

# Colour Variations in Sheets

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IN the issue of April 1st, Mr. W. E. Fyndem in the Philatelic Finance page remarks that he has found at least three shade variations in a single sheet. That is an interesting statement. In the first place what does he mean by the word "shades"?

From a typographical viewpoint a shade is any colour that has had black added to it. Now it is obvious that in printing and especially rotary printing, you cannot add black to only certain portions of the plate, unless, of course, you are doing colour work. But even so in two or more colour work each colour is added separately starting from the lightest and ending with the darkest. Therefore to add black in the wrong place would show up immediately. So I do not think it is a shade in the strict sense of the word. What then is it?

It may be one of several things or even a combination. A flaw in the paper might account for it. A change in the room temperature during printing might also account for it. However, he remarks that the variations are on the single sheet he examined. Therefore room temperature can be eliminated.

The most probable cause is to be found in the "make ready" of the plate.

"Make ready" is a technical term in printing and like all technical terms it is difficult to explain it to an outsider. However, I will try.

In rotary printing the plates are cast into a curved mould which is done so that the finished plate or stereo can be attached to its cylinder on the rotary press. Theoretically the plate when cast and dressed should have a uniform thickness. In actual practice this is not so. There are minor variations in the thickness of the plate at various places. These variations may only be the thickness of tracing paper but they have to be eliminated in order to obtain a perfect print.

This fault is generally corrected by gluing pieces of thin paper to the back of the stereo plate under the hollows. As it is purely a matter of personal opinion as to when the plate has been raised sufficiently to rectify the fault, it is no great matter for a collector to "find a difference". After all it merely boils down to two personal opinions.

Another and more serious fault is encountered in printing. This arises from the fact that all steel has a certain amount of spring in it. As printing presses are made of steel it has been found impossible to remedy this defect. This springiness results in the impression roller imparting an uneven impression to the paper. To remedy this fault here again pieces of paper are used. In this case, however, they are attached to the impression roller, not to the plate. This process is known as overlaying. Both operations, underlaying and overlaying are necessary to obtain a good result. Here it must be emphasised again that the amount of overlaying necessary is merely a matter of personal opinion.

Perhaps here we have the reason for the variations in "tones" mentioned. It is impossible to eliminate them 100 per cent. Anybody with a magnifying glass, plenty of patience and a lot of time will find varieties, not only in stamps, but in any piece of printing he cares to examine. So when stamp collectors start raving over colour differences, the printer, and I happen to be one, just sits back and smiles.