

also say the sacredness of it; for I must say I have been very much startled at what has been revealed—that any officer in connection with the Public Trust Office, or, indeed, I would go further—any officer in connection with the Government service of the colony—because this is the colony's Public Trust Office—should in any way have participated in the purchase of any portion of personalty of any estates. Has it never occurred to you in that form?—It has not occurred to me in that form.

2871. You are a lawyer. Supposing you were to make a requisition to the Supreme Court to be allowed to purchase any articles belonging to an estate, and do you not think that would be your proper course if you wished to purchase such articles?—I should never dream of purchasing, except articles of very slight value.

2872. You must put out of your mind altogether the value. To my mind it does not matter, so far as principle is concerned, whether the value is £5 or £5,000?—I agree as to the principle.

2873. Do you think you could have a good title to anything you purchased at those auction-sales, looking at your position in the Public Trust Office, unless you purchased with the consent of the Supreme Court—that is to say, acquired an indefeasible title, a title that the Court would uphold if any article you ever purchased was afterwards disputed?—No, perhaps not.

2874. What do you think any Judge of the Supreme Court would say to the Public Trustee, if he applied to be allowed to purchase certain articles belonging to an estate in the hands of the Public Trust Office that were going to be sold by auction? What reply would Supreme Court Judges make to such an application?—I must again say that Latin maxim I gave would hold.

2875. You think a Judge of the Supreme Court would agree with you?—I do not think he would take the trouble to answer a small matter of the kind.

2876. All I can say is, that I am very sorry for your opinion, looking at the position you hold, and I have no further questions to ask you to-day.—Very well.

2877. *Mr. Macdonald.*] You stated that the list of jewellery in each estate was always to be found in the papers of the estate?—Yes; it should be so, but, as a matter of fact, it is not so.

2878. Then how are we to get the knowledge?—[No answer.]

2879. We have had it in evidence to-day that there is no such inventory in the Dallon case. If you look through the papers yourself you will discover that there is not a single inventory at all of either jewellery or effects in connection with that estate?—No. I see the direction is, "Please receive and sell same by auction at an early date."

2880. There is no inventory?—No.

2881. No inventory of jewellery even?—No.

2882. I now hand you the Rev. Mr. De Castro's jewellery-book. You will see Dallon's estate. Would you consider that an inventory of the jewellery that came into the office?—Certainly not.

2883. Mr. De Castro told us that is the only inventory he possesses?—Where effects are sent to the auctioneer the invariable course is to send an officer to ascertain what the effects are, and the auctioneer or his clerk goes over the contents of the packages, boxes, or trunks.

2884. We have it in evidence that has not been done in this case?—[No answer.]

2885. *Mr. Loughrey.*] So that these papers are incomplete to that extent? They do not show the full history of Mrs. Dallon's estate, inasmuch as the inventory is missing?—In many small estates the goods are sent from a lodging-house.

2886. Would you call Mrs. Dallon's a small estate?—No.

2887. Then, look at the jewellery-sales. Would you call that a small estate?—No; I should not call it a small lot of jewellery.

2888. *Mr. Macdonald.*] You see there that the principle which you refer to has not been carried out in this estate, of taking an inventory?—No.

2889. Then we have had it in evidence to-day that the particular jewellery in this estate was brought into the Public Trust Office to yourself. You directed it to be sent out to Mr. De Castro in accordance with the practice of the office, and it was left with Mr. De Castro; but no inventory of it was taken by Mr. De Castro. The difficulty in the matter has arisen in consequence of the letter written by Mr. Morrison, in which he desires to purchase certain articles which were so left; and the fact that a valuable bracelet and some valuable lace, so left, does not appear to be accounted for in the account sales requires explanation?—I was ignorant of that.

2890. You will see the importance, therefore, of the absence of an inventory?—Of course, clearly so. But about this lace: you say there was some lace and a valuable bracelet?

2891. We are asked, in reference to the disposal of this personalty, to take a case, and we instantly pick upon one case in which a woman dies intestate, who possesses jewellery and clothing and a little furniture, which is sent to be disposed of in accordance with your usual practice. We examine this case, and discover the whole system that exists in the office, as to a clerk being sent to take an inventory, has not obtained; that the request of the very people who requested an inventory to be taken was not complied with; and that the very jewellery they brought into the office has no record made of it in the jewellery-book. All this becomes of importance in face of the fact that certain articles have disappeared?—Clearly so.

2892. *The Chairman.*] And it comes to this: that if any article coming into your possession under the present system is taken away, you would have no record of it to discover it?—That is very bad.

2893. Is that not so?—Apparently so.

2894. *Mr. Loughrey.*] When a box of jewellery comes in, and there is no inventory taken of the contents, how do you know some one has not helped themselves to any of its contents?—It is impossible to know.

2895. *The Chairman.*] And no trace can be found of a very valuable, heavy bracelet, set in stones, and a piece of lace?—[No answer.]

2896. *Mr. Macdonald.*] We have been told to-day that occasionally a large number of private