

514. As an example of noting upon the envelope "Received without contents," my friend has handed to you the envelope addressed to Mr. John Findlay, which bears on the back "Not known; received without contents." Can you tell His Worship whether that envelope was posted with the flap turned in or turned out?—With the flap turned out, I should say.

515. Does it bear the mark of the back roller?—It does.

516. Quite as distinctly as those you produced this morning?—Quite.

517. Can you tell us why this letter has been stamped with a requisition for another $\frac{1}{2}$ d. required and a postage-due stamp affixed to it?—If it were posted as a circular with the flap turned in it would go through at the circular rate—penny rate.

Mr. Ostler: If it was open, whether the flap was out or in, it would go through at the penny rate.

Mr. Gray: It looks as though it had been closed.

His Worship: What is the rule, Mr. Morris?

Mr. Morris: If it was open and the contents could be classified as a letter it would be charged.

Witness: It might have been slightly closed and treated at penny-halfpenny rate. I think that is the explanation.

Mr. Ostler: We have got a whole number like that, and we were told they were charged extra because there was a request to return to the box: so that that will not do.

Mr. Morris: My attention has just been drawn to the fact that this letter was one returned by the Dead Letter Office in accordance with the "special request" enfaced upon it in the left-hand top corner; and as such it is entitled to bear another $\frac{1}{2}$ d. postage.

Mr. Ostler: Then Mr. Gray was wrong in his suggestion.

Mr. Gray: Exactly.

518. *Mr. Gray:* You were asked questions about the statement you made to the *Auckland Star* on the 12th July: what material did you have before you when the reporter called upon you?—

519. *Mr. Ostler:* I understand you waited on the *Star*?—No; that is a mistake.

520. *Mr. Gray:* Had you anything before you except the statement in the *Herald*?—No.

521. You read the *Herald* in the morning, and, I suppose, saw this account of the meeting of Mr. Elliott, and his statements, and so on. I want to show what material the witness had before him when he made this statement. [Extracts from *Herald* and *Star* put in.] With regard to the suggestion that you have employed detectives, my learned friend is putting in the correspondence which passed between himself and the Right Hon. the Prime Minister, and between himself and me since I have been in Auckland, and I wish therefore to put a question to the witness. [Following read from Mr. Ostler's letter to Mr. Gray of 15th August, 1917: "I am instructed by the Rev. Howard Elliott that he did state that he would supply the Post Office with a list of the names of persons who had received empty envelopes and of those who did not receive the circulars posted. He learned subsequently, however, that the Postal Department was employing a detective to take statements from such persons, and, upon my advice, he subsequently decided that he would not furnish the list, as it might prejudice his chance of obtaining the necessary evidence to support his charges." "Such persons," of course, means the persons mentioned before. Is there any ground for the suggestion that you or the Department were employing a detective to take statements from these persons who had received empty envelopes or did not receive the circulars posted?—No.

522. Did you employ the detective to do anything more than inquire into a rumour that some boys had been seen in possession of tickets?—No.

523. With regard to the statements of Mrs. Stainton and Mrs. Stuart, who had complained to the letter-carriers, were you following the usual course in directing officers to see those ladies?—Yes.

524. Did you employ any detective to wait upon either of those ladies?—No.

Mr. Ostler: They did not say it was a detective: they assumed it was.

525. *Mr. Gray:* Apart from those two persons, have you had any complaint from any individual of non-delivery or abstraction of contents?—No.

GEORGE WILLIAM RUDD examined.

1. *Mr. Gray:* What is your name?—George William Rudd.

2. What are you?—Chief Mail Clerk.

3. In the Post-office at Auckland?—Yes.

4. How long have you been in your present position?—Six months.

5. Where did you come from?—I have been here thirty years.

6. You have been promoted, then?—Yes.

7. You have been thirty years in the Auckland Post-office, and during the last six months Chief Mail Clerk?—Yes.

8. You are familiar, then, with the working of the Post-office?—Yes.

9. You heard Mr. Williamson describe the method of receiving, stamping, and sorting and delivering letters: is that correct?—Quite correct.

10. Have you had any specific complaint brought under your notice of non-delivery of letters in connection with box 912?—No.

11. Or of the abstraction of contents?—No.

12. Who dealt with the complaints of Mrs. Stainton and Mrs. Stuart?—The Chief Clerk's room, upstairs.

13. By the way, Mr. Rudd, did you happen to be favoured with an invitation to the meeting of the 11th July, or receive a circular?—I received two.