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THE STAMPS OF GREECE.

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In 1865 a printing of the 1 lepton was made in black-brown of at least two shades. It is not very rare, but can by no means be called a common stamp. As it is the darkest of all the 1 lepton on cream-colored paper, it is very easy to identify.

There are a good many printings of the 2 lepta, although not as many as of the 1 lepton, but it would be a hopeless task to describe them in detail. They are generally in different shades of yellow-ochre. One printing in ochre-brown is very rough; the color looks as if it had been laid on in a paste. The date of issue of this stamp is 1864.

There was at least one printing of the 5 lepta, with the narrow figure "5," made after 1862. It is much rougher than the first Athens print, rather darker in shade, and is equally rare. All subsequent printings of the 5 lepta have on the back a "5" of a new type: the body of the figure is now circular instead of being an upright oval as before. The first printing of these was made in 1863. There is not much difference in the printings of the 5 lepta after this; I cannot distinguish more than three, one of which is a thick, blurred impression like the 2 lepta described above, but I do not know its date of issue.

We have seen that the first Athens-printed 10 lepta was in dull orange, on pale blue paper; but in later printings, as the plates wore, the colors employed were more brilliant, until we get to one printing in an almost identical color to that of the 1861 issue. The tint of the paper varies very much, ranging from pale greenish-blue to deep blue, and the numerous combinations of color and paper form a bewildering number of varieties. I divide my collection first into two classes of paper—pale and deep blue—and then graduate the colors of the stamps themselves. In this way I have succeeded in finding nine different printings, besides that of 1862, only two of which are at all common.

There is also a printing on green paper, which must have been made about 1872, as we find it recorded in the *Philatelist* of May of that year.

The bright, deep orange-red stamp is on grey-blue paper, and is very heavily, but not badly, printed. The stamps on deep blue paper are, as a rule, very carefully printed. One impression is all in patches—"impression empâtée"—as in the 2 and 5 lepta. It is a very difficult task to make up a set of all these printings unused; nearly all the unused ones usually met with are of one printing—a dark shade of orange on greenish-blue paper. I have very few pairs of any in my collection. Used specimens of all are common, and the best way to study these stamps is to make up a used set, as a guide to the knowledge of what exists and may be looked out for.

The 20 lepta in all its printings is just as difficult to collect as the 10 lepta; but there are fewer varieties, and the paper is more uniform, being generally a chalky-blue as in 1861 and 1862. I make out about five printings on this paper. Besides this there is a grey-blue paper, identical with that on which the deep orange-red 10 lepta is printed. The 20 lepta on this paper is in a very deep shade of dark dull blue. The same value is also found on pale sea-green paper, and is a rare stamp used, while unused it is a great rarity, and I look upon my solitary specimen as one of the gems of my collection. The green color of the paper is quite decided, but sometimes it is very pale, and it is always more marked on the back than on the face of the stamp. This paper is identical with that of the French 20 centimes issued in 1855, and is recorded in the *Philatelist* of May, 1872.

There is a printing of the 20 lepta in very pale blue, on grey-blue paper, that has long been a puzzle to collectors. It is usually called "the Paris-printed 20 lepta with figures on the back," but that it was printed in Paris I do not for a moment believe. M. Moens catalogues it by itself, and calls it "*Impression d'Athènes exceptionnelle—ment plus soignée*," and gives the date as April (2), 1870. I must here respectfully differ from this great philatelic writer. So far from the impression being "*exceptionnellement soignée*," the plate shows every sign of deterioration, especially in the spandrels, which always have white patches in them where the design is worn away; and as to its having been printed in any month of 1870, I have here before me the record of its existence being known to a writer in the *Stamp Collector's Magazine* of January, 1866. I think it very likely this writer is right, and that "the die in its original state was printed from for some time after its arrival at Athens." Some of the lines of shading on the neck and cheek are dotted just as in the Paris-printed stamp; but in some of my specimens the lines are drawn right through, which leads me to the belief that certain stamps on the plate were touched up,

although the spandrels were not so treated, and show the same signs of wear. It is a fairly common stamp used, but very rare indeed unused. I have a specimen, and have seen three others. In my collection there is likewise a proof of it in black.

The printings of the 40 lepta between 1862 and 1876 form one of the most interesting features in a collection of Greek stamps. The shades are very numerous, and on more than one occasion the colors were changed, but I think they afterwards reverted to the original violet. Both the issue of 1861 and that of 1862 were printed in bright violet on greenish-blue paper. After 1862 the violet color used became gradually deeper in shade, with more red in it, until at last it may be described as red-violet. The plates during this period show great signs of wear, and the printing is very carelessly done. The paper also deepens considerably in shade. One printing is in very deep dull violet, on deep blue paper, and the sheets were gummed with a composition of a greasy nature that soaked into the paper, and made it semi-transparent. In the latest printings of all the color goes back to a very dull violet, the paper still remaining a deep blue. In all I can distinguish about ten different printings of the 40 lepta, violet on blue. To these must be added a printing in very pale lilac, on green paper, which I presume is the variety chronicled by the *Philatelist* of January, 1872.

Next in order come a class of colors very difficult to describe, which M. Moens catalogues as "*bistre-violet*" and "*bistre-pale*," as they are nondescript or neutral tints. They are all wretchedly printed on the deep blue paper, and often gummed with the greasy gum already mentioned. I think they were originally intended to be lilac or violet, but that the colors were badly mixed, and rapidly deteriorated after printing. I believe them to be very late printings, and to have remained in use long after 1876. I make out three of them, all of which are very rare unused. I put them in my collection immediately after the true violets and red-violets, to which I consider them allied; but the stamps I am now about to describe certainly preceded them in point of date.

From postmarked specimens I infer it must have been from 1865 to 1868 that a series of printings of the 40 lepta were made in shades of claret—*le de vin* of M. Moens. These stamps were generally printed on blue paper of a much paler shade than the violets, and the colors range from bright and deep to pale and dull. They are also on the deep blue paper, but this printing is very rare. Of these *le de vin* stamps I have seven printings.

In 1872 the 40 lepta was printed in "*solferino*," a term to which I suppose I must submit, since that is what M. Moens calls it, and it is also so described when recorded in the *Philatelist* of May, 1872. In its origin, I state it is a bright rosy-lake, but is liable to deteriorate into all sorts of dull shades down to dirty orange-red. It is printed on pale sea-green paper, and has a peculiarity in the figures on the back, which are not of the same color as the stamp, but in *le de vin*. The sheets probably had the numbers printed on them when they were prepared for the *le de vin* stamp which preceded it. Used specimens are usually in the dirty orange-red tints, but even then are not all common. In the original color they are very rare, and the only unused specimen I have ever seen is in my own collection.

There do not appear to have been many printings of the 50 lepta, or at least they are not distinguishable from each other. The first Athens printing of 1862 was in rose; later on the color became carmine, and of this there is an *impression empâtée*, as in the other values. The paper remains the same throughout, being cream-colored, and the surface tinted with the color of the stamp. I cannot make out more than four distinct printings of this value.

Before going on to describe the issue of 1876, I had better say a few words on the various errors found in the numbers on the backs of the stamp. Some of these are common, others again are very scarce. It would take up too much space to give a complete list of them, but I will mention some of the more important ones.

There is a 20 lepta with "50" on the back, which was seen at a very early date (1863), and is probably of the first Athens printing; there is also a 40 lepta, violet on blue, with 20 on the back, which same error exists with the number corrected by a "4," being surcharged over the "2." Several values exist with the second figure of the value omitted, and there is another class in which it is the first figure that is absent. Inverted and reversed figures form another group, and several values are known with figures twice. I do not look upon these errors as of much importance to a collection, and they are always expensive to buy, as the dealers have been debauched by the hunters of "curiosities for exportation."

(To be continued.)