

HERMES

BY A. LLOYD JONES.

On turning over the pages of our beloved stamp albums, when we come to Greece we notice that many of the Grecian stamps have a picture of a head covered with head gear ornamented with wings. The fact that there are wings on the hat naturally leads one to suppose that it is a female head. But the catalogue gives it as the head of Mercury. This however is not exactly correct for as it is a Greek stamp, the Greek name should be given, which is Hermes.

Hermes, or as better known by the Roman name of Mercury, was the son of the chief divinity Jupiter and of the eldest and fairest of the seven mountain goddesses, Maia. Mercury is one of the twelve divinities of Olympus and is one of these that have planets named after them. In art Mercury is represented as a lad wearing a winged cap and winged sandals and bearing in his hand a rod entwined with two serpents called the caduceus.

The name Hermes really means the morning breeze and so it is thought that Mercury represents the wind. Because when the wind blows things are taken away, Mercury is thought of as the god of thieves. On account of this his picture in a stamp album would be most appropriate if every one thought as some do of stamp collectors.

Mercury presided over barter, trade, and all commercial dealings. His very name connected with Mercator, mercantile, etc. shows that he is god of merchandise and patron of merchants. All the usages and terminology of trade and all the religious ceremonies connected from it were borrowed by the Romans from the Greeks. Doubtless merchants practiced their religious ceremonies from the first but their god Mercurius was not officially recognized by the state till four hundred and ninety-five years before Christ. The odes of May was chosen as the feast of Mercury, obviously because Maia was his mother.

Mercury also is the god of eloquence, invention, wrestling and other gymnastic exercises, everything in short which requires skill and dexterity. Mercury is said to have invented the lyre. He found one day the shell of a tortoise with some strings of the inwards stretched across it and at once began to play on it and thus formed the first lyre. Then he kindled fire by the friction of wood, and thus gave to the world the warmth of the cheerful flame.

Then followed the contest between him and Phoebus Apollo re-

specting the stolen herd, the trial of the cause in the court of Zeus, the placation of Apollo's temper by the device of music, the interchange of the lyre of Hermes for the Caduceus of Phoebus, and to the treaty between the two deities, one of the most elaborate, interesting and witty myths of the Greeks.

Also Mercury was the interpreter and messenger of the gods, and it is said, the inventor of letters. This last explains why his picture, in preference to that of any other god, adorns the Grecian stamps.

AN ODDITY

BY J. SYDNEY DALTON.

The collector of oddities has of late had many varieties to add to his collection which he did not have before, for many errors have been made in the printing of our, not a few, new issues which have appeared since 1897—for from this date up to the present most countries have had their share in issuing news stamps, especially American countries—for the good of my fellow collectors, in general, I am not going to add another "new discovery." I am going to deal with an error that was made in the year 1864 in one of the Canadian Revenues, viz. -the 7c. variety of the first issue of Bill stamps. This stamp is by no means a common one and not many collectors can boast of having a specimen in their albums.

There is a general cry out by many stamp cranks as soon as a new oddity is discovered, as if it was done on purpose. They immediately start running down the country for which it was issued. But, thank goodness, we are not all like the above; we are not "keen" on errors, but they do appear now and again so we have got to hear it or not for there they are in spite of us.

But let us return to our subject. The above stamps were printed by the American Bank Note Co., of New York. The engraver made a very bad mistake in his work by spelling "seven" "sfven"—probably you think he couldn't spell it. I don't know. The number of stamps printed from this engraving is not known but it could not have been very many for it must soon have been noticed. However, it doesn't matter if there were twenty or 20,000 printed—you may be sure it was no where near the latter number—it was corrected and some of the stamps show that it was not much better. Some one fixed up the plate, I would imagine his eyesight was very bad for some of the copies of this stamp have the lower stroke added to the "F" to make it "E"

and this stroke is too far up and too much to the left—it is quite noticeable. This variety is even more rare than the "sfven" copies, and it is very rarely met with. It is not, however, catalogued. Canadian revenues have not reached the minor variety stage but no doubt as soon as more is known concerning it it will be listed. Thank goodness, though, it is not a variety that will have to be examined through a magnifying glass to be discovered.

Canadian revenues are very young yet. Some catalogues do not even give the perforations of the bill stamps and none of them catalogue any differences or varieties of them, for they are not known. The bills are perforated 12. If any philatelist finds one perforated differently he will add another specimen to our now too long list of "minor varieties."

In the early years of Canadian revenues if a person was to apply to the Minister of Inland Revenue they could have, free of charge, one complete set of every revenue issued in Canada. I have exaggerated somewhat. I say if a person was to apply; I should say, he could get a set if he knew the Minister or through someone who did. However they could be obtained without much trouble. The Minister, however, saw that money could be made out of them; he therefore charged \$10.00 for the complete set. There was a large amount made in this way too. But at last it was seen that they were too valuable to sell and it was stopped altogether and to-day they can not be bought from the Government. Of course the Minister "makes a break" once in a while and "favors a friend" with a set but not often.

Of course the "oddy" that we have described above is not or was not included in these sets, nor any other variety.

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