

2030. Have any of the officers in the Public Trust Office ever, with your knowledge, bought or purchased anything at any of those sales?—Yes. We have always considered that we have as much right to bid as any of the public. I have bought things myself. I have considered I had a right to make a bid, and it is quite open to any one else to bid against me. There is no favouritism in the matter.

2031. Then, you have bought things yourself?—Yes.

2032. Has Mr. Hamerton ever attended auction-sales and bought effects which had been committed to the care of the Public Trust Office?—Very seldom. I have attended and bought things for him. He has wanted a certain thing, and he has said to me, "I will give so much; if anybody gives more let it go." Where goods are sold by auction, of course they are knocked down to the highest bidder.

2033. Then, Mr. Hamerton never saw any objection to himself or any of the officers connected with the Public Trust Office becoming the purchaser of any assets that were in trust by his office, if sold by auction?—No.

2034. Nor did the Rev. Mr. De Castro see any objection?—No. Generally speaking, the articles purchased by officers have been watches or rings.

2035. What class of personalty generally have these sales comprised?—Clothing, jewellery, and personal effects generally. I have always taken care to keep away things we would not care to go to an auction-room. I have taken out letters and papers.

2036. What class of personalty at any of these sales where you felt disposed to buy for yourself have you purchased?—A watch or two. I bought a watch or two sometimes for my boys.

2037. Rings?—No.

2038. Always something in the way of jewellery?—Yes.

2039. Did you ever buy any clothes?—I bought a new overcoat once, which a man had brought out from England.

2040. Sure that the coat was not second-hand?—It was not second-hand. The poor fellow came out from England, and died when he came here.

2041. Do you bear in mind when and where you purchased for Mr. Hamerton, and what class of personalty you bought?—I bought two watches for him. I do not know that I bought any more. Two I know of—a silver one and a gold one. I have bought other little things of the same sort.

2042. Did you ever buy Mr. Hamerton any clothes?—No.

2043. Then, do you know any other officers in the Trust Office service who have bought assets belonging to the estates of deceased men and women at auction-sales?—Yes.

2044. Who are they?—Mr. Ronaldson has made purchases.

2045. What other officer?—Mr. Stephens made a purchase of a watch, I recollect, and some jewellery, pins, and rings; some very good things that were sold, and he gave a very good price for them too.

2046. I suppose, occasionally, there are some very choice articles to be had at these sales?—Yes.

2047. What other officers have purchased?—These two officers I call to mind at the present time. Sometimes I may have bought a watch for a man who said he wanted one and asked me to buy it. I recollect people asking me to buy. They would state their price, and sometimes the price realised was larger than they would give.

2048. I notice these sales have been conducted chiefly by one auctioneer in this city?—Yes: Thomas. The land-sales have been distributed.

2049. But not so the personalty. These personalties have been sold by one auctioneer?—Well, sometimes we have only a swag to sell; they are sometimes very small affairs.

2050. Then you have confined your favours, as far as personalties were concerned, to George Thomas and Co.?—Yes; but not the land sales.

2051. Have you any arrangement with them as to what commission they were to charge?—No.

2052. Was there any arrangement with their office or any of their officers as to any rebate of commission?—No.

2053. On no occasion?—I do not think so. I do not recollect a case.

2054. Try and think whether Thomas and Co. did not pay some rebate commission?—If you could tell me the case I could see.

2055. Will you make a note of that and give us the information this afternoon. You can find out by referring to Thomas and Co.'s books whether they have paid back any commission. Auctioneers sometimes, where business has been put into their hands, agree to pay rebate to persons who directly or indirectly place business in their hands. Do you see what I mean?—Yes.

2056. I want those cases, if any, where they have paid back any rebate, whether large or small. Will you get the information?—Yes. I never remember any such case as that; not Thomas certainly.

2057. Then it has frequently happened that officers on the staff of the Public Trust Office have bought at auction-sales?—Yes.

2058. Of course, they would occupy a favoured position, as they would have the first information, I take it, as to the quality of any personalty that was to be sold?—They would see the things in the office before they went down.

2059. They would have an inspection of the things in your office before they were sent to the auction-room?—They might have.

2060. Therefore, they would have the opportunity of appraising the value in their own minds of the articles before they went to the hammer?—Yes. But then the watches and other effects have always been taken down a few days before the sale to the auctioneers in order that the public might see them.

2061. But the officers of the Public Trust Office would have very the first opportunity, by inspec-