

Henry Hunter Calvert's
Collection of Amphora Stamps
and that of Sidney Smith Saunders

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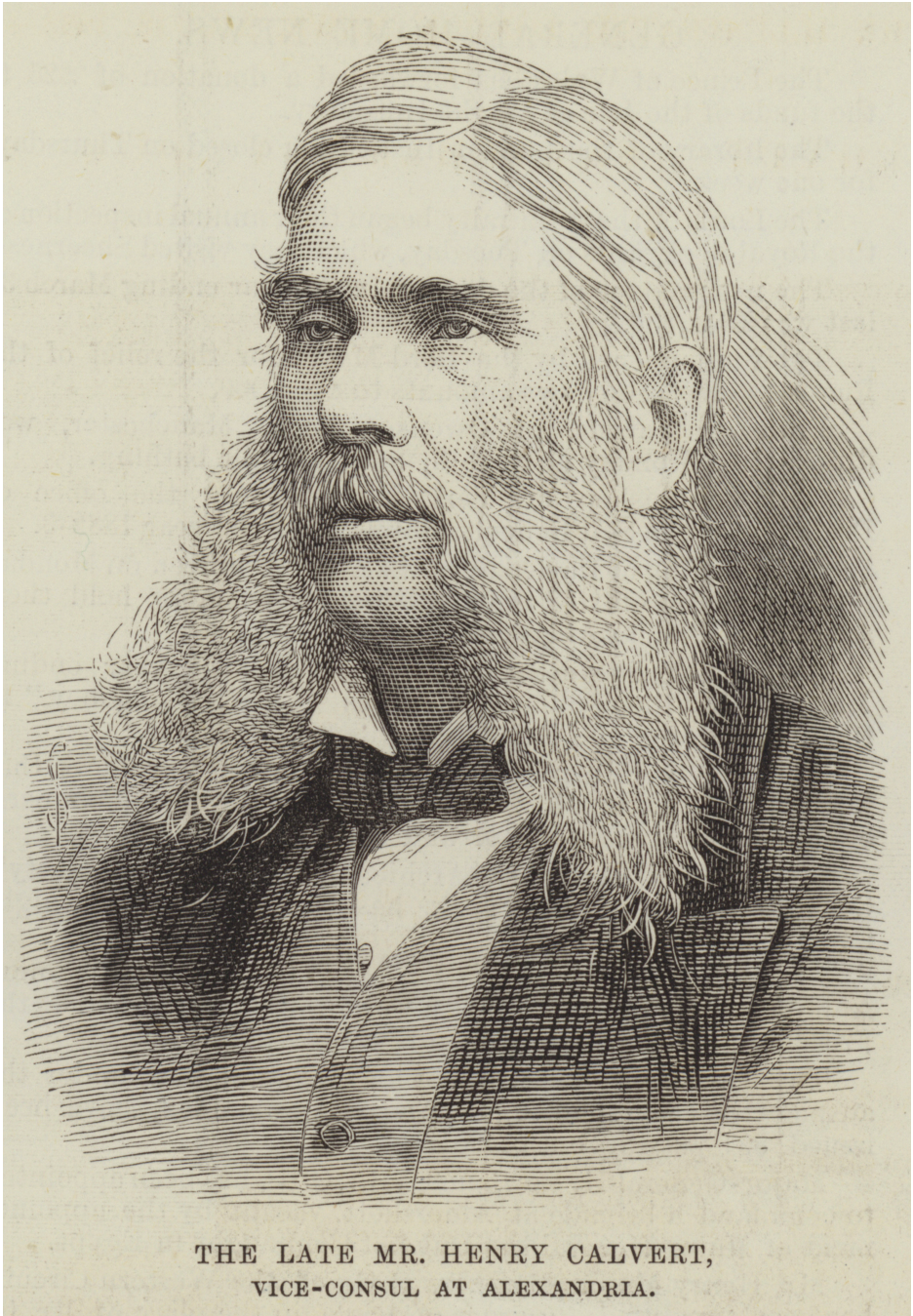
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THE LATE MR. HENRY CALVERT,
VICE-CONSUL AT ALEXANDRIA.

*The late Mr Henry Calvert, Vice-Consul at Alexandria.
Illustration for The Illustrated London News, 19 August 1882.*

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Introduction

A bundle of papers in a box-file in the Department of Greece and Rome in the British Museum lay unread, one would guess, for a very long time before 2017. I myself had noted it earlier and assumed it was a contemporary record of the amphora stamps acquired in 1848 through William Leake from the collection of J.L. Stoddart in Alexandria. Minimal consultation soon corrected my error, since the document was clearly signed by Henry H. Calvert (e.g. Plates 1 and 5), and comprises a record of 692 stamps in his collection and 255 in that of Sidney Smith Saunders,¹ as well as 17 owned by Dr. A.A. Arcadius; Stoddart does appear at the end, where there is a list of the names attested, with those also on Stoddart's stamps underlined (Plate 2) and in his note on 75. Previous mention of the collection appears confined to a passing remark in Neroutsos (1874: 447),² though the heartfelt obituary by E.T. Rogers-Bey (1882: 78), mentions 'il ramassait aussi le debris d'ancienne poterie dont il a fait une collection très curieuse et intéressante'. Calvert notes that nos 518-532 in his own collection were 'from a [or d] Wilkinson' [the letter, whether a or d, is in lower case]; Gunning 2009: 30-31 notes the frequency of Wilkinsons in the consular service; it is unlikely that this one can be identified; it would not be Sir Gardner Wilkinson whose time in Egypt did not overlap with Calvert.

Henry Hunter Calvert was a British consul in Alexandria from 1857 to 1882, at which date he and many others fled from the riots in the city. He died soon

¹ Unfortunately the sheets with the details of nos 153-223 are missing; however on the credit side there are preserved six good squeezes, of 248, 249, 251, 253-5, which in turn suggests that more were once extant. Seven numbers in the Calvert sequence have no preserved entry (71, 349, 596-600). On many pages the ink has seeped through, as in Plates 1-4, making it difficult to present fully clean but also authentic illustrations; the in-text illustrations do however include the full-stops that Calvert normally added, rather incongruously, at the end of lines.

² With reference to 75 he notes *ὁ δὲ ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ CALVERT τὸ βούκρανον ἐξέλαβε γλαῦκα, καὶ ἀνέγνωσε Ἑλλάτιδα Αἴνος*. Clearly Neroutsos knew the collection, and was aware that Henry was not the only Calvert of relevance.

after, of cholera, on the 29th July at Çannakale in the Dardanelles (*Illustrated London News*, August 19th). He would have joined his youngest brother (for he was the eldest of six, all of whom were active in the eastern Mediterranean and Levant in various roles). The youngest was Frank, who had explored and excavated in the Troad and advised Heinrich Schliemann in his plans to excavate a local site.³ From published obituaries and a few other sources (he seems not to have published himself) we learn that Henry was a respected botanist and conchologist, and that his collection, presumably including the stamps and those of Saunders, was destroyed in the mayhem of June 1882 when the British consulate at Alexandria was burnt down; he was never told of this fact before his death (Rogers-Bey 1882: 78). There are both shells and plants that bear the name *calvertii*, gathered in Eastern Turkey when he was consul in Erzerum (Allen 1999: 54). Sidney Smith Saunders, who was rather an entomologist, and prolific publisher, was a fellow consul in Alexandria between 1859 and 1864; it must be likely that Calvert wrote this whole catalogue around that time or soon after, though supporting evidence is lacking. Paper, ink and hand suggest two different periods of composition; nos 1-600 and the index are on quarto paper while 600 to the end and the other collections are on foolscap, and the names there are not in the index. The fact that there is no mention of Neroutsos' publication in 1874 of the Alexandrian collection of Ioannis Demetrios strongly points to completion before then. Identifying Dr Arcadius is not easy.

It is easy to envisage that the manuscript list reached the British Museum via the frequent contacts between Charles Newton and the Calverts, though it had been an up-and-down relationship, especially with Frank, after the British Museum (twice) declined to support excavation at Hissarlik.

The text consists in large part of careful drawings of individual stamps, though where the piece is of a common type it is merely listed (most of nos 652-692 and all but 42 (noted as 'new stamps') of the Saunders collection and 5 of that of Arcadius; comment on some relevant pages indicates that in these sections he only drew 'new stamps' (Plates 3 and 4). One is reminded of Petrie's reluctance, recorded in his diary, to accept from the locals at Naukratis 'common' stamps (no doubt for baksheesh). Notes on clay, handle type, wear and character of lettering are frequent but not ubiquitous; most of them are transcribed in the catalogue, though I omit most descriptions of clay, which are largely just of the colour, not normally a good guide.

³ Frank Calvert explained to Schliemann that his attention was drawn from the excavations at Troy that year because he was caring for his dying brother (Allen 1999: 211).