

3256. Was that lace there then, or the bracelet?—I did not see them.

3257. So that fifteen or eighteen months ago there was no sign of the bracelet or the lace in the casket?—At the time I got the watch I did not see them. I missed the bracelet.

3258. Did you make any remark about it?—No.

3259. Did you make any observation about it when you left the place?—No; but I forgot to mention yesterday that in coming down with the casket to the Public Trustee I called in on Dr. Henry and showed him the contents of the jewellery-casket, and Dr. Henry examined the bracelet. He will be able to tell you what he thought of it.

3260. Could you draw a sketch of the bracelet?—Yes.

Mr. FREDERICK WILLIAM HAYBITTLE examined.

3261. *The Chairman.*] You are a partner in the firm of George Thomas and Co.?—Yes.

3262. How long have you been connected with the firm?—Since 1872—nineteen years.

3263. I presume before you became a partner you were employed by Captain Thomas?—Yes; I started as office-boy, and was for a long time auction-clerk.

3264. You know all about the sales that were sent by the Public Trust Office for your firm to conduct?—Yes, I think I know as much as any one would know, so far as would remain in their recollection.

3265. Had you frequently sales from the Public Trust Office of personal effects to deal with?—Yes; we have had them pretty frequently. Unfortunately, they have been small; but they have been fairly frequent. The sales were probably better five, six, or seven years ago than they have been the last two or three years—larger estates. Lately they have been confined to a little jewellery and personal effects—coats, trousers, boots, &c.

3266. Did the Public Trustee ever favour you with the sale of any real estates?—No; anything good seems to deviate in another direction. If an aggregate were taken, I suppose that for the last two years the sales have not averaged £100 or £150 a year; that is, the total amount sold. Anything good seems to have gone somewhere else. The best sale I have had from the Public Trust Office was the late Mr. Gordon Allan's books. That was the first sale I undertook myself, and the best we have had. It took place about six years ago. It came to about £200.

3267. Then the sales you have had have consisted of personal effects, such as clothing and jewellery?—And I think in one instance I had a house, which brought £150. The sale of furniture took place at the residence. These are the only two sales of any consequence.

3268. Sometimes you have had musical-boxes and scientific instruments?—Once I had a set of solid silver knives and spoons.

3269. Do you remember who purchased?—Mr. Littlejohn bought them.

3270. Have you generally a fair attendance?—Always a pretty good attendance. People recognise that these sales, as distinct from pawnbrokers' sales, are genuine, and consequently there is an overflow of people.

3271. Does the advertisement announcing these sales state that they are by order of the Public Trustee?—Yes.

3272. And does it indicate the estate which is being dealt with? You only act as instructed by the Public Trustee?—Yes. I think the great majority are simply advertising "George Thomas and Co. have received instructions to sell a large number of valuable personal effects, including," &c.; but in one or two instances the name is mentioned, as in Gordon Allan's, but in the others no name is mentioned.

3273. Have you ever been asked by any one in your employment, when these sales occur, to buy for any officer in the Public Trust service?—Personally, I have never bought, myself; but there is no doubt, if you subpoena one of my clerks, he would be able to give you information on that score. I believe that something now and again has been purchased by outside individuals.

3274. I am alluding to gentlemen in the actual service of the Public Trust Office?—Yes; I believe that certain purchases have been made on their behalf.

3275. You spoke of another clerk in your service. Would you object to give us his name?—Mr. Nairn.

3276. You will have no objection to his giving evidence?—Certainly not. He has recognised a good many people come into our auctions who probably cannot attend, and they say to him, "Nairn, I would like to buy such-and-such an article. Will you secure it for me if I cannot attend?" Probably he has taken a transaction of that sort.

3277. Have you ever seen, during the conduct of any of these sales, any of the officers of the Public Trust Office present bidding?—Yes, probably in a remote case. It is not a general rule.

3278. Do you remember which officer you have most frequently seen?—I could not distinctly state.

3279. Have you ever seen Mr. De Castro bidding?—Certainly.

3280. More than once?—Yes.

3281. Several times?—Yes.

3282. Do you know whether any of your employes have bought at any of those sales for themselves?—Oh, yes! I should say they have taken advantage of the opportunity afforded now and again—not often—to buy a good pair of boots, a bundle of linen, or something of that sort.

3283. Did any of the firm ever buy anything?—Yes, I bought a watch myself; I have got it on me.

3284. A gold one?—Yes.

3285. What price did you give for it?—I bid £15 for it.

3286. That is a higher price than usual?—It is a keyless watch, and a very good one.

3287. Do you know the estate it belonged to?—I could find out the name. There was an old