

Some Tasmanian Items.

BY AMY L. SWIFT.

In Tasmania, as in other British Colonies, the postal and telegraph departments are run in connection with each other under the direct care of the Postmaster-General, who is as responsible for the one as for the other. Telegraph instruments are placed in the various post offices, and the official in charge must understand and attend to them in addition to the other business of the position, something that our own postmasters are not expected to do. A very large number of telegrams go through the department every year, and the Postmaster General, who has recently been looking into the matter, has discovered that a much larger proportion are sent under the free or "franking" privilege than seems possible. Over \$20,000 worth of free telegrams go through the Hobart Telegraph Office annually, all of which is just so much loss to the government, and when to this amount is added the lost postage on the large number of letters that are also permitted to pass free, it can easily be seen that the amount lost each year must be very large. The trouble is that a great many who were entitled to the franking privilege have "ridden a free horse to death," as the saying is, using it in transmitting private messages of a length they never would have done had they been obliged to pay for them, and to such an extent that the loss has now gone beyond permissible bounds. The franking privilege was meant to be used in behalf of the public good, and not for the self interest of those to whom it was accorded, so now the Postmaster General is planning to take steps towards lessening the abuse, and as a result we, who collect colonial locals, will soon have another of the clan to gather into the fold. A "cech stamp," it is to be called, and most appropriately so since its purpose is to keep a check on the amount of free telegraph and mail matter sent by each public body or official. Hitherto, any envelope could be used for such matter, the sender merely endorsing his name on the cover, but hereafter envelopes with this check stamp impressed upon it will be supplied to those entitled to use them, and should the number from any other source become excessive the Postmaster General will politely request to be informed how it happens. In this manner it is hoped to keep tally of the free matter sent, and thus reduce it in volume.

One of the postal laws of this country says that no married woman shall be eligible for office, but the Postmaster General has lately learned, to his intense amusement, that through the quick wit of a woman at least one pair of cooing lovers have succeeded in setting that law at complete defiance. It seems that the young post mistress of a country office decided awhile ago to make a local acquaintance supremely happy by marrying him, but she didn't want to give up her position and yet was perfectly aware that according to the rule she could not keep it if she married. She was a bright lassie, how-

ever, so after due cogitation she sat her down and penned a grave business like letter to the Deputy-Postmaster General suggesting that the management of her office might with advantage to the department, be offered by public tender. The official fell into the trap so carefully spread for his guileless feet, and accepted the suggestion, offering the position accordingly. In due time the successful tenderer, my lady's own beloved, was announced, whereupon my lady resigned her charge, married her successor and then promptly returned to her former duties. Who says that Cupid is too blind to see beyond the present moment?

One of my Tasmanian correspondents told me a few months ago about an odd letter from an odder American which was received last year by the postmaster of Hobart, and given by him to the public press as something entirely too good to keep to himself. Here is the letter, copied from the copy sent me, which by the way was devoid of signature; thanks to the good nature of the receiver. It came from Atlantic City, New Jersey, and bore date of October, 1897.

"Postmaster Hobart, P. O., Island of Tasmania. Dear Sir:—Enclosed please find my business card and testimonials would you please inform me who is the ruler of the Island of Tasmania, his name and address, colored or white, do the natives rule New Zealand, if so would you give me the address of the New Zealand native kings or any in Australia please send me a copy of Hobart and Launceston newspapers in return I will send you amount of expense for postage and newspapers and anything I can do for you in America shall be pleased to be at your service Australian newspapers would be a novelty here thanking you for attention."

Of course this wonderful epistle aroused considerable hilarity in Hobart and people have been wondering if that was a fair sample of "Yankee notions of Tasmania." I think myself that it must have been the effort of small boy who was on the hunt for good addresses from which he could beg stamps but there is no knowing. If he could only be lifted over to Tasmania just long enough to see that the cities and towns of the island are in no way inferior to those of the United States, and the people thereof as highly educated as any of our people (not taking that Jerseyite as a sample) I think he would be too astounded to ever write a letter again.—Herald Exchange.

Falkland Islands.

BY C. F. ROBINSON.

The Falkland Islands are a group of islands in the South Atlantic, belonging to Great Britain, and lying about 250 miles east of the nearest point in the mainland in South America, between the parallels of 51 degrees and 52 degrees 45 minutes and 61 degrees 46 minutes west. The islands are about two hundred in number, but only two are of considerable size, the largest of these, East Falkland, is 95 miles in extreme length, with an aver-

age width of 40 miles, and the smaller, West Falkland, is 80 miles long and about 25 miles wide.

The area of East Falkland is about 3000 square miles, and that of West Falkland 2000. Most of the others are mere islets, the largest being only 10 miles long by 8 miles wide.

The two principal islands are separated by Falkland Sound, a narrow strait from 18 to 2 1-2 miles in width, running nearly due north and south. The coast line of both islands is deeply indented and many of the bays and inlets form secure and protected harbors. The northern sections of East Falkland is hilly, and is crossed by a rugged range, running east and west, and rising in some places to a height of nearly 2000 feet. The remainder of the island consists chiefly of low, undulating ground, a mixture of pasture and morass, with many shallow fresh water tarns and smaller streams running in all the valleys.

It has been controlled by the English since 1771, who have their government offices at the principal town, Port Stanley.

The first stamps to appear were issued in 1878, and consisted of a 1-2, 4 and 6 penny and a 1s. They are not catalogued very high, compared with the 12 pence, black, Canada; the prices ranging all the way from 1 to 7 1-2 dollars. The next issue did not appear until 1884, with only two denominations, the 1 and 4 penny. Again in 1886 the same denominations made their bow to the public; this time on paper watermarked "crown" and "C. A." sideways. In 1891 appears to have arisen a demand for two new values, the 1-2 and 2 1-2 penny. They were issued in green and blue respectfully; while the 1 penny was changed to brown.

In the same year appeared their only surcharge, and let us hope it will be their last. (The 1 penny claret was overprinted with the 1-2 penny denomination, in the upper left and lower right hand corners. (This surcharge may be found in many positions; the most common being inverted and sideways, while a few received a double surcharge. In 1892, the 2 and 9 penny stamps were thrown on the market, while the other denominations appeared in new colors.

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