

WEDNESDAY, 22ND APRIL, 1891.

The Rev. CHARLES DANIEL DE CASTRO, Chief Clerk in the Public Trust Office, examined.

1789. *The Chairman.*] Mr. De Castro, will you state to the Commissioners when you joined the Public Trust Office, and what your duties are and have been?—I joined it at its commencement in 1873. I think my appointment dates from November, 1873. It is gazetted.

1790. You joined it in Mr. Woodward's time?—Yes. I had charge of similar accounts in the Treasury—curators' accounts—in the days of the provinces; so, knowing something of the work, I suppose I was transferred from the Treasury in consequence.

1791. Then, before you joined the Public Trust Office had you had any experience in the keeping of accounts?—In keeping curators' accounts, posting their accounts into our Treasury ledger. After all, it was a mere matter of copying.

1792. But have you had any experience in book-keeping generally?—No; not a large amount.

1793. You have been brought up to a different profession?—Yes.

1794. Will you kindly state what your duties have been since you have been in the Public Trust Office?—It would be difficult to enumerate them. I have been Chief Clerk of the office since Mr. Hamerton had charge.

1795. Will you state the duties pertaining to the office of Chief Clerk?—During Mr. Woodward's time there was no other clerk. We had a boy at last, and Mr. Woodward, myself, and the cadet managed the whole thing. When Mr. Hamerton came in 1880 we had a very largely-increasing business and a largely-increasing staff; so I have had, as Chief Clerk, general supervision of the office. My duties, of course, relate principally to correspondence. I open all letters that are addressed to the Public Trustee, record them, and minute them, if necessary, in order that Mr. Hamerton may see any particular point that requires attention. That is really the principal part of my duty—the supervision of the office generally, and correspondence.

1796. What do you mean by "supervision"?—The clerks will come to me for directions if they want to know anything in connection with their duties.

1797. But the word "supervision" implies a wider range than what you seem to think in connection with the office. Do I understand you that in stating that you supervise the office you see that the books are kept correctly?—No.

1798. Then, the extent of your supervision is appearing and being in the office to be referred to?—Yes, and attending to the general order and management of the office.

1799. Well, now, what I understand your principal duties have been are the opening of letters that come into the office?—Yes, *précis*-ing them and putting them in order for record, minuting them, if necessary, for the Public Trustee, and supervising all the replies before they go to Mr. Hamerton.

1800. Do you write the replies?—I write replies to letters in some cases, and I write and am responsible for all letters addressed to agents in the districts. They are signed, not by the Public Trustee, but by me.

1801. Then, do I understand that you carry on one portion of the correspondence relating to the business of the Public Trust Office?—Yes.

1802. Can you specify what portion or portions of the correspondence you have taken control of?—The correspondence with the agents in various districts.

1803. How about correspondence with the outside public?—The replies would come to me to see that they were correct before they would be sent in to the Public Trustee for signature. I would examine the records to see that everything was correct before sending them in to Mr. Hamerton.

1804. If you open all letters and read them, and make a *précis* of their contents, it is the *précis* that is put before the Public Trustee?—The *précis* is at the head of the record.

1805. That goes before the Public Trustee?—Yes.

1806. Does that accompany the letter?—Yes.

1807. Then, do you consider your position in the Public Trust Office as coming next to that of the Public Trustee?—Oh, yes! I act for him in his absence, if Mr. Hamerton goes away. People come to see me when they cannot see him. I sign all letters in his absence to every one.

1808. Supposing, then, that any new set of books or series of books were opened in the office, would you be consulted on the subject?—No, very probably not. That would be a matter for the Accountant.

1809. Then, if any irregular kind of book-keeping occurred in the office, would you, as Chief Clerk, be likely to discover it?—No; that is entirely a matter for the Accountant.

1810. Then, do I understand you to consider your position to be as next in command to Mr. Hamerton, and yet irresponsible for the working of the books of the office?—Yes; that is a matter for the Accountant: we have always left that to him.

1811. But the Accountant, I understand, is subordinate to you?—Yes.

1812. Supposing, then, that you had occasion to look into the books, you would, or ought to, understand every class of book that is kept in this office?—Yes. For some years the ledger was kept by me, in Mr. Woodward's time; but the books now are more numerous than they were then.

1813. But, of course, you would understand the object of any class of books that are kept in the office?—Yes.

1814. Then, you would understand why they are kept?—Yes.

1815. And the nature of the entries that pass through them?—Yes.

1816. Then, can you tell me why it was necessary to keep ordinary cash-books and general cash-books?—When the different accounts were divided, the intestacies, for instance, were divided between two Ledger-keepers, and wills and trusts the same. Mr. Hamerton thought it better that each Ledger-keeper should have his own cash-book and make his own entries, and then those totals