

memoranda of extreme importance to those connected with the estate are never attached to the papers, but are destroyed. If either yourself or a clerk in the office thinks it advisable they should not see the light of day, will you tell us what your practice is, and the reasons that guide you?—There are no private letters destroyed without my authority; and I believe none at all unless they contain obscene language. In such cases I have required the destruction of obscene pictures, photographs, and letters.

2897. *The Chairman.*] But, supposing private letters relating to an estate, even although they contained improper language, but had certain contents relating to an estate, would you have those destroyed?—If there was anything of importance in them I should not, but if they merely relate to some action or conversation, it is very likely I should.

2898. The Rev. Mr. De Castro told us to-day he had destroyed, and had been in the habit of destroying, private letters in connection with Mrs. Dallon's estate by your instructions?—I cannot call it to mind.

2899. Well, would you deny he ever had your instructions?—I would not do that, because my memory is not sufficiently good; but I think I can say with perfect truth that I authorise the destruction of no letters unless they are obscene.

2900. *Mr. Loughrey.*] Does Mr. De Castro consult you invariably with regard to the destruction of private letters?—He should do so.

2901. Are you aware that he of his own motion destroys many letters without consulting you?—I should be surprised.

2902. *The Chairman.*] Do you not think it would be a much better form if you had kept a register from the beginning of the Public Trust Office in which you recorded particularly every article of personalty that came into your office?—No doubt it will be done in future.

2903. How is it that it did not occur to you to do it before?—It was left to the Chief Clerk, in the same way as I have left the accounts to the Accountant. The fact is, you can have no conception of the work that has been placed on my shoulders. I never had a moment's time to think of these things as they ought to be thought of, and this is one thing that ought to be done unquestionably.

2904. Has the Rev. Mr. De Castro, outside his office here, to do any professional duties in connection with the Public Trust Office? Is he required to open the office with prayer?—No; he is not called upon to do any duty of that kind.

2905. Then, I do not know why you require a gentleman in holy orders in the office?—He was in holy orders before I joined the office.

2906. *Mr. Loughrey.*] Does Mr. De Castro still preach?—Within the last year he has done so, but has not preached lately in the churches of the town. I have sent him to Christchurch some times on some matters. He preached there; and he preached also in Auckland when he went up there to inquire into the agency in Auckland.

2907. You are aware that the Commissioners have asked for a return of all jewellery purchased by officers?—Yes.

2908. Is that being prepared?—There is no record in the office of the purchases; and the only plan I can adopt is to ask the auctioneers.

2909. With the assistance of the auctioneers, and the memory of each particular officer, they will be able, at any rate, to arrive at most of the articles they have purchased?—I think so. The return may be imperfect, but I will make it as perfect as possible.

2910. *Mr. Macdonald.*] In reference to the son of Mrs. Dallon, the jewellery was not forwarded to the son in consequence of some bar being set up as to his legitimacy?—Yes.

2911. That is to say, he has no claim to the estate?—Yes; that was my impression, but I now perceive that I was in error.

2912. Is it not a very unusual thing to require from a son or a daughter who is admitted to be a son or a daughter, as in this case he writes letters, and the mother acknowledges him as her son—is it not, I say, a very unusual thing to require him to produce evidence of the marriage of his parents, his own birth, and so forth, in these small matters of personalty? Is it your practice to do so?—Yes, I think it is our practice, but there are not a great many cases such as this; but it is unquestionably our practice to ask for proper proofs before handing over the estate.

2913. You require each person, before you hand them over their £10 or £15, to produce the certificates of marriage of their parents, and of their own birth, and other evidence?—No. In small matters we content ourselves with a less costly procedure—some declaration by a person who has known that the parents were married, and that this child was born, and so on.

2914. *Mr. Loughrey.*] Is it not impossible to obtain such evidence in many cases?—No, we have not found it to be.

2915. *Mr. Macdonald.*] Is it not almost impossible for a man of forty or forty-five, whose parents may be dead, who has drifted out to the colonies—is it not almost impossible for him to get such evidence, supposing the parents had been dead for thirty years or so?—We have a few cases where we do find it impossible; and in a few cases we are waiting for the time to lapse to approach the Supreme Court for directions. But we have got directions to pay, notwithstanding deficiency of proof.

2916. Have you seen the papers in Mrs. Dallon's case?—Yes.

2917. Do you not think it an extremely hard case that the son should have been treated in that manner by the Public Trust Department, looking at the fact that, being in Brisbane, he took the trouble by cable to you not to dispose of his mother's effects, and afterwards wrote a very long and manly letter in reference to his mother, giving you the story of his mother? Letters are found from him to his mother of the most affectionate character; and yet, notwithstanding his desire, and the trouble he took by cabling from Australia, the jewellery is sold away from him, and he has no opportunity even of purchasing. It is not even valued. He asked to be allowed to purchase; he asked the department to set a value on the jewellery, and he will pay for it; but the department