

STAMP POSTAGE.

First came into use in 1653, when Paris set the Fashion.

Though the use of postage stamps dates back 250 years, only a few collectors can show specimens made earlier than the present century. The custom of attaching postage stamps to letters did not become general until after 1840, and no one tried to collect the few varieties in existence before that. Some of them now would have a value thousands of times greater than their original selling price.

What probably were the first postage stamps were brought into use by the first postal collection and delivery system, which was introduced in Paris in 1653. In that year King Louis XIV. granted a privilege to a municipal dignitary, M. de Valayer, to establish letter boxes in various sections of Paris, he to collect the letters deposited therein and to charge a given fee for their delivery. The deal applied to local letters only. All mail for the outer world had to be handled in the primitive way then existing.

Valayer put up a series of boxes and organized a force of collectors and messengers in short order. But right at the start he encountered a difficulty which threatened to land him in bankruptcy. He had made no provision for the advance payment of the fees for his service, and soon found that most of the recipients of the letters refused to pay for them. He was in a serious quandary, and for a time discontinued the service. He could not afford to station a man at each letter-box to collect the tolls, and no solution to his problem came to him. Finally one day when he was discussing his hard luck in the garden of the royal court he announced his determination to give up the privilege. The Countess de Longueville had been interested in the conversation, and, with that vehemence that always distinguished her noble family, she protested against the amateur post-master's decision.

"No, no, my dear Chevalier," she said, "you must not think of abandoning so important an innovation. The service will soon become indispensable to all who cannot for one reason or another get about to communicate with others in person. Consider the lame and the sick, think of those who are detained in cloisters and convents and places for punishment, and more particularly have some regard for the lords and ladies of the court, who are on their feet all day in the service of the Crown, but have no opportunity to