

262. Can you explain the postmark "5 a.m." when they were posted at 11.20?—No, I cannot; but the clerks who dealt with them can probably explain.

263. You will admit this: that letters can lie in the General Post-office for some hours before the postmark is put on them?—Anything after 3 is marked "5 a.m."

264. Take you on your own figures—1.30 or 2 o'clock to slightly after 3?—I might suggest a reason for it—

265. I am not saying that is wrong?—I might suggest a reason, only I think it would be more satisfactory to get it from the officer who was responsible.

266. Just to go back a moment on the ministers' letters: if the Rev. Frederick Warner is prepared to swear that he got his letter out of his box at 9.30 Monday morning; would not that show that some of those ministers' letters were released on the Saturday?—It might show that some of them were not handed to the Censor.

267. Surely that will not "wash." In that case that would have been delivered on Saturday morning?—Has that statement been proved?

268. No. I am prepared to prove it, if necessary—it has only just been put into my hand. I did not call all these, only Mr. Gray admitted some of them did not get their letters in the morning?—I would be in a better position had particulars been furnished at the time.

269. Would you mind going on telling me what the practice is when the letters come in: they are put through the machine, you say?—They are turned out on the stamping-table and then put through the machine. After that they are sorted up by the night clerks into the divisions.

270. The night clerks—what are they called?—That is the usual term for them. They are ordinary Post Office clerks.

271. How many clerks work at that work at night?—Two.

272. They work together side by side?—Not necessarily.

273. Do their duties take them a little apart? Is it not a fact that they work at different tables?—Yes, on occasions.

274. And the tables are so placed that they must work back to back?—Yes. You are referring to the stamping-tables?

275. I am referring to the night clerks who do the sorting?—And stamping.

276. How does the machine run—by motor-power—electric power?—Electric power.

277. Do they have to be fed by hand, letter by letter?—In one case it is fed by hand; in the other case by a belt.

278. Are there two machines working?—Two machines—not necessarily at once.

279. Do they both make the same sort of postmark?—Practically the same.

280. Are you able to say by looking at these letters which machine the postmark was made by?—An expert would.

281. Does not one man work one machine and one man the other?—They could be worked by both men.

282. What is done is what I want to find out. Is it the practice for one man to work one machine and the other the other?—The practice is to work whichever machine might happen to be vacant.

283. Does that mean that no particular man is in charge of a particular machine?—No; not at night.

284. I suppose the night clerks—the sorters—in the post-office are men of a good many years' experience?—The senior man is. The junior man need not necessarily be.

285. Are the night clerks on there constantly or do they take week about?—Yes, turn about.

286. How long?—The period is a week.

287. Can you tell me the names of the night clerks who were on duty for the week beginning on the 2nd July and ending on the 9th?—Mr. Linton and Mr. Comrie.

288. How many years' experience has Mr. Linton had?—I cannot say from memory; I could get it from my records.

*Mr. Gray:* I am going to call both those gentlemen.

289. *Mr. Ostler.*] Is he an officer of some years' experience?—Oh, yes.

290. Mr. Comrie—what about him?—He is a younger officer; I cannot give you his length of service.

291. Is it not a fact that a sorter after some years of experience becomes very expert in knowing whether a letter is received without contents?—That is so—or *should* become expert.

292. I believe I read somewhere about experts who were able to tell whether there were notes—money—in a letter: is that common?—It is fairly common.

293. Would there be any difficulty for a sorter of any experience when a letter contained that circular and that card [specimens handed up] to discover whether it was empty?—You mean, would he be likely to pass that envelope without noticing if it contained no contents?

294. Yes?—I would say it was likely in the rapidity of sorting.

295. Now, what is the duty of a sorter if in sorting he discovers that an envelope contains nothing—has no contents?—It is his duty to make a suitable endorsement; it is then sent on and the addressee asked for particulars of what should have been in it.

296. What is the suitable endorsement?—That might be "Received without contents": generally it is.

297. Does he initial it?—He may do so.

298. Is there not a rule that he should?—I do not know of any in that particular regard. The rule says, "In the event of an apparent shortage in the contents a suitable endorsement should be made, and the addressee's attention directed thereto on delivery of the letter."