

3307. It is clearly contrary to law?—He must not buy it himself, but plenty of others there would.

3308. Now, as to a ladies' hunting, gold, lever keyless watch, in good order and little worn, would it be surprising to find a watch like that worth £20?—You could hardly give an idea unless you saw the watch. There are so many descriptions of watches. I have ladies' keyless hunting levers selling at £2 10s., and £2 even. It all depends on the gold. It may be nine-carat. If it is a Rotherham watch it might be worth £20. But very important evidence on this point would be the evidence of the watch itself. Get it, and, as men of business, examine it and find your own ideas about it.

3309. It really does not matter what the value is, so far as this watch is concerned. It is the principle of the thing, the quarter or direction in which the watch has gone, which we have to investigate?—[No answer.]

3310. Is it not possible for you to assist us in reference to that last jewellery-sale?—The books I have at the present time go back to June, 1890, and there are a good many sales in those books.

3311. We should like, if possible, to trace the buyers of that jewellery. I may explain the reason for that. There is a valuable bracelet missing in the estate of Mrs. Dallon. It is extremely doubtful whether that bracelet, as far as we can gather, ever went to you to sell. So that if we could trace the buyers of the whole of the jewellery there, we should know exactly whether you ever submitted that bracelet.

3312. *The Chairman.*] I do not think the bracelet ever reached the auctioneers.

3313. *Mr. Macdonald.*] I do not think it ever reached them?—If it reached us it would be here.

3314. But it is not here?—I should say, speaking from memory, I never sold such a bracelet. I now produce account sales of this sale in Mrs. Dallon's estate on the 28th March, 1890, as follows: Dress-case, cash, 6s.; bangle, Cleary, 2s. 6d.; sundries, cash, 2s.; gold locket, Kean, Newtown (connected with 'Bus Company), £1 3s.; gold watch, Hamerton, £6 5s.; earrings, Franklyn, 5s. 6d.; gold rings, W. Hill, 11s.; two diamond rings, E. J. Hill, £1; two rings, J. M. Cleland, 14s.; two earrings, Cooper, 10s.; sundries, R. Butt, 1s. 6d.; locket, R. Butt, 2s. On the same day, in Dickson's estate, silver watch, De Castro, 8s.

Mr. THOMAS SHERRIFF RONALDSON examined.

3315. *The Chairman.*] What is your position in the Public Trust Office?—Ledger-keeper I am called.

3316. Do any other duties devolve upon you?—Yes, of course. In fact, I do not really keep the ledger, as far as it is concerned.

3317. Explain as fully as you like. Do not be under any reserve. The Commissioners want to see the condition the office is in. What information have you to tell us about it?—When an estate is reported, I have simply to see that the estate is realised, or assets realised, and claims in connection with it paid. If there is a title I have to get it put straight; in fact, to see that the estate is administered, claims paid, and next-of-kin or other parties paid.

3318. Then, you are one of the officers who are called managers?—I have never been called manager. I am simply known as Ledger-keeper. I have charge of the intestate branch.

3319. The Accountant of the Public Trust Office has told the Commissioners that there are five officers who keep the ledgers, who are in charge of separate and distinct departments, who are called or looked upon as managers. Are you one of them?—Yes, I am one of them.

3320. Now, in your position, does it come within your duties to know when any effects belonging to an estate in realty or personalty is to be disposed of?—It does.

3321. Do you know how personalty belonging to any estate in the Trust Office is disposed of?—I do, or should.

3322. What is the course pursued in disposing of it?—As a rule, it is sold by auction. Of course, if there are relatives, and they wish to have it transferred, it is transferred if the estate is solvent.

3323. Presuming it is not going to next-of-kin or relatives, it is sold by auction?—Yes.

3324. Do you know how long it is kept before it is sold?—Jewellery and that sort of thing is generally kept from a year to two years.

3325. So that a large stock accumulates?—Yes.

3326. Have you anything to do with the keeping of that stock?—No.

3327. Do you know any of such personalty that has been sold at any time privately within your knowledge?—Not in Wellington.

3328. Do you know of any sale out of Wellington?—I cannot exactly name a case, but I think there were two or three cases where we have had things valued at the request of a friend or relative, and sold at that value.

3329. To which auctioneer in Wellington are these effects generally sent?—Thomas and Co. get most of the jewellery.

3330. Does any other auctioneer get any sale of personal effects?—Yes. There is a sale of a few things coming off on Saturday. Mr. Sidey is selling.

3331. Has he had many sales?—No.

3332. But some?—Yes; I believe so.

3333. Do you know of any other firm?—Laery and Campbell.

3334. Have they sold jewellery?—Yes.

3335. Any other auctioneer?—Well, I do not recollect any more.

3336. Has Mr. Sidey sold jewellery?—No; I think he has sold in the way of clothing.

3337. And perhaps other effects, not jewellery?—Yes. He may have sold jewellery, but I cannot at the moment remember whether he has or not.