

299. Now, you have said it is extremely likely that the sorters would miss the fact that these envelopes had no contents?—No; “likely,” not “extremely likely.”

300. How comes it, then, that you are able to point to instance after instance where the sorters discovered that the envelopes had been posted without contents, and to direct the attention of the posters to it: you read a list of fifteen or twenty?—Only one. That list was simply a list of letters or circulars returned to box 912—

301. You read a list, then, of case 1, and it went on to case 19, I believe: how comes it, then, that the sorters were able in each of those cases to pick out the empty envelopes?—The cases might have been a little exceptional in some instances, because they were in very large lots, and they would be delivered tied up in bundles.

302. Would that make any difference? I suppose the bundles are cut open and run through the machine?—They would necessarily be handling a great number of the same kind, and if any were without contents they would be picked up very easily.

303. Are there not several instances in those nineteen cases you gave us where the number would be about the same as this?—Yes.

304. If the sorters in those cases were able to find out that the envelopes were empty, why not in this case too?—Because in the cases mentioned the bundles would be handed in and dealt with at once; in the other case the correspondence would be mixed up with matter from the posting-boxes.

305. In case 9 which you read out there were only twelve hundred-odd circulars posted altogether?—Twelve thousand.

306. What is the smallest number you have there?—Three thousand.

307. Is it a breach of a night clerk's duty—is it regarded as a serious breach of his duty—if he lets an empty envelope go through?—It is recognized that some empty envelopes must inadvertently be passed.

308. Suppose out of two thousand-odd envelopes nine or ten were allowed to go through by a night clerk, would you regard that as a serious breach of his duty?—The whole circumstances would have to be taken into account. If he were especially busy the matter might not be regarded so seriously as if he were slack and able to give proper attention.

309. If he were able to give proper attention would it be serious?—Fairly serious.

310. Very serious if ten empty envelopes out of 2,500 passed?—Yes.

311. Is it not the case that in none of these cases where empty envelopes were delivered none were discovered by the night clerks?—None of them, as far as I know, were discovered by the night clerks.

312. Your counsel has supplied me with a list of letters which were returned because they were wrongly addressed or not known to the letter-carriers. On one of those letters there was an endorsement “Received without contents”—that is John Findlay. Who put that endorsement on?—I am not in a position to say, but the officer in charge of the letter-carriers could tell whose the initials were.

313. Well, it is “J.B.” That could not be either Comrie or Linton, could it?—No.

314. How could a man, not the sorter who received the letter—how could he tell it was received without contents?—It was received by him without contents.

315. That only means, therefore, that that is received by the person who puts the endorsement on, without contents?—Exactly; otherwise it would be “Posted without contents.”

316. It does not mean that it was received by the post-office without contents?—Not necessarily.

317. I understand your complaint to be that Mr. Elliott did not give you more facts on which you could investigate these charges?—That is so.

318. And until you got the information here you were not in a position to properly investigate?—Not in a position to fully investigate.

319. Would you mind explaining, then, how it was you rushed into print the day after, saying there could not possibly be anything wrong?—Yes. I said “a full investigation.” I made such investigation as was possible, and I had confidence in my staff.

320. The charges were made first on the night of the 11th July, were they not?—Yes.

321. And I suppose you knew nothing of them until you read your *Herald* on the morning of the 12th July?—Of course, Mr. Elliott had previously told me over the telephone.

322. But did you know anything of the public charges?—I think that was the first I heard of them.

323. And yet in the *Star* of the same date you are reported to have said, “The charge by Mr. Elliott is given emphatic denial by the Postal authorities. The charge of envelopes being opened, the contents abstracted, and the empty covers delivered is so absurd as to carry its own denial. No officer of the Post Office, even the veriest youth, would be so stupid as to abstract the contents of a communication and deliver the envelope. Such action would simply invite inquiry—the very thing the culprit would wish to avoid—and provide evidence of guilt. The Rev. Mr. Elliott rang up the Postal authorities prior to the meeting in relation to the charge, and was informed strict inquiry would be made immediately a list of the addressees was submitted. The list not being forthcoming a second request was made, and the list was faithfully promised by a certain hour. The time passed, and no list was submitted. Mr. Elliott therefore has cut the ground from under his own feet by apparently purposely withholding the means by which proper inquiry could be made. Notwithstanding this, such inquiry as was possible showed that under the impartial postal system such allegations were utterly unfounded. The submission of postal packets to a Censor appointed by the military authorities is one entirely out of the control of the Post Office.” You have read that statement?—Yes.