

2792. There were two rings sold in Mrs. Dallon's estate for £1; would they not likely be the rings that fell to you?—No; I think not. If I recollect rightly, the rings that I bought belonged to the estate of some person not a Wellington resident, but I am not sure.

2793. Do you remember that the ladies' gold watch belonging to Mrs. Dallon's estate was purchased by you?—I think so. I authorised Mr. De Castro to go up to rather a heavy price, as I thought, and I believe he purchased that watch.

2794. What was the price?—£6.

2795. Was that the price you authorised the Rev. Mr. De Castro to go to?—Yes; I am speaking from memory, but I think that is so.

2796. Then, that is the watch which her son wrote to you about from Queensland when he asked you to preserve that among other things, in order that he might get them?—If I may be allowed to look at the records I could say, but not without. I may say that if he now desires the watch he shall have it.

2797. Now, did the son not write to the Public Trustee from Queensland asking the Public Trustee to retain that watch, with other articles belonging to his mother on which he set a particular value?—He did.

2798. Then, you did not care to do that?—No, that is not the position. I did not do that.

2799. Why did you not do so? May I remind you that, in speaking of this estate before, you gave as one reason that you had doubts about this person's legitimacy? If I remember rightly, your explanation on a former occasion was that you did not consider there was any kinship?—I am not aware that the Commissioners put any questions to me in this estate on a former occasion.

2800. Mr. De Castro has stated his reason for not recognising any claim by this reputed son, and you do not remember any circumstances in connection with it?—Yes, here is a minute: "Claim cannot be established without proofs of kinship; inform writer as to box of clothing, watch, and brooch, and state these may be forwarded to him on his paying carriage."

2801. That was alluding to his own watch. Well, then, the rest of the articles were not forwarded to him. They were eventually sold at auction by George Thomas and Co.?—Yes, the particular watch and some other things. But there were many things handed to Mr. Wm. L. Morrison on behalf of that same gentleman.

2802. There are a gold locket, gold watch and chain, photograph of gentleman in walking costume, said to be the father of Arthur Dallon, two small brooches, and a parcel of letters?—Those were handed to Morrison on behalf of Dallon.

2803. And you have Mr. Morrison's receipt?—Yes.

2804. The rest were exposed to auction by Thomas and Co.?—Yes, with many things.

2805. And the watch was bought by the Rev. Mr. De Castro for you for one of your daughters. Mr. De Castro has told us to-day that your instructions to him were to buy that watch at a certain price, as you wished to make a birthday-present to a daughter?—What I wish to do with things I buy has nothing to do with Mr. De Castro.

2806. Do you think it likely you made that statement to him?—Quite likely I did.

2807. Now, what have you done with the other articles you have purchased in a similar way?—I have presented other daughters with a gold watch, and sons with a silver watch.

2808. Now, Mr. Hamerton, in your position as Public Trustee, do you not look upon the trust as a very sacred one?—Most certainly.

2809. I notice your second in command is a gentleman in holy orders?—That is so.

2810. Is that with the object of giving greater sanctity to the business of the office and the manner of conducting it?—I am not aware.

2811. You are a solicitor of the Supreme Court of New Zealand?—Yes.

2812. Do you think it is right and proper for you, or for any officer even, subordinate to you, who is employed on the staff of the Public Trust Office, to purchase or possess any article belonging to an estate that has been administered by your office?—In relation to small matters—and most of the articles are inexpensive—I cannot myself see any impropriety, on the principle of the Latin maxim, *De minimis non curat lex*, but, as regards more expensive things, I should consider it highly improper.

2813. Is the principle not the same, whether the value is large or small?—No doubt the same, but I should like to point out that there has been no purchase of realty by any one connected with the office. The only occasion on which it happened I would not allow it. An agent of mine was instructed to sell some realty belonging to an estate. He sent in his report, showing that he himself had purchased the section of land, and sent up the transfer for my execution, which was promptly refused. I would not permit him to purchase; and no purchase of realty has ever been made by any person connected with the staff, nor any portion of realty, nor any personalty except trinkets.

2814. Has any jewellery been sold privately?—Not that I am aware of. I should say no.

2815. Then, you would not allow this agent, who was really not an officer directly employed by the department, to possess himself of that estate or portion of the realty which he purchased?—That is so.

2816. In that I think you were right. But you yourself could not see any harm in purchasing the personalty portion of an estate?—Personalty of small value.

2817. Well, a watch: although it might really be worth £20, it might be sold for £3 or £4?—True; but in the open market, with a room full of people, in the full light of day, I have always thought, where the Chief Clerk chose to bid a higher price than any one else, there could not be any great harm in it. I myself have never attended an auction-sale.

2818. Those articles of personalty, before they are sent to George Thomas and Co., have always been on view in the Public Trust Office?—No; I should not call it "on view."

2819. Have you not always seen them before they were sent to auction?—Yes.

2820. And every officer could have seen them if they liked?—They could if they applied to the Chief Clerk.