

until 1898. It is a matter of comment in Orillia that Mr. Miller carried round this appointment in his pocket for a year, and it was only made public after the local elections were disposed of. In the light of future events, it would have been probably more in the interests of the service if Mr. Goffett's services had been dispensed with in 1897. It is a fact that Mr. Miller, in March or April, 1897, had been promised a position by the Postmaster General and recommended by Mr. Cook, and was the appointment delayed until after the approaching local elections?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I have no objection to give my hon. friend every information. Mr. Mellville Miller never received any promise or communication authorizing him to suppose he was going to be appointed postmaster until he was appointed a very short time ago. My hon. friend is aware that the former postmaster was not conducting the office in the interests of the public for a considerable length of time, and well founded complaints were made against him, and I presume that the community recognized the fact that this office was at least in danger, and many thought I should have removed him long before I did. About that time I received a communication, I think, from Mr. Cook representing Mr. Miller.

Mr. BENNETT. That would be in 1897.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. This recommendation was in the event of a vacancy. I suppose that when I received that letter people were aware that a vacancy was probable, owing to the conduct of the officer, and in that event Mr. Cook recommended the appointment of Mr. Miller, but I did not create the vacancy at the time, because the postmaster had a good staff in his office, and I hoped that they would take care of it, and it would not be necessary to make a change. I therefore made no change until the circumstances happened to which my hon. friend referred; and until I directed a telegram to be sent to Mr. Miller announcing his appointment, I had arrived at no conclusion whatever. In fact, when the charges were made against the postmaster many thought I should have acted more promptly and dismissed him at the preliminary investigation. But I felt that it would not be fair to prejudice his case before another tribunal or to prejudice him in the eyes of the community by appearing to assume his guilt. Hence I resisted the, perhaps, not unreasonable pressure on the part of those who were more cognizant of the local circumstances than I was. I felt it my duty to resist the pressure and to retain him in office. If the charges which were under investigation this spring had turned out favourably to him I should not have felt warranted in disturbing him in his office.

Mr. BENNETT.

Mr. BENNETT. As I understand the Postmaster General, in the year 1897—I am not referring to the troubles which happened to the postmaster this year—charges were preferred against the postmaster of alleged wrong-doing in the conduct of his office.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I do not say that charges were made in a formal way. I think I had communications of various kinds referring to him. In fact, I think the community had come to the conclusion the year before that he was not a fit and proper person to remain in the office. My recollection is that I sent the inspector to Orillia with instructions to inquire whether the general conduct of the postmaster was regarded as so notoriously bad as to make it amount to a public scandal to leave him in office. I think it was about that time, probably, that the public may have thought that he was going to be dismissed. The inspector did give me a report, and I threw the veil of charity over the man and left him in office a while longer.

Mr. BENNETT. I wish to show that the action of the Postmaster General has been rather remarkable. In the year 1897—as I understand it—and I wish to be fair—complaints were made as to the conduct of this officer.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. No, the conduct of the man himself outside of office.

Mr. BENNETT. You can hardly dissociate a man and his office in that way. His deportment, it would seem, was such that the confidence of the public was lost to him in his office. The postmaster was complained of and these complaints found their way to the ears of the Postmaster General and were regarded so seriously by him that he thought it his duty—and, of course, he was quite within his rights in what he did—to send the inspector for the division to inquire into these charges. And the report, if I understand him correctly, was that the charges were only too true. Now, in view of these facts it seems strange that the Postmaster General did not see fit to dispense with the services of the official at the time. He has made the statement that he was aware of alleged lapses in the conduct of the postmaster as far back as nearly a year before his final dismissal. The public there can judge of the facts as stated here whether or not it was to meet, as alleged, certain party exigencies, that the office was kept in that condition for nearly a year, against the protest and remonstrances of a large part of the community.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I can tell my hon. friend (Mr. Bennett) with absolute frankness and without qualification or reservation that political considerations had nothing whatever to do with the retention of the man in office. I will submit it to himself as a member of the legal profession what I ought to have done under the cir-