

57. But you accept responsibility entirely for what was done?—Yes.

58. And now you find it was a wrong thing on your part to have done so, so far as the Audit Department is concerned?—I suppose so. I do not know.

59. The payment was made in the ordinary course?—Yes.

60. Is there any doubt about the postman getting the money?—He never thanked me for it, but I suppose he did. I believe he got the money.

61. When that voucher was sent out signed by you, were you under the belief, as you are now, that the money was paid to the postman?—Yes.

62. With regard to purchases for the girls, I think every month certain moneys are credited to the girls for this purpose?—Yes; a system of mark money.

63. And at the end of the month are you in the habit of asking the girls whether they want any purchases made?—It is a regular system. The clerk makes out a ticket, with lollies on one side and goods on the other, and these are handed to the girls at the end of the month, with the amount of money they are entitled to, and the girls write down what they want. If a girl has wages she puts that down also.

64. The girls fill up this paper once a month?—Yes. Of course, they do not know the price of the goods, and they put down a price.

65. Then, at the end of the month you make the purchases?—Sometimes, and sometimes I hand the list into the shop and let them do it. For the last few months I seem to have got more what the girls want, so I have been doing it.

66. Have you an arrangement with the shop by which you get 10 per cent. discount off all these purchases?—Yes. When I first came, Strange and Co. gave me 10 per cent. discount on my private account and on the Department's also.

67. Am I correct in saying you do get 10 per cent. allowed on all the purchases made for the girls?—Yes, through me.

68. Supposing a girl gives you a shilling to buy an article and it costs 1s. 3d., is that 3d. taken out of the girl's future money?—No. I always think it will come off in the discount in the long run.

69. Then you pay the 1s. 3d.?—Yes.

70. Then, if the money you have to go round and the 10 per cent. covers all the purchases, that is all right?—Yes.

71. Have you ever on any occasion retained one shilling of that 10 per cent. for your own use?—Never that I know of. It was always overdrawn.

72. Have you at any time paid up out of your own pocket any moneys in order to get the girls the goods at the prices they have put down?—Yes; often.

73. Is it a fact that if the children do not give you quite enough money to pay for what they want you pay it out of your own pocket, if the discount is not sufficient?—Yes.

74. Has that been your practice all through?—Yes. Sometimes the discount is sufficient.

75. Have you ever endeavoured to get a refund from the Department or the children of moneys paid by you for them?—Never. I very often tell the girls they are overdrawing, but I never take it from them.

76. Now, I wish to go through the evidence given at this inquiry. Has the girl G— J— ever objected to physical work, or complained to you upon any occasion about the outside work being too hard?—None of them have.

77. In your opinion, is the outside work necessary and desirable for these girls?—Yes. It is much better than laundry-work. They must have some work to do, else what are we to do with them? I find they increase in weight and colour before they have been here six weeks.

78. Have you on many occasions supervised the work yourself?—Yes; I am always out and about.

79. On any occasions have you thought the girls were being too hard worked?—If I have seen a girl working too hard I have stopped her. Some will work too hard, but the majority want a good deal of spurring on.

80. In regard to the lupins, have you ever noticed that work too hard for the girls?—It is very easy work.

81. One or two of the girls complained that they were not allowed water over there, and others said if they did not take water with them they were not allowed to go back for it: can you explain the position to the Commissioner?—Yes. I saw the girls breaking out in spots. It was pretty hot in January, and I said that they were drinking too much cold water, and that they must not have it, and that if they wanted water it would be better to take a little oatmeal water with them, and not to come in and drink cold water on their return. Another reason is that two or three girls plotted to abscond. The water was put in the lupins a little way to keep cool, and the girls made it an excuse to go to the back of the lupins whilst the staff's attention was directed elsewhere, and make a bolt through the lupins. I said if that was the case they could not have water—they must take a drink before they went. That was very near the end of the time, and I do not remember any more about it. Nothing was reported to me about it.

82. Was there ever any attempt to deprive the girls of water if it was necessary for them?—Not that I am aware of.

83. Most of the girls said they could take water if they liked?—They were told they could do so.

84. With regard to the dress put on absconders, is that accounted much of a disgrace by the girls?—No; but they do not like it. If there is any holiday or concert on I always say to the girls, "Now, to-night you can take off that dress and put your own dress on for the time being, if you promise to behave yourself." Sometimes they avail themselves of this permission and sometimes they do not.