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IS PHILATELY INSTRUCTIVE?

ADAPTED FROM AN ARTICLE IN AN OLD MAGAZINE.

(Concluded from last month.)

"THAT is easily done. You know, uncle, there are two sorts of collections of stamps, the maculate and the immaculate. Maculate stamps, or such as have passed through the post, are marked, to prevent their being used again. I do not claim any value for those, because you, perhaps, will not admit that they have any value.

I nodded my perfect assent to this.

"And yet I have a Neapolitan stamp—here it is—of the late king Bomba, which I would not part with for five shillings. Besides, as each country has different postage stamps, so has each a different mode of defacing them. Just look, uncle. England does it by black bars, Hesse Darmstadt by concentric circles, France by a number of little black spots. Now, as it is possible that the rarity of certain discontinued stamps will tempt forgers to imitate them, if they commit any error in the mode of defacement, they will be caught most assuredly. Therefore, an authentic postmark on a stamp confirms its genuineness and increases its worth."

"Which I ignore."

"I must tell you a true story, which I heard a short time ago. A maid-servant, who made use of a postage stamp for the first time in her life, had noticed that all the letters she took in for her master were dotted with black over the stamp, like this head of the Republic. She supposed it was done to make the stamps stick better, and imitated it as well as she could with a pen. At the post office, it was at first suspected that some one had used an old stamp, to cheat the government. Inquiries were made, and learned experts set to work, who proved the girl's innocence of intentional wrong. She got off with an admonition, lucky enough to escape further trouble."

"Is it possible she could have been so stupid?"

"There are more stupid things done than that. Among the curiosities found in letter-boxes are unstamped letters in considerable quantities, and mingled with them, though not exactly in the same proportion, single loose postage stamps. There are people ignorant enough, after they have written and directed their letter, to buy a stamp at the office, and then, instead of sticking it on the letter, to throw it into the box at the same time with the letter, supposing that to be the mode of prepayment. The clerks do the best they can to distribute justice in the shape of stamps, amongst the