

THE POSTAL EMISSIONS OF CRETE.

By WM. WARD, Author of "The Adhesive Stamps of the Levant," etc.

The first actually known stamps to be used in Crete were the "Ottoman" issues of Turkey—but I am unaware that the first issues of this design saw postal service there. At any rate the second series were used—1884 date, with varieties of shades and perforations. The whole of the 1892 series were also used in Candia, but as yet I have not seen the 1897 provisional 5 paras upon 10 paras with the Cretan obliteration. Of course the only possible means of distinguishing these stamps is by the postmark, which resembles most Turkish ones, being a large double circle enclosing the date and having the town name inserted between the double rims.

Probably the labels for printed matter also saw service in the island—the post-offices being but worked as ordinary Turkish ones.

The 1898 Provisionals.—In 1898, the aforementioned governments began to be active towards the Turks who had gradually usurped the Egyptian power awarded in 1833. By unanimous consent, Prince George of Greece was appointed Governor or High Commissioner to the whole island—a position he held until quite recently.

New officials were appointed in the stead of the Turks. The British Vice-Commissioner for the department of Candia being selected in the personage of Sir Herbert Chermiside, who was at the time, General of the British forces in Crete.

Acting in cooperation with Sir Herbert was Major Fairholme.

As I have previously shown, the mails had been under the direction of the Stamboul government—which of course were withdrawn upon the European occupation. Whilst the several powers took charge of all the external mails, no interior service had existed. The British and Austrians placed their heads together, and it was decided to institute an internal Post. Orders were sent to Athens for a couple of values of postage stamps about the end of November, 1898, but as these did not arrive by the expected time during the early part of December, it was decided to issue some sort of a stamp or mark to signify the prepaidness of a communication. Letters being tendered in numbers in Candia brought about this urgent step. After one or two consultations on this matter, it was left in the hands of Herr Berinda, the Chief of the Austrian Post Office, to provide a provisional stamp. Unaware of this course, the military authorities of the British forces about the same time provided themselves with a couple of handstamps—or rather a couple of varieties of handstamps. One a circle bearing an illustration of the Union Jack on standard, underneath which was given in white letters on a solid oblong background the name of the district. Above the flag was inscribed the amount of postage prepaid (in Turkish currency) and below the acting postmaster's or postelerk's (whichever they cared to call themselves—though more correctly they would be, officially, paymasters) initials. Besides this stamp, on the same envelope, would be marked another—also circular. This had in an outer circle the words "International occupation" and in the inner circle the two words, in two lines, "Governor" and "Monofatsi," or whatever other district this may have been used in. These stamps, themselves, were evidently prepared from wood. At any rate, whatsoever the material the letters or lines were cut out, so that when stamped the letters

appeared in white—or more correctly—colorless, upon a solid background in the color of the ink used for stamping. These curious marks will be found in a dark blue, or purple—as used extensively for rubber-stamps. Evidently the envelopes were not altogether confined to the British forces, for they will be found bearing the familiar Austrian postmark used today—i. e., "Candia—Oesterreich Post" with the date composed wholly of Arabic numerals.

Note.—A recent writer has described these early British Postal Provisionals as being the obliterations used upon the "Herakeleion" provisional issued by the Austrian Post Office. It is incorrect—the previously described handstamp was in use previous to these latter, and was not a postmark, but a surcharge to show that postage had been properly paid. The cancellation for the Austrian provisionals is described in the above description of those stamps.

In the meanwhile Herr Berinda had been making his provisional stamps. His method was by no means unique nor original. When the stamps came out, several German philatelic journals attributed his method to a wood carving—or as they called them, woodcuts. But though the matrix may have been wood, or still more likely cement, the final die was rubber. Only one was made. This was stamped on paper which had previously been ruled out into spaces large enough to accept an individual impression. I cannot say whether the paper was pre-gummed, or the adhesive placed on afterwards. The inscription on these stamps reads (in English) "Provisional—Postage Receipt—Herakeleion (Candia)—20 paras" in four lines. Similar to the military Post Paid mark, the letters are white on a solid background of violet—a colour generally used for rubber-stamps, and supplied to and used by most people, in the shape of the familiar self-inking pad.

The cancellation of these provisionals made at the Austrian Post Office, or as it really was, the Austrian Administrative Commission in Crete—also consisted of a rubber-stamp—probably made up from one of those cheap outfits, which enables one to compose any word, and to print from a small holder.

Note.—The stamp (Gibbons No. 1) described by the catalogue as belonging to the British Sphere of Administration, and which has lately been extensively advertised in several English philatelic journals as a British issue, is of course wrong. Properly, as above accounted, the stamp belongs to the Austrian Post Office.

In a number of the *S. C. F.* it is given that 3,000 of these stamps were impressed, and that in the presence of the officials, the rubber-die was destroyed on the 20th of January, 1899. The stamps of the regular type ordered from Athens were due on December 3, 1898, and the order was given that the above provisional of 20 paras would only carry a postal value until that date (Dec. 3rd). Since, however, the Greek printed stamps did not arrive on the given date, the order was withdrawn until such date as they (regular issue) would arrive, which was the beginning of January, 1899.

The Russian Officials.—Like most Russian stamps, the officials responsible for the issue of the Cretan Provisionals of 1898-9, have taken care to shroud their work in secrecy. None of these stamps, which were issued in the district of Retimo, ever came through the

forwarding depot in Candia—which was almost solely in the hands of the Austrians. These were in two values—the one metallik with an inscription in French signifying "Provisional stamp," the remainder being the district name "Retimo" and the value embodying at the same time the Russian seal of double headed eagle. The two metalliks stamp very similar, but all inscriptions in Russian.

For the army or navy officers, whichever they were, a separate design of a somewhat elaborate appearance, was provided, and which was very evidently confined to official use. As these stamps have very little appeal to the general collector, if indeed anyone outside the Czar's Dominions, I think most will agree with me that there is no great omission occurred by leaving them out of a collection of Cretan stamps provided for public, or semi-public use. Certainly, the first mentioned types are worthy of this inclusion, but since I can place no further evidence of their emission than appears in most catalogues, I am bound to pass over to the other issues of Crete.

It is a most distasteful matter to have to disagree with contemporary writers on a similar subject, but at the same time in the interests of philately one is often obliged to. The "Fork" design of these Russian Crete have been recently given as bogus issues. It would be unfair to place them as such and yet chronicle many another stamp of Crete. Confessedly they are "peculiar," and the collector who has them missing from his collection need not be ashamed of his display being incomplete.

The First Regular Issue.—As I said previously, these stamps made their appearance after a couple of disappointments to those concerned, as to their actual arrival from Greece.

Printed in sheets of a hundred, alleged by lithography, but more likely by zincotype process, some 5,000 each are said to have been issued, according to a high continental authority. There were two values, ten, and twenty paras or parales, not *parades* as was incorrectly spelt in Greek upon the stamps by error of the printers. Several minor varieties will be found, including blemishes and lines upon the face of the stamps. The 10 paras was for local use in the towns, as Candia, etc., and the 20 paras for inter-island postage. With the exception of the Russian "Officials", these stamps superseded all the civilian and military issues as far as the island authority went. For some unaccountable reason, the colors of these two stamps was changed during the year 1899.

Though these stamps are placed under the heading of the "British & Austrian Administration", they are really and properly, the first and orthodox issue of Crete. Of course, both French, Austrian, and Italian consular stamps were in concurrent use at their respective quarters in the island, but so they are even today. During the early part of 1899, through the efforts of the British, orders were placed for a proper series of postal franks, by the Greek commission, who eventually gave the execution to Messrs. Bradbury, Wilkinson of London, after an attempt to send the order to Paris, British influence in Candia and Athens being the result of the loss to the French printers.

The Second and Subsequent Issues.—The Bradbury-Wilkinson stamps no doubt lived up to the issues of this Near-Eastern Island. They were curious and original. Four values only made their

advent in a virgin state—the 1, 5, 10 and 20 lepta. As is generally known, the surcharge practically denoted a reduction upon the 25 lepta and higher values. The Turkish piastre was still current, and of course taken at its nominal value, 25 lepta; but to sell 25 lepta stamps at 1 piastre, and the lower values at the same rate would have meant a loss to the Post Office. One piastre equals nominally 25 centimes, but the market value may be anything from 17 to 20c. Hence the course adopted by the other Levant foreign Post Offices to protect the lower rates of postage (newspapers, samples, etc.) was adopted until such time as the notice of the non-use of other than Greek currency came in force—and not to any change in the Post Office arrangements.

It would be interesting to know the purpose of the surcharge being in two different colors, black and red.

I have heard it evinced that the purpose was a control of some distinction. Maybe some reader can help. Much comment was made upon the five-drachmas stamp bearing the familiar (sometimes!) reverse of the English sovereign, at the time of issue—but settled by consulting the ancient mythological authorities—a somewhat "bullish" phrase.

1901 saw the issue for postal use of three other varieties, the 20 and 50 lepta in changed colors, and the 1 lepta olive, alleged fiscal. The latter stamp is described to have only been issued provisionally twice, but the stamp has been indiscriminately used at several, or perhaps all, periods since its emission. The 20 lepta, by-the-way, I have found by personal experience, has had a higher face value than the 25l (piastre) stamp. A purchase of these cost me exactly twopence each, whereas I got twenty 25 lepta labels for 3sh 1d. This goes to show that a piastre is *not more* than twopence Sterling, as so often written. The whole of this first series were reproduced upon post cards by the Commission (*not government*—the authority being entirely consular) but few arrived to addresses in this country—being confiscated by our Post Office and destroyed according to act—at least when they were detected.

The 25 lepta received a larger variety of the surcharge "Provisional" in 1902, and a couple of years later saw the using up of quantities of the 20 lepta orange by reduction to 5 lepta.

In 1905, the Commission published a third series of values from 2 lepta to 5 drachmas—all with the exception of the 10l new illustrations of Cretan lore and fable. These issues are varietyless, and so ably described and illustrated in Gibbons, Part II, that there is little necessity to describe. The two values, 25l and 1 drachma of 1907, the couple of 1908 officials, and the set of Postage Dues of 1900 complete the stamps issued by the Crete Commission. Should anyone be unaware of the cause of the surcharged 1 drachma postage due, with a little effort, it will be perceived that the 1 lepta is of the same color as the 1 drachma, and extremely likely to be confused by a non-philatelic postal official—hence the overprint "1 Drachma."

The Permanent Government.—A reshuffle of the Near-Eastern Cards resulted in the loss of Turkish interests in both Crete, Bosnia and Bulgaria. The Liberals had long been agitating for the Grecian Regency in place of an uncertain haphazard Commission. I am unable to discover with any degree of satisfaction, whether Monsieur A. T. Zaimis or Prince George is the Viceroy, both having seemed to be withdrawn and re-instated.

The 1 and 10 lepta, and 2 drachma of the second issue, the whole of the third (excepting the 25l), and the 25l of 1907 together with a new 10 lepta in red depicting Hermes, have been surcharged "Ellas" in several styles of type, signifying Greece (territory). The whole of the 1900 10 lepta and sundry errors of inverted alphos and what not, are reputed to have been gathered and gleaned by the postal philatelists in Crete and Greece. May they do well.

At the time of writing no news is to hand, but I suppose an issue advertising the first Greek Colony for some few hundred years will in due course make its appearance—unless the example of the Ionian Islands is followed. But alas, we know too much now, for the possibility of such good fortune.

The Italian Issues.—After the F. P. O. issues, but previous to the appearance of the 1900 series of stamps for the Cretan Commission, a semi-provisional (if such a term can be used) was issued by the Italian Post Office.

Evidently our Italian friends had watched the Austrian and Russian ventures, but had taken some time to make their mind up as to the following of the set example. When they did, no doubt they were in too great a hurry to prepare a special issue, so the 25 centesimi of the last issue of Italy bearing King Humbert's head was overprinted in long characters "1 PIASTRA 1" in red. It may be interesting to note that the 1909 edition of Part II prices this stamp at 6d. From my experience of this stamp, as well as Eastern information, future catalogue editions may show a surprise.

The words "La Canca" were added to the value 1 piastra, in block capitals, and overprinted upon the 1901 Victor Emmanuel III 25c stamp in the same year. In 1906, towards the decade of that year, the whole Italian series of 1901, excepting the 20 centesimi, made their appearance with the 1901 overprint "La Canca," but minus the value. The 15 on 20c provisional of 1906, the current 5, 10 and 25, and inland 25c Express stamps have since been similarly surcharged.

I believe that an Italian Post Office also now exists at Candia.

The French Crete.—The notorious (from a woman's point of view) 25c "Droits de l'Homme" French consular office type made a concurrent appearance in Crete in 1902 with the same type for use in Egypt, Morocco, etc. It was also accompanied by the 1900 oblongs. These, in addition to the name label, were overprinted in Turkish currency 1, 2, 4, 8 and 20 piastres. The following year, 1903, saw the addition of the whole French set unsurcharged with a different currency. Well-known, there is no need to further typify.

Austrian Issues.—Sometime back in my work upon "The Adhesive Stamps Used in the Levant," I made remark that I possessed Austrian stamps overprinted with a new value in centimes and francs, only bearing Turkish postmarks, and I included them among the stamps of the Levant. Several philatelists supported my statement that these were for use in the "Levant."

Since that appeared I have found that both Austrian stamps surcharged in piastres and centimes are concurrently used in both Turkish and Cretan Post Offices. The former were used for first class matter, and the centimes were and are for printed papers or samples. This of course upon account of double currency.

It is therefore correct to allot to both Crete and Turkey the following emissions used conjointly.

Austrian Post Offices in Turkey and Crete.—Austrian stamps overprinted with new values in piastres for first class matter.

1 piastre of 1902 (No. 94) and 1904.

2 piastres of 1902 (No. 95) and 1904.

5, 10 and 20 piastres (1902)?

(The three highest values I cannot safely allot, as I have no evidence as to their actual use, but maybe some reader will have copies showing postmarks that will settle the matter.)

Austrian stamps overprinted with new values in centimes for newspapers and sample postage.

5c of 1902, 1905 and 1908 (latter with centime value in design).

10c of 1902, 1905 and 1908 (latter with centime value in design).

25c of 1902, 1905, 1908 and 1909 (latter with centime value in design).

50c of 1902, 1905 and 1908 (latter with centime value in design).

The 1, 2 and 4 francs may no doubt be used in the scheme that has recently been started by the German Post Offices in Turkey.

It has been stated by some one that the purpose of this standard currency movement in the Levant offices is to compete against the Turkish governments 20% reduction upon stamps for foreign postage. This is incorrect, as it will be seen that the change has an exactly opposite effect. A foreign P. O. stamp of 1 piastre is sold for 40 paras (under 2d)—but the Turkish 20 per center costs only 32 paras (about 1½d), whereas the franc currency maintains the standard of value—so that where a Turkish 1 piastre is sold for 15 centimes (or about), the F. P. O. stamp costs 25 centimes. The whole matter is a confused juggle. I see that the new Gibbons makes the following note: "Many of the stamps issued for use in Crete have also been sold at Austrian Post Offices in the Levant." This is the only notification in the direction of the status of these stamps, outside my own articles that has appeared in our English Press, though many people must surely be aware of the matter. If such information is to be kept secret how are we to successfully catalogue, list or enrol the world's stamps?

Now that the control of Crete has been assumed by the Hellenes' government, it is more than likely that the foreign Post Offices may disappear. In a used condition these latter are by no means common—and in time the used as with many another country must show a greater appreciation than the unused. So few are used for postal, against the quantity devoured by philatelists, that it only stands to reason.

The So-Called Revolutionary Stamps of 1905.—I suppose no account of Crete would be complete without allusion to these labels. It would be useless to hide their identity. Of course everybody is not aware of their history. They were published by a stamp dealer in Athens, who sent to most dealers in Europe, with whom he had business relations, about half to a dozen sets on approval. Those who sent the money for which the stamps were invoiced—that is the first series bearing "An Angel", received in due course the next map series. Those who kept the stamps, but sent no money, heard nothing further, nor even had a regret for payment or return. The only stamps of the sets that saw Crete were those sent to persons there. Most were obliterated in the sheets. The Cretans interested in the Radical movement were entirely unaware of the issue of the labels, which of course were "done" solely and entirely by M. G— of Athens on his own "behalf".