

**326.** The impression of each stamp must be not only legible, but perfect in every particular. To secure this with hand-stamps, attention should be paid to the following points:—

- (1.) The stamp must be kept perfectly clean. This may be done most effectually by applying with a small brush a weak solution of potash or soda, or printer's lye. Type which has been used must be cleaned before it is replaced in the box.
- (2.) The cushion on which the letters are placed to be stamped should be quite even and very slightly elastic.
- (3.) The stamp should be held firmly in the hand, and struck upon the postal packet with a light sharp blow, care being taken not to let the stamp fall upon the impression made at another office.
- (4.) Strict attention should be paid to keeping the ink-pad constantly fit for use by moistening it with stamping-ink. Too much ink is not to be put on the pad, and the ink put on is to be well rubbed in so as to prevent the clogging of the stamp. If the pad is allowed to become saturated or the stamp dirty the stamping will be smeared and indistinct.
- (5.) A moderately soft pad should be used to place under the letters when being stamped. Any soft book, such as an old Post and Telegraph Guide, would answer this purpose in small offices for which rubber pads are not provided.

**327. (a.)** At offices at which postmarking-machines are in use it is essential that letters be levelled up at the end on which the postage-stamp is usually placed, and on the bottom, not the top of the bundle. This secures that letters all touch the bed of the stamping-machine as required, and prevents their being bent over at the "stamp" end and retarded in their passage through the machine, where action is very rapid, and, to be satisfactory, must be continuous. Also letters must be distributed so that, as far as possible, very thick letters are kept in separate bundles.

**(b.)** Postmarking-machines must be kept well oiled and properly adjusted. Tension-screws, particularly those holding the type, require frequent attention.

**328.** Worn felt pads (bobs) used in postmarking-machines are to be returned to the Stores Manager for reconditioning and reissue. The process of reconditioning is to be repeated from time to time until the pads become too small for effective use.

**329.** When a relief postmarking-machine is required, application must be made to the Secretary.

**330. (a.)** The only rubber-stamp ink to be used in obliterating stamps is to be the special ink supplied by the Stores Manager for the purpose. Postmasters supplied with rubber stamps must obtain the proper ink and linen pads. The ordinary obliterating-ink used for metal stamps destroys the rubber, and must not be used. With rubber stamps black ink is to be used mainly, but red ink may also be obtained for special purposes.

**(b.)** For the cleaning of rubber stamps a weak solution of washing-soda and water should be employed. Kerosene or benzine is not to be used, as it is injurious to rubber.

**331. (a.)** Chief Postmasters, Postmasters, and other responsible officers are personally to make irregular but frequent inspections of the date-stamping at their offices, so that the work may be kept up to the proper standard. Postmasters at offices which circulate for non-permanent offices are held responsible for the checking of date-stamp impressions on correspondence posted at those offices. Any defective stamping or failure to cancel stamps must be at once