

2591. What about the private letters? Is there sufficient information in the papers in the office to show the history of each and every case?—I think so.

2592. Notwithstanding that a number of private letters have been destroyed?—Yes; because it is marked there, “who is supposed to be illegitimate.”

2593. On what authority, then, did you mark him “illegitimate”?—I gathered it from the private papers that I have destroyed that he was illegitimate.

2594. *The Chairman.*] Then, are the Commissioners to understand, Mr. De Castro, that your reason for destroying private letters was to save and economize room in the office?—Not entirely that, but partly that; because very often the letters are of such an obscene character that it would not be well to retain them.

2595. What is your real reason for destroying any letters?—If they were of that character I should destroy them without hesitation.

2596. Are all the letters you have destroyed of that character?—These would not be called obscene.

2597. What are those private letters you have destroyed?—Letters from Mrs. Dallon to the gentleman with whom she was acquainted.

2598. Have you destroyed letters in any other estates?—Yes.

2599. Then, has it been an instruction by the Public Trustee that you should destroy letters?—Yes, except letters we could return to relatives, if necessary; but they do not seem to care about old letters.

2600. Do you ever get letters that do not appertain in any way to business in your office? In other words, do not all those letters, even if they do contain objectionable wording, refer in some manner to estates in your office?—Oh, yes! They are found with the effects of the deceased person.

2601. Do you not think it very objectionable to destroy letters relating to business that comes into the Public Trust Office?—They are not relating to business.

2602. That is your opinion. Is it not a very improper thing to destroy any writing whatever in connection with business that comes to this office?—I think it is quite as well to destroy these letters.

2603. That is your mode of conducting business?—Yes.

2604. And that is Mr. Hamerton's idea of how records should be kept?—Yes.

2605. And you think it is a proper thing to destroy such letters?—Yes.

2606. And would you continue to do so as long as you hold your present position?—If no instruction is given to the contrary.

2607. You brought up a book which the Commissioners had not seen before, which is styled by you “Inventory of Properties in the Public Trust Office Safe.” Now, what does this book refer to?—It refers to the jewellery in the drawers.

2608. Does this book contain a record of all and every property in the shape of personalty—every article that is in the hands of the Public Trust Office in Wellington?—Of every article of jewellery. It does not contain a list of some dozen or fifteen watches which belong to lunatic patients, and perhaps half-a-dozen which belong to convicts, which are in a separate box and labelled accordingly.

2609. Have you any book referring to them?—No.

2610. Then there is no record of them?—They would be on the records which were sent down to the office.

2611. But, surely, whether these articles belong to an intestacy or to a testacy, to an insane person, to a prisoner of the Crown, or to an innocent person, they should all be treated alike so far as making a record of them. Do you not treat them all alike?—They are all there, but these few sent down from Auckland are in a separate box and are under key.

2612. How long is it since they were sent down?—Two or three years. They have been kept in a part partitioned off.

2613. They have not been entered in this book, nor in any record, or in any other special book?—No. I will put them in there if you think it advisable.

2614. We are not here for that purpose, but to take things as they are and as we find them. We are not here to direct you to make any change in your system?—They might have been put in that book, but I did not think it necessary, as they are retained until claimed.

2615. How many of these detained watches are there?—A few, and very poor ones.

2616. Any clothes?—No.

2617. They are not recorded in any book?—No.

2618. Is everything else in the shape of personalty belonging to estates in the Public Trust Office recorded in this book?—Only jewellery, as a rule. I may have memoranda of parcels of papers; but that is to guide me in case of a claim being made for jewellery, and that would guide me to papers in the pigeon-holes. I have a private book of my own.

2619. Who is responsible for this jewellery?—I am.

2620. I understand from your evidence this morning that you are, in fact, the jeweller of the Public Trust Office?—I keep all the jewellery.

2621. Then you are, *ipso facto*, the jeweller?—Yes.

2622. Now, do you think that that record of the jewellery belonging to different estates from time to time is kept as it ought to be?—I have only treated it as a private memorandum-book; it has always been sufficient for my purpose.

2623. Did Mr. Hamerton ever want to know in what state the store of jewellery was?—No; he leaves it entirely to me.

2624. *Mr. Loughrey.*] And in the event of anything happening to you, how would your successor discover the jewellery there is supposed to be in the safe?—The book is always in the drawer; I never take it away.