

I want to say a word about the stamp paper that appeared on some of these envelopes. It is a most curious thing, and there is something there that has not been properly explained. The two witnesses who posted those envelopes swear they did not put any stamp paper on the back. The ministers I called proved they did not put that stamp paper on the back; the stamp paper was there when they were delivered to the ministers. The Censor admits he opened those letters. How did he open them? They are ordinary sealed envelopes stuck down, and your Worship must know how tightly gum sticks.

*Mr. Gray:* The Censor did not admit that he opened these letters.

*Mr. Ostler:* I believe my friend is right; but he said, generally, he rather scouted the idea that he could censor letters without opening them. He admits he had these letters for censoring, and the natural inference is that in censoring he must have opened at least some of them. How did he open them? Those letters were not cut open; they were letters on which the gum had dried in the ordinary way. They must have been steamed open in some way: how else could he have opened them?

*Mr. Gray:* He has not said he opened them, to begin with.

*Mr. Ostler:* He was not "permitted to say" that; but he did say that he opened letters in the course of censorship, and it is ridiculous to suppose he could censor these letters without opening them. I submit there is something unexplained there, which if he had been permitted to say would have cleared up that point.

As to the third charge, we have proved that nine persons to whom filled envelopes were posted received theirs empty—Mr. Shackelford, Mr. Lowe, Mrs. Fisher, Mr. Symons, Mr. Hannan, Mr. B. Smith, Mrs. Stuart, Mrs. Stainton, and Mr. T. Smith. We have also had the admission by the Post Office—a thing we did not know—of a tenth letter, addressed to Mr. Findlay, returned through the Dead Letter Office with no contents. In addition a postman informed Mr. Jamieson, and the same postman informed Mr. Bilby, that he had delivered other empty ones. That postman was called, and he said he was joking. All I can say to that is that Mr. Bilby and Mr. Jamieson are not fools; they would not come here and give that serious evidence of things they thought were said in jest. They came here and they said this man said he had delivered others empty.

*Mr. Gray:* "Others like them."

*Mr. Ostler:* "Others like them," if you like; it does not make much difference.

*Mr. Gray:* All the difference in the world.

*Mr. Ostler:* I think you will find Mr. Bilby said "empty," but it does not matter. Then, another postman told Mrs. Stainton and her two daughters that he had delivered others empty. That postman again has denied that; but in that case there are three witnesses against one. Another postman told Mrs. Stuart he had delivered a number of them on his round. I admit that is ambiguous—it might have meant full or empty ones. Another four letters posted full were not received—Mr. David Goldie, Mr. Woodruffe, Mrs. Irvine, and Miss D. Smith. Miss D. Smith gave most positive evidence she had posted a letter back to box 912 containing an empty envelope and a note. That letter has never been received, and the Military Censor is not permitted to say whether he has that still or what happened to it. In two or three instances—I think in three, but possibly two—the postmen when asked about the contents of envelopes said at once they contained notices of a meeting by the Orange Lodge. I think that was said to Mrs. Stuart and to Mr. Hannan and Mrs. Stainton—at any rate, to the first of those two. I submit that the attempt of the two postmen to explain that away is quite unsatisfactory. Mr. Roan said he heard Rusden say he had an invitation to an Orange meeting, but he did not see the letter. How, therefore, could he know that the empty envelope which he had taken to Mrs. Stuart was one of the same kind? He admits he did not see the letter; how therefore could he know that? The other postman, Ellis, says that he saw the letter next morning, and that it contained one of those egg-shaped tickets produced. The next morning was the 4th July, and these tickets never came from the printer until the 6th July. I say the attempts of the postmen to explain how they got to know what those envelopes contained are quite unsatisfactory, and their evidence should be rejected. I do not know how many more there are that have not come to light; but I say the instances we have proved show that there has been some tampering with the letters in the course of post. Now, the proof that they were posted full is strengthened by the fact that although they went through three sortings in the Post-office, not one was held up as being empty either in the mail-room or the letter-carriers' sorters' room. Only two witnesses of all the sorters that were called were bold enough to state it was likely to happen out of the great body of sorters. Of all the number of sorters that were called, and I suppose there must have been a dozen, only two out of the lot were bold enough to say it was likely to happen. I submit that a fair estimate, without going through at a wearisome length the whole of the evidence of these sorters—a fair estimate of the evidence of those sorters is that although it was possible it was not in the least likely. Not only have we the evidence of Mr. Bilby and Mr. Keyworth that the letters were properly filled and posted, but we have the strong evidence of those letters going through all the sortings without one being discovered empty. We cannot be expected to prove who abstracted the contents of those letters. All we know is—and it is freely admitted by Mr. Williamson and the Postal officials—that there is opportunity for letters while in the course of post—for the contents to be abstracted, and we say, in view of that evidence and the evidence I have already referred to, the fair inference is that there was some tampering with those letters. If the average of errors in the Post Office is only one in half a million, as stated in the return, then these fifteen or sixteen cases of irregularity in not more than 2,500 letters shows conclusively, I say, being so much above the average, that there must have been some design in it and not merely error, and I hope your Worship will agree there was sufficient under those circumstances to justify the charge. Mr. Williamson has complained that no particulars were given him to enable him to investigate the charge. The particulars were withheld on my