

thankless one. All that collectors and dealers talk about when the new catalogs come out are their petty squabbles concerning pricing and listing. Only few give credit to the fact that the general catalogs are the life blood of our hobby. Without them, stamp collecting on a higher scale than swapping stamps item for item — as our philatelic forefathers did in the early days of collecting — would dry up and would become the hobby of a few persons collecting in an

EUROPEAN CLASSICS

XVI. GREECE

The Kingdom of *Greece* — in Greek called *Hellas* — is one of the youngest creations among the independent countries of the classic stamp period of Europe, as it became independent as late as 1827. It covered the southernmost part of the Balkan peninsula, extending into the Mediterranean Sea, bordering on the north on the Turkish Empire, its shores washed by the Ionian Sea to the west and by the Aegean Sea to the east. The country's coast line is made up in a rather bizarre way of small peninsulas and bays. The largest part of the country was the Peloponnesus peninsula, connected with the mainland only by the narrow isthmus of Corinth. A number of islands in the Aegean Sea also belonged to Greece, mainly the Cyclades and the Northern Sporades. The total area was 15,525 square miles, with a population only slightly in excess of a million in 1863. The only addition to this territory during the classic stamp period were the Ionian Islands, on the west coast of the country, with the main islands Corfu, Levkas, Cephalonia, Ithaka, Cythera, Paxo and Zante, which had been a British protectorate; they were ceded to Greece in 1863 and were incorporated in 1864. This brought the area of Greece to 16,275 square miles, with a population of 1,290,000 in 1864. The capital of Greece since 1833 is Athens (*Athenai*, in Greek), on the Greek mainland, which had less than 5,000 inhabitants in 1834 when the seat of the government was transferred there from Nauplia. Its population increased rapidly and was 44,500 in 1870.

Greek *history* is very ancient, going back to almost 4,000 B. C.; Greece is definitely one of the cradles of civilization. Its Golden Age was in the fifth century B. C., when it dominated the Mediterranean area and parts

insecure way as was done in the stone age of philately, a hundred years ago. No one of sound mind, only a few crackpots, favor such a backward movement for philately. We should all manifest our appreciation to publishers and editors of general catalogs, so that they continue to provide us with new editions regularly year by year and in this way give our hobby the basic guidance without which it could not flourish and progress.

of the ancient world far beyond that inland sea. The decline of the Greek Empire started in the fourth century B. C.; it disappeared through Roman conquest in the second century B. C. After having been part of the Roman Empire until its dissolution and then changing hands frequently, it was eventually overrun by the Turks in the 14th century and became part of the Turkish Empire in the 15th century, only small parts remaining in the possession of the Republic of Venice. In the frequent wars between the Turks and Venetians, parts of Greece often changed hands, until after the Napoleonic Wars Turkish rule was established over the entire country. But revolutionary movements soon started to free Greece from the Turkish yoke. These revolutions were successful only in 1827, after Great Britain, France and Russia had supported the revolutionaries. In 1828, a former Russian Minister, Count John Capo d'Istria, was elected president of the Greek Republic, but in 1829 Greece was scheduled to become an independent monarchy. Capo d'Istria was assassinated in 1831 and, after a short period of anarchy, Greece was put under the protection of Great Britain, France and Russia. Prince Otto of Bavaria was made king under the name of Othon, but his despotic rule was unpopular and led to a revolt in 1843, which forced him to accept a constitution. But in 1862, another revolt broke out and King Othon was deposed. In 1863, Prince Wilhelm Georg of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg was elected "King of the Hellenes" and ruled as George I until long after the end of the classic stamp period. He received from England, whose protégé he was, the Ionian Islands, which were taken over by Greece in 1864. In the same year, a new and highly democratic constitution came into force.

The *Postal History* of Greece is as young as its independence. There was no governmental postal service for the population during the Turkish rule, only for government agencies. The merchants had to make their own arrangements for the forwarding of mail, especially with the captains of ships which passed between and through the many harbors of the country. But already during the revolution, the first efforts were made to establish a regular postal service and in 1828 a decree which came into force in 1829 created a general postal administration with five main post offices, to which a sixth was added soon thereafter. By 1834, 43 post offices were in existence. In the same year the first post offices abroad were established, but they were only for the exchange of mail and originally did not accept mail from the public. In 1834 and 1835, contracts with various shipping lines, especially the Austrian Lloyd, were made for the transportation of mail. The first general postal regulations were established in 1836; they were revised in 1855 and then in 1861, when postage stamps were introduced. The Greek postal administration followed in its organization mainly the example of the French postal service; the stamps and postmarks which were in use until the end of the classic stamp period show this fact quite clearly. The seat of the postal administration was Athens, with several main post offices, to which the smaller post offices were assigned. When postage stamps were introduced in 1861, there were 85 post offices functioning in Greece. When the Ionian Islands were incorporated in 1864, seven post offices (Corfu, Paxo, Santa Maura, Ithaka, Argostolion, Zante and Cythera) were established there. In 1875, there were about 140 post offices in Greece proper. Aside from the regular post offices there existed a rather large number of auxiliary postal agencies, which were conducted by the various municipalities, serving the population of the small towns and villages. Greece was a founding member of the Universal Postal Union and its regulations came into force there on July 1, 1875.

Of the 13 *post offices abroad* ten were located in the Turkish Empire and three in Romania. The first post office which accepted mail from the public was installed at Salonica in 1838; Constantinople followed in 1849, Arta and Janina in 1852, Prevesa in

1853, Alexandria, Smyrna, Bucarest and Ibraila (the last two in Romania) in 1857, Galatz (in Romania) in 1859, Larissa in 1860, Volo and Sulina late in 1861. The three post offices in Romania were closed in 1869, while the others — with an interruption during the Crimean War, from 1854 to the end of 1855 (Constantinople), to 1857 (Salonica and Smyrna) and even to 1861 (Arta, Janina and Prevesa) — remained open during the entire classic stamp period.

On June 1, 1857, the postal administration started to number all post offices. This numbering was not done alphabetically as in most other countries but by postal routes and regions. The numbers from 1 to 38 were assigned to the post offices in the Peloponnesus, 39 to 55 to those on the mainland and 56 to 85 on the islands. Nos. 86 to 94 were kept in reserve and Nos. 95 to 105 were given to the post offices abroad in operation at that time. In the following years, after using up the reserve numbers, new post offices received the numbers from 106 up in order of their opening, regardless of location. The highest number assigned during the classic stamp period was 152. The numbering of post offices stopped in 1892, when the number 272 was reached.

Greece has as *currency* the drachma, divided into 100 lepta. — The metric system was used for *weight* and *measures*. — Greece made use of the *Julian calendar*, which was twelve days slow compared with the Gregorian calendar used in most other countries.

The Greek stamps in the first design were used until 1886, too long for being all included in the *classic stamp period*. Therefore, and for practical reasons, we will terminate the classic period for the purpose of this monograph with 1875 and deal only with the stamps issued on colored papers, stamps on cream and white papers, issued from 1875, being outside its scope.

Greece issued *Postage Stamps* on Oct. 1, 1861. No other kinds of postal stamps and no postal stationery were issued during the classic stamp period. But the regular postage stamps, without any special markings, were used during the whole period also as *Postage Due Stamps*, on letters from foreign countries only.

Type-set labels are known from as early as 1840, black on white laid paper, with the value indication "Lepta 40", which can be

found on the reverse side of unpaid letters. As far as we could ascertain, they were used by the post offices to mark letters for which postage was to be collected from the addressee but were not accountable for the amount indicated on them. Therefore they lack one of the main characteristics of a postal stamp and must be considered as labels. They are interesting postal-historical documents but are not postage due stamps.

The *postal rates* were rather simple and no changes of any importance occurred during the fifteen year classic stamp period. There were uniform rates for domestic mail, regardless of distance. Letters up to 15g paid 20 lepta, from 15g to 30g 40 lepta, from 30g to 60g 60 lepta, from 60g to 100g 80 lepta; heavier letters paid 80 lepta for each 100g. Local letters paid half the above rates, while for registered letters double rates were charged. Magazines and newspapers paid 1 lepton for the first 30g and the same amount for each additional 20g, books were charged 10 lepta for each 100g, up to the maximum weight of 1000g. Printed matter cost 4 lepta up to 10g and 2 lepta for each additional 5g, over 50g 20 lepta for each 50g. Samples paid half of the letter rates. The rates for letters to foreign countries varied greatly. Most letters, owing to a lack of postal treaties, were only franked to the Greek exit harbor or to the border, the remaining fees to be collected from the addressees.

The *use* of postage stamps was obligatory from the day of their introduction and double fees were collected from the addressee for unfranked or partly franked mail. But during the first year of use of postage stamps, until Sept. 30, 1862, for letters for which at least half of the postage was paid, only the shortage was collected without any surtax. Letters from foreign countries, including those from Greek post offices abroad, were charged only with the regular postage, without surtax. The amount to be collected from the addressee was affixed to such foreign letters by the delivery post office in regular postage stamps, which therefore in these cases obtained the status of postage due stamps.

Due to the stability of the postal rates, the same seven *denominations* which were introduced on Oct. 1, 1861, remained in use during the whole classic stamp period, without changes or additions. They were 1L, 2L,

5L, 10L, 20L, 40L and 80L. The same was the case with the *color scheme* which remained basically unchanged from 1861 to 1875. 1L was *brown*, 2L *bistre*, 5L *green*, 10L *orange*, 20L *blue*, 40L *violet* and 80L *carmine*. The numerous shades of these colors which can be found on the issued stamps are all unintentional, although some of them, especially of the 40 Lepta, are entirely different colors. But the brown, olive and salmon shades of this latter stamp were nevertheless unintentional and are the result of the use of spoiled printing inks. All classic stamps of Greece were printed on *tinted paper*, a feature copied from the contemporary stamps of France. 1L and 2L were printed on yellowish (cream) paper, 5L and 10L on greenish paper, 20L and 40L on bluish paper and 80L on rose paper.

No stamps of the classic period were *withdrawn* or *demonetized* before 1875, all printings were used up. Only in 1881 the first value, the 80L, was withdrawn and demonetized, while the other values remained valid for postage until 1900.

The *design* of the postage stamps closely resembles that of the first stamps of France, which is not surprising as the design was the work of Albert Barre of Paris, son of the engraver of the France stamps. The difference is in the center, where the Ceres head is replaced by the head of the Greek god Hermes, and in the inscriptions, which are in Greek letters. Otherwise, the two designs are exactly the same and even in the inscriptions the method of value indication is the same, with the figure of value at both sides of the currency indication. It is said that Barre used as a model a stamp of the 1853 issue of France, from which he cut out the head and the inscriptions, inserting the Hermes head and the Greek inscriptions, without figures of value.

Beginning with the later printings of 1861, the Greek stamps have a *figure of value printed on their back*, generally considered a control measure, but which probably was intended to make identification of the various values easier, especially for a population in a high degree illiterate. This seems to have been an idea of Albert Barre, but only the 10L of the Paris Prints has such numerals — 8mm. high — while all Athens Prints, except the 1L and 2L and the first printing of the 20L, have numerals on the reverse side, 6½mm. high.

The *printing material* for the classic stamps of Greece, in typography, was manufactured by the Imperial Mint of Paris, which had also done this job for the first stamps of France. Similar methods were used as described by us on page 198/199, Volume III, for the manufacture of the French plates, but there were some notable variations. The main difference lies in the fact that while plugs were used to insert the figures of value in the dies of each value of the French stamps, so that all clichés derived from these dies had the figures of value in the same position, a master die without figures of value was used for the manufacture of the clichés for the Greek stamps and these figures were engraved individually in each design of the plate, therefore actually creating 150 types of each value. The process used for the Greek stamps was to make for each value 150 copper electrotypes from the master die without figures of value, engrave individually the figures of value — quite a job, as there were 300 figures to engrave for each plate, therefore 2100 for the plates of the seven values — and then solder them together for a plate of 150 clichés, in 15 rows of 10, spaced $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2mm. One plate was made for each value and this one plate was used for all printings, from 1861 to the end of the classic stamp period and several years thereafter, until 1886. Therefore, all the frequently striking differences in the aspect of the Greek stamps are the result of different printing methods and later, of the deteriorating condition or of the varying frequency of cleanings of these plates, but are not due to new or changed plates. This is also proven by the rather numerous plate flaws, which can partly be found in the same position in the plates from the first to the last printing. There was no margin print on the issued sheets, lines or bars on sheets from later printings being accidental spacers or similar occurrences.

The plates for the numerals on the back were type-set in settings of 150(10x15), to fit the sheets of stamps. For each value, one setting was used for all printings, which is shown by the obvious wear of the figures in later printings. But replacements of single figures must have taken place, especially to eliminate errors of the original settings and new ones which crept in when defective figures were exchanged. The

setting of the 5L figures was completely renewed in 1862; the figures, which until then showed a vertical double line, from now on had only a single line. The reason for this change is unknown. Setting errors were rather numerous, the most serious ones being wrong figures, which are known such as "00" for "10", "80" for "20" and "20" for "40", the latter being corrected by a handstamped "4". Other errors, almost equally serious, are inverted figures — for 10L, 20L, 40L and 80L either both figures or one — or reversed figures, for example "02" for "20", or one figure omitted, for example, "0" for "10". In rare cases, the figure was entirely omitted. Several of these varieties can either be classified as plate varieties or printing varieties. For some of them it is not known how they occurred, especially for some inverted or omitted numerals. Minor plate varieties are spaced figures as well as the two figures not on the same line, and others.

The *printing* of the classic stamps of Greece by letter-press was first done in Paris and then in Athens. It was for a long time doubtful whether the Paris Prints were made by the Imperial Mint or by the private firm of Ernest Meyer. From several indications — mainly that the stamps were obviously printed on cylinder presses, while the Imperial Mint still used hand presses to print the French stamps — it is now taken for granted that the printing establishment of Ernest Meyer, which had modern cylinder presses, handled the first printing of the Greek stamps. The printed sheets, except the 2L, had an imprint TYPOGRAPHIE ERNEST MEYER, RUE DE VERNEUIL 22 A PARIS on the bottom margin, 8 to 13mm. below the stamps. But only sample sheets are known with this imprint and it seems that it was cut off before the sheets printed in Paris were sent to Greece. After the plates together with ink and paper were sent to Athens, all the following printings were made by the Government Mint of Athens, which used cylinder presses, probably acquired in Germany and of the same make as those used by Meyer of Paris.

The printing job done for the first Greek stamp was a very uneven one. Several factors were responsible for this, the main one being the use of different printing methods. Ernest Meyer's printing establishment was well equipped and had experienced

printers. Therefore the Paris Prints, as they are generally called, were carefully executed by the so-called "hard" printing method, which works with make-ready on the cylinder of the printing press. Applying the make-ready is a rather difficult job and good "hard" printing requires patience and skill, giving the stamps a fine appearance, thin and clearly defined lines, with almost unnoticeable embossing of the design in the paper. The Paris Prints are good examples of such "hard" printing, another one being the "fine" prints of the Austria 1867 issue. After the plates were sent to Athens, the printers there were instructed in the "hard" printing procedure, but they were unexperienced and by far could not achieve results such as the fine Paris Prints. The early Athens Prints which they produced have a rather uneven appearance, depending upon the care which was devoted to the make-ready and to the printing itself. As the make-ready varied within the same sheet, we can find rather well printed stamps — although usually considerably less well executed than the Paris Prints — side by side with badly printed ones. The intricacies of "hard" printing which requires constant work and attention, soon proved too much for the Athens printers and in the first half of 1862 they started to print the stamps by the "soft" printing method, which was obviously more familiar to them and which needs little or no make-ready at all, working with a felt covering of the cylinder. The "soft" prints are generally heavier and coarser than the "hard" prints, the lines are more or less thickened and there is usually a distinct embossing of the design in the paper, visible on the back of the stamps. "Soft" printing is a much easier printing process, but only under very favorable conditions does it produce prints which are similar to those obtained by the "hard" printing process. In the transitory period between "hard" and "soft" printing undoubtedly some experimenting was going on and stamps from such experiments are often difficult to classify as to which kind of printing they belong. The "soft" printing method was used for the Greek stamps from 1862 until after the end of the classic period, with one short intermission, in 1870, when German printers, who had come to Athens to install a new printing press, made "hard" printings of the 1L and 20L on this

press, to show its working to the Athens printers. But after the German printers left, the local printers did not bother to continue and all further stamps were again printed by the "soft" printing method.

Another factor which contributed much to the appearance of the stamps was the *cleaning* of the plates. Theoretically, the plates should be thoroughly cleaned after each day's work, but actually this was badly neglected and the plates do not appear to have received such cleaning even after each printing. This led to a growing accumulation of printing ink in recessed parts of the plates which hardened. Gradually it became so strong that it completely filled the open spaces between some lines and acted as being part of the design, resulting first in colored spots in places of the design which should have been colorless and eventually in a general filling up of the design, making lines run together and parts of the negative inscription disappear, so that the aspect of the design changed quite materially. Real thorough cleaning of the plates — with turpentine applied by brushes, to dissolve the hardened ink — probably was only made four times, namely in 1861, before the plates were sent from Paris to Athens, in 1868, in 1870 when German printers instructed the Athens printers, and in 1875. These cleanings show quite distinctly on the printed stamps, but only for a short period, as soon thereafter the negligent working methods were continued, the hardened ink accumulating in the recessed parts of the plates and influencing the printing results.

There are some constant printing varieties which can be found on several or all values of a printing, as for example a colorless contour around the head, pale spandrels, etc., which were all the results of peculiarities of the make-ready. Characteristic of some printings is also the quadrillé or lined ground of the design, a peculiarity which also can be found on contemporary issues of other countries, for example France and Austria, and which was caused by the texture of the blanket which was inserted between paper and cylinder during the printing.

Considering the little care given to the printing, the number of major *printing varieties* is small. There exist numerous double prints and prints on both sides of the Paris Prints but none of them belong

to the issued stamps and they must be considered printer's waste. Of the Athens Prints, three values, 1L, 10L and 20L, are reported in used double prints of the design; they are all rare. Otherwise only minor printing varieties, due to accidents during the printing, such as offsets, turned-over corners and similar can be found.

In some respect the same remarks as those made for the printing of the designs also are valid in respect to the *figures on the back*. The cleaning of the settings of these figures was equally neglected and as they seem to have been of the less durable type-metal, the appearance of the figures deteriorated considerably between 1861 and 1875. The slow deterioration is very helpful in the classification of the various printings, as the early ones have rather fine and clearly printed figures while the later ones show figures coarser and more defective. It is now accepted as a fact that the figures were printed before the designs because cases have been found where the embossing of the figures has influenced the printing of the design. But although there can be no doubt that this is correct for part of the printings there is no proof that it is true for all printings and there may have been one printing or another where the figures were printed after the designs. As stated when discussing the plate varieties, it is sometimes impossible to ascertain whether a specific variety of the figures is a plate or printing variety. This is true for inverted figures, which are known of the 10L Paris Print and the 5L, 10L, 20L and 80L Athens Prints as well as for the 10L Athens Print without figures. The 10L Paris Print without figures was not issued and must be considered an unfinished stamp. Stamps with double figures belong definitely to the printing varieties; they are known of all Athens Prints. The rare stamps with figures inverted on the face instead of on the back, of which 10L and 20L are known, also belong to the printing varieties. Minor varieties are incompletely printed figures or shifted (split) ones.

The *paper* used for the classic stamps of Greece varied considerably and contributed to the diversity of the stamps. The paper of the Paris Prints was of good and even quality, showing little variation and only slight shades. A quantity of such papers

was sent to Athens together with the plates and used there for the early printings. Until 1870, the paper seems to have been procured from Paris and was quite similar to the original paper with little variations. Only from 1870 a change took place in this respect, cheaper paper, obviously secured from other sources, now being used. This paper, coarser and having a more porous texture, varied also in its colors, which fact showed especially on the bluish paper, tending on one hand to lilac shades and on the other hand showing lighter or darker coloring, even to a dark blue shade. In 1872, probably to save money by employing a thinner paper, rather transparent papers came into use, showing a distinct mesh, which is not always pronounced on the 1L and 80L, but quite obvious on the other values. This transparent paper remained in use until the end of the classic stamp period, when it was replaced by a uniform cream paper for all values, similar to the paper until then used only for the 1L and 2L.

Paper of a wrong color was used on several occasions for specific values, but we cannot consider these as errors as obviously in all cases large quantities were printed and therefore such use either was an emergency measure — when paper of the right color was exhausted — or a using up of surplus paper of one color. Such stamps on paper in wrong color are the 10L on the bluish paper of 20L and 40L — also existing in a lilac shade — as well as 20L and 40L on the greenish paper of 5L and 10L. All papers varied somewhat in thickness and the Paris Prints were no exception in this respect, as the 20L of that printing can be found on very thin paper. The paper for the classic Greek stamps received in Athens a *control handstamp*, before it was given to the printers. This control handstamp which can be found only on the Athens Prints, was a small oval with Greek inscription CONTROL in black, from 1872 in a larger type with small ornaments above and below the inscription. It was placed on each sheet in the bottom left corner of the reverse side, usually showing on the sheet margin. In exceptional cases it can be found wholly or partly on the back of a stamp. On rare occasions the control mark was in another corner or on the face of a sheet, in the latter case in the top right corner.

The *inks* used for the printing were originally, as long as they came from Paris, quite uniform and no big contrasts can be found. But this is true only for the Paris Prints where only the 1L, 2L and 20L show small variations, and for the earliest Athens Prints. On the later Athens Prints, the variations are considerable for all values. The 1L, originally chocolate and red brown, runs through numerous shades, light brown to black brown, with yellowish, reddish and grayish tints. The 2L, originally bistre, shows shades of this color with yellowish, olive and brownish tints. The original green of the 5L later run through all possible shades from yellow green to emerald. The 10L, which started in orange, later went in many shades from yellow to red orange. The 20L run from light blue to dark blue, with pale, greenish, grayish and indigo shades. The 40L, which was lilac at the start, had the most sensitive color, which can be found later in all possible shades from lilac to purple and mauve, partly with rosy tints; the salmon, bistre and olive green colors of the last printings of the 40L were caused by the use of spoiled lilac ink and were not intentional changes of color. The 80L, which was carmine in the beginning, later went in many shades from rose to deep carmine.

The early Athens Prints sometimes can be found with a peculiar *yellowish cast* on the surface. This is caused by a chemical reaction between a specific gum and the paper and is therefore of minor significance.

For the *figures on the back* of the stamps generally the same ink was used as for the design. But as the figures often seem to have been printed considerably ahead of time, sometimes the printing ink had changed in the meantime and more or less obvious differences between the color of design and of figures are noticeable. So, for example, the figures on the first Athens Prints of the 80L are always vermilion while the design is printed in rose carmine, the figures on the red orange 10L printing of 1870 are always orange, etc. The greatest differences exist on the 40L, where some figures were printed in the colors caused by spoiled ink, while the design has the regular color, and vice-versa. This is true for the 40L of 1870 in salmon, with lilac figures on back, and the 40L of 1872 in lilac, with bistre figures on back.

The *gum* used for the classic stamps of Greece was of very uneven quality and color. We can find white to yellowish and brownish gum, of varying texture, thin and thick, all applied by hand with brushes. The great diversity of the gum makes it rather difficult to ascertain its genuineness and in quite a number of cases no definite opinion can be given, as there are no facts upon which such opinion can be positively based.

All Greek stamps before 1875 were issued *imperforate*. Only in few cases has private initiative provided help for the separation, by perforating stamps, as is known from Corfu and Amphissa, where probably the postmasters were responsible for the rather crude perforating partly done on stamps of the classic period long after 1875. Such privately perforated stamps can be considered as bona-fide items only on covers from the correct period, in their original state, while perforated used stamps off cover or unused stamps as well as late uses of such perforated stamps on covers are of little value and almost entirely products of later efforts to create material for collectors.

From the peculiarities of printing — design and figures —, settings of the figures on back, color, paper and gum, the specialists have established a *system of printings* in which they group all classic stamps of Greece. The first printings are, of course, the Paris Prints, the most even, fine and careful prints of them all. They are followed by the so-called "Provisional" Athens Prints, which started in November 1861 and which were obtained by the "hard" printing method. Their appearance is most uneven and, due to the application of more or less accurate make-ready, runs from fine prints, similar to the Paris Prints, to rather crude ones. The first sheets printed of the 20L had no figures on the back; this rare stamp usually shows a distinct quadrillé background. The specialists separate the "Provisional" Athens Prints into two sub-groups, carefully and less carefully printed stamps, but there is no sharp borderline between the two, inasmuch as they sometimes can be found in the same sheets, which were rather unevenly printed. The 80L of this "Provisional" printing shows the peculiarity that the figure on the back is always in different shade from the design, vermilion instead of carmine rose. The "5" on the back of the 5L is always of the first variety, with vertical

double line. Next come the Athens "soft" prints, called "Definite" Athens Prints, from May 1862 to 1868. These prints are the most common ones; they vary greatly and specialists distinguish three groups, carefully printed, less carefully printed, and badly printed stamps, but the same difficulties for exact classification exist here as explained for the previous issue. Aside from the shades, the main characteristics of these printings are the more or less strong embossing of the design in the paper as well as the figures on the back, which are finer and neater than on the following issues. The "5" on the 5 lepta is now of the second variety, with a single vertical line. The last of these printings have a blotted appearance and belong to the worst printings of the classic Greek stamps. They were followed in 1868 by printings from cleaned plates, which were a notable improvement, but now the figures on the back started to deteriorate considerably; they are coarse and badly printed. This is especially characteristic of the 80L, where the "8" is always printed less heavily than the "0". The next printing, of 1L and 20L only, was made by the "hard" printing method by experienced German printers. These printings have some similarity to the Paris Prints, but the designs appear lighter and the spandrels pale, because the condition of the plates made considerable negative make-ready necessary. After this interlude, the printing returned to the "soft" printing method. These printings after 1870 are characterized mainly by the inferior papers and inks used for them, as well as by the worn and defective appearance of the figures on the back. Two groups can be identified, one on porous paper from 1870 to 1872, and one on transparent paper, usually showing a distinct mesh, from 1872 on.

All classic stamps of Greece were issued in sheets of 150, as they were printed.

There were no *remainders* of the issues up to 1875, except for the 40L stamps of the last printings which were overprinted and used up in 1900 as provisionals. Nevertheless, neither the Paris nor the Athens Prints are rarities in unused multiples. Of the Paris Prints, a number of sheets had survived, because — as was the custom for the stamps of France — the people connected with the printing had retained a number of sample sheets as a kind of "Souvenir" which sheets

later were broken up. Most of them were without gum and, as their shades are in part slightly different, are generally considered proofs. We would classify them as unfinished stamps, because the difference in the shades was probably caused by the gum. A set of such sheets, kept by the engraver Barre in frames under glass in his office for several scores of years, and which showed the Meyer imprint, are good proof of this, as those parts of the margin paper, which were under the frame and therefore not exposed to the light, show the exact shades of the issued stamps while the other parts suffered considerable changes by the long influence of light and look quite different. Only gummed stamps of the Paris Prints today are considered by the specialists as the real thing, which must lead to many wrong conclusions, due to the difficulty in ascertaining the genuineness of the gum of these stamps. We are sure that quite a number of the prized possessions in the big Greece collections are from such unfinished and sample sheets or even from proof sheets to which a faked gum was applied. In any case, unused multiples of all values of the Paris Prints are available at a price. Of the Athens Prints, of the more common printings, unused multiples are rather easy to obtain, but of the rarer printings or varieties, they are scarce to rare and in some cases no such multiples are known. Of the rare first 20L Athens Print without figure on back not even a unused single copy is known and, therefore, also no multiples seem to exist.

Used multiples are much rarer than unused ones. This is especially true of the Paris Prints, of which used blocks are rarities and seem to be unknown of the 10L, 40L and 80L. Of the Athens Prints, some printings are not rare in used blocks, but some, of course, are and a few of them are not even known in used blocks. This is especially true of the 20L Athens Print without figure on back, of which only used singles but no pairs, strips or blocks seem to be known.

Classic stamps of Greece *on entires* are rather easy to collect, as none of them deserve a considerable premium on cover. A large percentage of stamps was used to collect postage due on letters from foreign countries and they deserve only a small additional premium when so used. But covers on which they were used in such

cases together with stamps of various countries — which paid postage to the Greek border — are eagerly sought and they fetch higher prices than they deserve considering the fact that they are rather common. The 1L stamp can be found singly only on newspaper and is scarce as such. The 2L singly could have been used only on double-weight newspapers, but we have never seen such use. There was no possibility of using a single 5L on mail and this value, as well as the majority of all 1L and 2L stamps, were used on foreign letters — for postage or postage due — to make up the often odd rates, or in multiple frankings for the usual domestic rates. The other values are available without difficulty in single or multiple frankings, as well as in combinations.

Of *emergency frankings*, only *splits* are known to have been used. They are all rare to very rare. Known are bisects of the Athens Prints 2L — with two whole 2L used for 5L additional postage — 10L, 20L and 40L.

No *Reprints* or *Re-issues* were made of the classic stamps of Greece. *Forgeries* are not very dangerous, as they are rather crude, including engraved imitations of old vintage. Much more dangerous are *fakes*, which sometimes are rather deceiving. All the rare varieties of the figures on back are made from cheap stamps — the most profitable way being erasing of the figure to simulate the rare 20L Athens Print without figure — but double and inverted figures, as well as figures on the face and wrong figures are among the fakers' favorites. A special field for fakers are also the cancellations, by transforming cheap ones into rare ones, especially the sought for numeral cancellers of post offices abroad or red and blue cancellations, etc. The 2L stamp, which is scarcer used than unused, frequently can be found with faked cancellation, in some cases applied with fraudulently used genuine but predated postmarks or numeral cancellers, the former often of much later vintage. Incidentally the 2L value of all printings is much rarer genuinely used than the catalog quotations would indicate.

The history of the Greek *postmarks* is a rather short one. As there was no postal service established under Turkish rule, there also exist no postmarks from that period. When independence was gained and a postal

service established, postmarks were introduced almost simultaneously, the first examples being known of 1833. They were very similar to the contemporary postmarks of France, being rather large double circles with the town name at top, an ornament of two crossed branches at bottom and the date — day, month and year — in the center. Late in the Forties and in the early Fifties, smaller double circles were introduced, first also with an ornament at bottom, but later with the year date shifted to the bottom, replacing the ornament. When the numbering of the post offices was introduced on June 1, 1857, a small double circle type, introduced in France in 1838, was adapted for Greece, with the town name at top, the date (day, month and year) in center and the number of the post office at bottom, within brackets.

Aside from the town postmarks, there were also special markings for paid and unpaid letters, as well as for registered letters.

The post offices abroad had the same types of postmarks as the domestic post offices but with the name of the country, TOURKIA or MOLDAVIA or VLACHIA, at bottom. In the 1857 postmarks, these country names replaced the post office numbers.

Generally, the Greek pre-stamp postmarks are black; blue and even more red postmarks are exceptions.

When stamps were introduced on Oct. 1, 1861, again following the French example *special cancellers* were introduced simultaneously. They were rather exact replicas of the contemporary French cancellers, diamonds of dots with a small figure in the center. The regulations provided, that all stamps used for postage should be cancelled with these special cancellers, while for the stamps used as postage dues the town postmarks should be used as cancellers. Actually, these regulations were either disregarded by the post offices or they were later amended, because most post offices frequently used their town postmarks as cancellers, while stamps used as postage dues were rather indiscriminately either cancelled with the numeral cancellers or the town postmarks. Nevertheless, the Paris Prints and the early Athens Prints are predominantly found cancelled with the numeral cancellers, while town cancelled

copies are in the minority. On later printings, town cancellations are in the majority and the numeral cancellers appear less and less. Especially the low values, 1L and 2L, now come almost exclusively with town cancellations, obviously also following the example of France where, for stamps on printed matter, town cancellations only were used. In 1872, the numeral cancellers were abolished, but they can be found sporadically until 1880. From then on town cancellations were used exclusively. The highest number known of numeral cancellers is 152, but not all numbers from 1 to 152 are actually known and it is supposed that several of them may not exist at all.

The *town postmarks* of the pre-stamp period — small double circles with the post office number within brackets at bottom — as far as they were not used as cancellers, were stamped alongside the stamps which were cancelled by the numeral cancellers. The same type remained in use during the entire classic stamp period. The highest post office number known on these town postmarks is 193, but the numbers from 153 on were used only after the end of the classic stamp period. The town postmarks were generally also used as arrival markings on all mail.

The auxiliary postal agencies in the small communities had special markings which were stamped on the letters, in rare cases also used as cancellers. They were small rectangles or triangles, with the Greek letters DT at top (abbreviation for the Greek name for communal post office) and a number at bottom. It seems that a separate numbering system was used for these auxiliary offices but no details are known.

The various markings for registered, paid, unpaid and insufficiently paid letters can also be found during the classic stamp period. As exceptions, they were also used to cancel stamps. Ship cancellations of foreign steamship companies are also scarce; especially those of the Austrian Lloyd can occasionally be found on the early Greek stamps. Stamps cancelled by a large double circle with the Greek arms in the center arise from fiscal use on receipts and postal documents.

The regular color of the cancellers and town postmarks was black. Blue cancellations are scarce and red ones exceptions which are known of very few post offices only.

The *post offices abroad* obtained, together

with the first postage stamps, the same type of numeral cancellers as the domestic post offices. The numbers 95 to 105 were assigned to them, to which 133 and 135 were added later. Until rather recently, it was doubtful which numbers were used by the specific post offices but the list now is definitely established as follows:

- 95. Constantinopolis (Tourkia) (also abbreviated Constantin)
- 96. Smyrna (Tourkia)
- 97. Alexandria (Tourkia)
- 98. Thessalonikh (Tourkia)
- 99. Joannina (Tourkia)
- 100. Galazion (Moldavia)
- 101. Ibraila (Vlachia)
- 102. Boukoureste (Vlachia)
- 103. Larissa (Tourkia)
- 104. Preveza (Tourkia)
- 105. Arta (Tourkia) (also Arti)
- 133. Soulina (Tourkia)
- 135. Volos (Tourkia)

The post offices abroad rather indiscriminately used either their numeral cancellers or the town postmarks to cancel the stamps.

The *literature* dealing with the stamps of Greece is rather extensive but not too much has been published in separate monographs and a large amount of information is scattered in philatelic magazines, not always readily available. The first modern and comprehensive monograph of the classic issues of Greece, written by A. G. Argyropoulos and Dr. Munk, was included in the Kohl-Handbook, where it fills 120 pages plus an 11-page supplement. It was translated into English and published as a supplement to "The Collectors Club Philatelist" of New York, in seven sections, between 1943 and 1950. The Kohl monograph inspired the 520-page monograph "Etude sur les Timbres de Grèce, Grosse Tête de Mercure", edited by T. Constantinides and published in Greek and French in 1933 by the Greek Philatelic Society; this is the standard book in the field. A booklet by R. O. Truman and E. Spink "Greece, Large Hermes Heads", is the best available help to distinguish the various printings. Concerning cancellations, "Les Oblitérations Grecques" by A. Lavenir, a booklet of 140 pages published in 1916, although in some respect outdated, is the best comprehensive study in the field. Altogether, Greek stamps are rather well studied and although all problems are not

completely solved, the diligence and perseverance of the many enthusiastic students in the field has provided the collector with a well rounded fund of information which makes it easier to collect this rather difficult field.

The *Scott Catalog*, in conformity with all other general catalogs, lists the classic stamps of Greece by printings, in this way tripling the basic 14 stamps to 42 main numbers. It would be easy to collect Greece if the general collector were allowed to collect them as one issue, disregarding the various kinds of printing and the figures on the back. In this case he would have to cope with only seven main numbers, which Scott prices unused at about \$32 and used at little over \$8, therefore easy to acquire even for the collector of very small means. It becomes somewhat expensive when the figures on the back are considered and therefore Paris Prints and Athens Prints are collected separately. This increases the catalog value for the 14 unused stamps to \$230, for used to \$115, still within the reach of the collector of modest means. Only if we consider all 42 Scott main numbers, do we come to higher figures, \$715 for unused (without the 20L Athens Print without figures, which is unknown in this condition) and almost \$800 used, in which sum the rare 20L Athens Print without figures alone amounts to \$600. This is not impossible for the collector of moderate means and many fine Greece collections have been built up by such collectors, depending upon their knowledge, which enabled them to acquire many rare stamps as sleepers. For specializing, Greece is an ideal country, not only because of the great wealth of varieties, but also on account of the availability of many low priced stamps, the lowest used stamp being cataloged at 30 cents. There are 28 more stamps listed below \$5, and 37, almost 90% of the total, below \$10. For the collector who has studied the early stamps of Greece and acquired sufficient knowledge to be adept in classifying the majority of them quickly — there will be always a small percentage of these stamps which are difficult to classify and which will puzzle even the expert — there are many opportunities in the field to build up an outstanding collection at a relatively small cost. Of course, the big items, such as

blocks and large multiples, bisects and similar rarities cannot be bought for a song and prices paid for them at auction run in the thousands of dollars. Every Greek collection of stature contains a number of items on which the experts are at odds and the owner has the doubtful pleasure that the same stamp is classified differently by different experts in the field. He will have to have his own opinion and stick to it, if he wants to be happy collecting Greek stamps. He will then be able to show a collection, which the fellow specialists will rightly admire and will envy him for one of his gems or another, while the average collector will look bewildered at the array of stamps arranged by the various printings which he cannot classify and therefore is afraid to collect himself. Greece in this way is a country which is a heaven for the indoctrinated specialist and hell for others, who have neither the time nor the ambition to cope with the intricacies of a country, which the specialists have made unpalatable for the general collector.

(Next: XVII. Hamburg)

MERRY CHRISTMAS

and a

HAPPY NEW YEAR

May the year 1957 again be
a prosperous one, with peace
on earth continued.

Publishers and Editor

MERCURY STAMP JOURNAL