

44. But, so far as you have been able to ascertain, have you some information as to a number of these letters. (To Mr. Ostler.) Referring to a number of letters returned to box 912 for various reasons, I propose to prove this particularly by the Chief Clerk. (To witness.) From information supplied to you by your officers, have you ascertained, assuming the information to be correct, that on the 13th July there were returned to box 912 at the Post-office fifty-seven open envelopes containing white cards and circulars all marked, "Gone, no address"?—I have.

45. Whose duty is it to put the note of the cause of the return of a letter on the outside?—Either the Letter-carriers' Branch or the Dead Letter Office.

46. Fifty-seven envelopes were returned marked "Gone, no address," on the 13th July, and no record was kept of the date on which those were posted?—No record was kept.

47. In practice, how long is a letter kept in the Post-office before it is returned to the sender when the addressee cannot be found?—In the case of a "special-request" letter the time is usually seven days.

48. What do you mean by a "special request" letter?—A request to return to a certain address or box within seven days.

49. As these were?—Yes.

50. In addition to those fifty-seven, did you find that there were a number of other letters which were posted on the 3rd and 5th July, and later, which were also returned for the reasons shown upon your list?—Yes, that is so.

51. How many other letters are there besides the fifty-seven shown on your list?—I do not quite understand the question.

52. There are sixteen letters noted here, are there not, in addition to the fifty-seven?—That is so.

53. All letters date-stamped 3rd and 5th July, and later?—Yes.

54. And the reasons shown are various: you might read it yourself?—[List read.]

55. Are these addresses taken from the envelopes themselves?—They were.

56. So that these extra sixteen letters were returned, apparently, by letter-carriers for the various reasons shown in these records?—Yes.

57. Tell us what is the practice with regard to posting, stamping, and sorting letters. We will confine ourselves to the posting at Dominion Road, the only place we have been told about. Are the letters collected by mail-carts or anything of that sort?—The letters are taken out of the posting-box on what we call the midnight clearance, starting about 11.30 p.m., by a chauffeur, put into a small bag, and taken to the motor-car and emptied into the large basket which the car contains. After finishing the round the chauffeur brings them down to the General Post Office and takes them into the mail-room, where they are then placed upon the stamping-table that is close to the stamping-machine.

58. Who takes charge of them when they are put on to the stamping-table?—In the case of a night clearance the night clerk will take charge and face up—*i.e.*, put the envelopes with the stamps in one direction prior to putting them through the machine. They then put them through the stamping-machine, and afterwards the sorters sort them into the divisions.

59. What do you mean by "the divisions"?—There would be certain divisions for certain letters—one for those for private boxes, another for those to be taken out by the letter-carriers, who work in the room above, another division for those to be sent out into the country in the morning mails, and so on.

60. What is the next process?—So far as the night clerks are concerned, they would be finished with them. The letter-carriers' sorters would be the next to deal with them. The sorters who come on at 5 a.m., at the same time as the night clerks leave, would come down from their room upstairs on the first floor and take these letters sorted into their own division up to the letter-carriers' room.

61. How do they take them?—Principally in a basket. The sorters would then take them and sort them again into other divisions: each particular pigeonhole or division would comprise all the letters going to a certain carrier's walk.

62. How many walks are there?—About seventy-five, speaking from memory. The letter-carrier takes the letters away to another part of the room, and then sorts them again so as to have those to be delivered first close at hand.

63. He re-sorts them into the most appropriate method for delivery?—Yes.

64. Then what happens?—He puts them into his satchel provided for the purpose, and goes out and delivers them.

65. His duty is, of course, to deliver them at the addresses shown on the envelopes?—That is so.

66. If he cannot find the addresses, what is his duty?—To bring the letters back and submit them to his officer in charge, with information as to the cause of non-delivery.

67. Have you any reason to suppose that any of your letter-carriers have for any sinister purpose, or from neglect of duty, not carried out their instructions with regard to the correspondence posted in the first week in July?—None whatever.

68. A number of envelopes have been submitted here in the course of this inquiry; you made an examination of them, I think. We have been supplied with a list showing nine persons said to have received empty envelopes. The first is Mr. Shackelford. We have been told that when this envelope was delivered the flap was in some particular condition—the flap out, I think—Mr. Mackrell's evidence. Look at that envelope: what do you want to say about it?—I think there is proof here that when that envelope passed through the stamping-machine the flap was out.

69. Will you say why?—When a letter passes through the stamping-machine it has to pass between two rollers. The roller on one side bears the type—the postmark. On the other side there is a plain roller which has bars and helps to bring the letters through the machine. Sometimes the ink gets on to the roller at the back. In this case I judge the ink has got on the roller, and the ink is showing on the envelope.