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THE STAMPS OF GREECE.

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DO not propose in this article to give anything of the nature of a reference list of Greek stamps, nor even to attempt to solve the problems involved in the question of the dates of issue of the many varieties of color, paper, and printing of the stamps of the first type, but only to give some idea of the order in which they appeared, and the groups into which they may be separated. Unfortunately, no English catalogue exists that gives any idea of what a good collection of Greek stamps should contain, and the country does not seem to have attracted the attention of philatelists to the extent that it undoubtedly deserves. I have myself collected the stamps for the past five years, and have missed nothing that I could possibly obtain in the way of variety of shade, so that now my collection is fairly representative, and it is very seldom that I find anything to add to it. Perhaps the following description of its contents, and how they are arranged, may be of use to specialists in the same country, or may induce other collectors to take it up on a generous scale. There is nothing in the task that need daunt them. Their natural enemies, the dealers, are still really quite modest in their prices for Greek stamps; so it cannot be said to be an expensive country either for unused or used specimens; indeed, a sum of money which would go a very small way towards the collection of any British colony will be quite sufficient to gather together a lot of Greek stamps, of which any collector, no matter how far advanced, may feel justly proud. But although the outlay of money need not be large, the collector will find that, to arrive at satisfactory results, his time, attention and patience must be taxed to their utmost extent, and that he need not fear that the country will not afford him what we may call a good run for his money. It is essentially one that should be collected *unused*; and although up to now no one need despair of completing such a collection, year by year it is getting more difficult to do so, and already fine pairs or blocks, unused, with gum, are very hard to get, even of varieties of which single copies are plentiful enough.

A collection may be divided broadly into the following groups: 1. The set printed in Paris in 1861, with which may be joined the second printing of the 2 lepta, which was printed in the same manner, and from the same plates, and which usually passes as a variety of shade of the Paris-printed 2 lepta. 2. The set printed in Athens 1862, which contains only one variety of shade of each value. 3. All the subsequent printings of the same set of values, which were made at Athens from time to time from 1862, until a radical change of paper took place in 1876. This group presents an infinite variety of shades on all sorts of differently tinted paper, and includes two notable changes of plates, and several changes in the color of the 40 lepta. 4. We include all the stamps issued from the introduction of the new paper in January, 1867, up to October, 1878, when the system of printing numbers on the backs of the stamps was

finally abandoned. 5. The issues without numbers, which were current until the introduction of the stamps of a new design in April, 1886.

The earliest reference to Greek stamps I can find in any of the old journals is in the *Stamp Collector's Magazine* of August, 1863, where the editor in reply to a correspondent says, "We introduce two sets of Greeks into our own album. In addition to the numbers impressed upon the backs, except in the 1 l. and 2 l., the later printed stamps are darker in appearance, there being much more shading about the face, giving Mercury what Mercury never had—a whisker." At the time when this was written there could not have been more than two Athens printings made, and possibly only one of some of the values, so the writer is fairly up to date. It will be observed that he does not mention the fact of the earlier stamps having been printed in Paris, which does not seem to have been generally known to philatelists until about two years later, as "Fentonia," writing in the same journal in November, 1865, says, "The unwhiskered Mercuries have lately received the epithet of 'Paris-printed.'" It is now accepted on all hands that this earliest set *was* printed in Paris, and that the date of issue was the early part of October, 1861.

The set consists of seven values, namely, the 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 40 and 80 lepta, one of these only, the 10 lepta, having the figures of value printed on the back of the stamp. The absence of figures on the back of the 5, 20, 40 and 80 lepta of the Paris print, make it quite impossible to confound them with even the best printed of those of the same values of the Athens print, and the size of the figures on the back of the 10 lepta sufficiently distinguishes it from all its numerous successors. There is almost identity of design between these stamps and those of France, of both the Republic and Empire, the head of Mercury, or more properly (since we are speaking of Greek stamps) Hermes, wearing the *petasus* or winged cap, being substituted for that of Liberty or the Emperor, but the Greek stamps are far the more finely executed of the two, and they differ in the key-pattern at the sides, which is of bolder design, larger and single-lined, whereas in the French stamps it is somewhat feeble and in part double-lined.

The cheek of Mercury (to call him by his more familiar name) is shaded with fine lines and dots, which are more pronounced in some values than in others, and they vary a little as the printing is light or heavy; but some at least of the lines of shading are always represented by a line of dots, and in the other cases they show a distinct tapering towards the ends, finishing off in a very fine point, the whole effect being to give the cheek a rounded appearance without in the least suggesting the idea of a whisker.

In the 1 lepton there is a greater variation to be found in this shading than in any other value, as it ranges from the faintest shadow, in some specimens, to well-marked lines and dots in others. There is no stamp in this country that seems to give collectors so much trouble as this 1 lepton of the Paris print, as in nine collections out of ten its place is filled by a more or less finely printed specimen of the Athens make. There should really be no