

business, there are restaurants in Paris who sell you packets of tickets for dinners. Instead of paying for your board for the month (and paying for nothing whenever you are asked out to dinner), you keep the tickets in your pocket book, and, whenever you want to dine, you present one; exactly as, when you want to send a letter, you stick upon it the proper stamp, and put it into the letter-box. The restaurant's ticket is a dinner stamp; it prepays the butcher, the cook, the wine-merchant, the rent of the dining room, and the use of the dinner things, all through the agency of the head of the establishment who is always there to supply the meal contracted for whenever called upon to do so. Subscription to the opera is something of the same kind. All I say is, that we may carry the stamp system further, applying it to medical attendance."

"We will ask the Doctor what he has to say to it. Meanwhile, I begin to think that your time and money may not have been spent on mere unmeaning bits of paper. To convince me thoroughly, can you stand an examination in the contents of your own stamp-book?"

"I believe so, uncle. Please begin wherever you like."

"How does the native Hanoverian spell the name of his country?"

"With two *n*'s; *H, a, double n.*"

"What does *S, v, e, r, i, g, e* mean?"

"*Sverige* is Sweden."

"What is a *Freimarke*?"

"A Swedish *Freimarke*, an Austrian *Post-stemple*, a Hanoverian *Bestell-geld-frei*, a Dutch *Post-zegel*, a French *Timbre-post*, an Italian *Francobollo*, a Hamburg or Lubeck *Postmarke*, are all and equally postage stamps."

"What is the shape of a Cape of Good Hope stamp?"

"Triangular."

"What are the stamps with a crowned lion holding a shield, marked nine crazie and six crazie?"

"Ah, those are Tuscan, beginning to be rare and valuable. A collector sets a value on a postage stamp in inverse proportion to the stability and prosperity of the state by which it is issued. Those of the overthrown Italian Duchies, Tuscany, Parma, and Modena, never were numerous, are now scarce, and will soon be priceless."

"What are—I can't make them out myself—those very pretty stamps, with oval medallions, green, red and blue, in the midst of drapery of a different color?"

"Those are Russian, for thirty, twenty and ten copecks each. I cannot read the legend or inscription, because I have not yet been able to set myself up with a Russian alphabet, and a grammar and dictionary to follow."

"Your aunt and myself will manage that between us. Let us now go and see whether she has finished her letter."

"You have been a long while upstairs," observed Emma, as we entered, as she handed me her letter to read.

"Harry has been showing me his correspondence. You may give him the envelope, or he will content himself with the stamp."

I then described to Emma what I had just seen. She was astonished. When I told her of the interesting conversation I had had with Harry, she