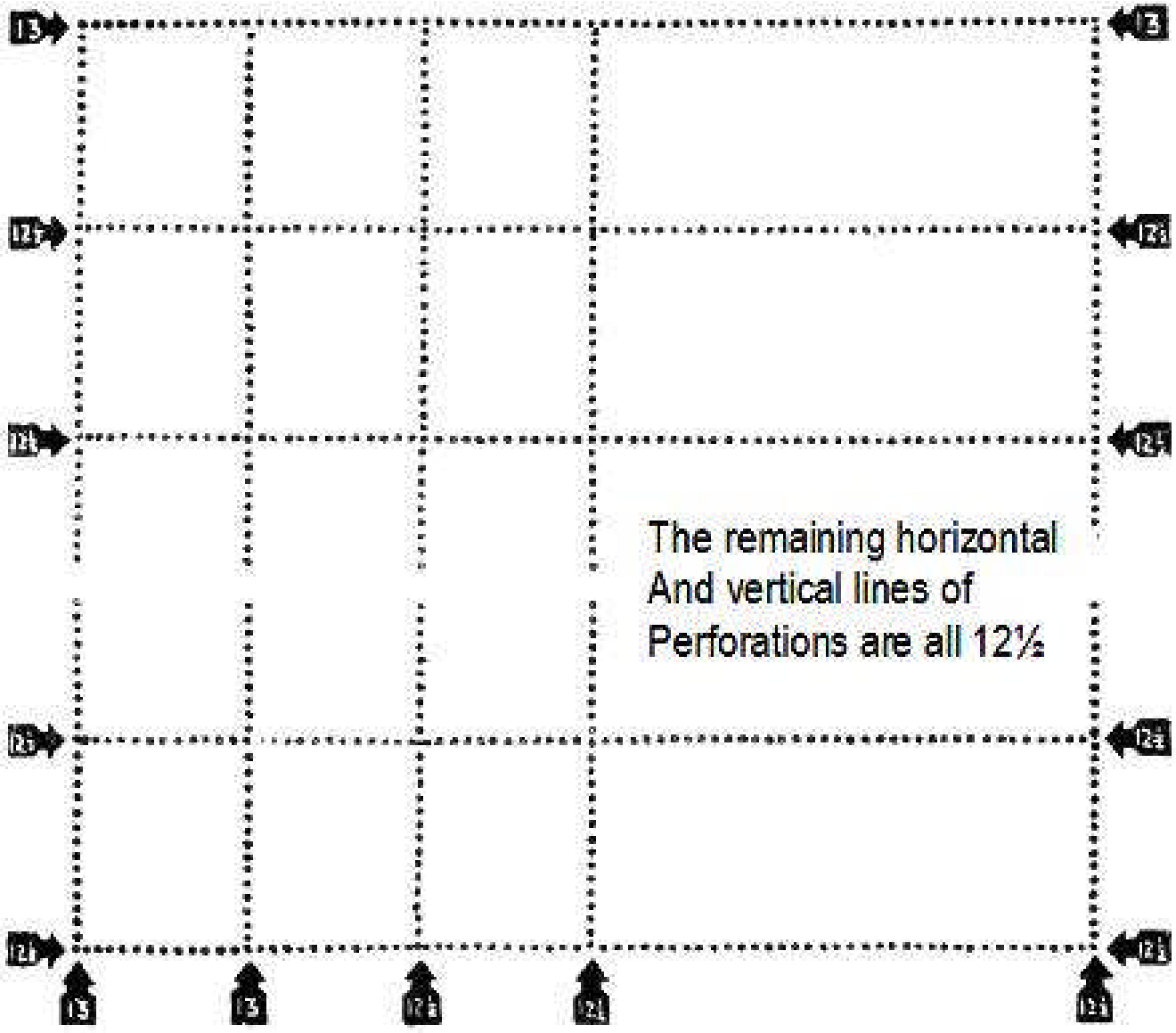
As the two machines gauging 12½ and 13 were sometimes used in conjunction, but apparently at haphazard. it is possible to find stamps in a single, sheet perforated 12½ all round. 12½ x 13, 13 x 12½, 12½ x 13, 12½ x 13 x 12½ x 12½ x 12½ x 12½ x 13 x 12½. and so on through all the possible combinations. For this reason

we consider these numerous compound perforations do not represent separate printings and therefore we group them all together as compounds of 12½ and 13.

In tile same way and in the same sheet with the above compounds, stamps perforated 13 all round occur, but are undoubtedly rare; we have seen the 5, 10 and 20 para. and also the 10 P.T. but the remaining values Probably exist.

In the Byam collection is a mint block of 53 of the 1 P.T., which includes the follow wing perforations: 12½,12½ x 13, 12½ x 12½ x 12½ x 13, 13 x 12½ x 12½ x 12½, 13 x 12½ x 12½ x 13.
A diagram of part of this block which extends the whole breadth of the pane, will show how these compounds occurred.

This block includes stamps front Row 2 of tile sheet but none from Row 1. Had Row 1 been perforated 13 horizontally above: by no means an improbability a single example of perf 13 all round would have occurred as St Stamp No. 1 on the sheet. In the same collection is included a used strip of three of the 10 para perforated 13 horizontally, both above and below, but vertically (from left to right) 12½, 12½, 13 and 13. The three stamps are thus 13 x 12½, 13 x 13 x 13 x 12½, and 13 all round.



IMPERFORATE STAMPS.

So carelessly was perforation carried out that imperforate and partially perforated stamps of all values are not very rare. In this way arise the pairs imperforate between and the so called perf. x imperf. specimens. For the same reason the majority of stamps of this issue are extremely badly centred and specimens showing the whole design are to be regarded as highly desirable additions to any collection.

CLASSIFICATION OF PERFORATIONS.

So that unnecessary complexity be avoided, we suggest that the following simple classification meets all philatelic requirements :

(a) 12½ (the normal perforation). All normal values; (we doubt the existence of the 5 P.T. with error of superscription perforated 12½ all round) .

(b) 13All normal values;

(c) Compounds of 12½ and 13 All normal values;

(d) Imperforate All values, including the 5 P.T. with error of superscription

(e) Partially perforated All values, including the 5 P.T. with error of superscription

(f) 12½ x 15 (trial perforation) 10 para, 2 P.T., 5 P.T., and 5 P.T. with error of superscription.

Stamps bearing other gauges are either proofs, with trial perforations, or forgeries.

PROOFS.

Some of these were perforated, but we do not know why when or where. We have seen perforated proofs of all denominations and among them the following gauges :
11½, 11¾, 12, 12½, 13, 13½ , 14 and compounds of the same; also 12½ x 15.