

3338. When any effects are sent to any auctioneer, by whose authority are they sent?—The Public Trustee's.
3339. In the first instance?—Yes.
3340. Then, who is the next officer who sends, or who takes charge?—Mr. De Castro, the Chief Clerk.
3341. The Rev. Mr. De Castro?—I believe he is.
3342. And he is the head jeweller of the establishment?—Yes; he looks after all the jewellery.
3343. You have no silk-mercier on the premises, because you have got clothing and lace on the premises?—So I hear.
3344. *Mr. Macdonald.*] Were you not aware of it?—I was not aware of it. I keep a record of all the assets and claims.
3345. *The Chairman.*] Then, you keep a record of all the assets and claims in connection with estates?—Yes.
3346. So that you ought to be familiar with all the personal effects belonging to an estate?—Yes.
3347. Have you ever attended any of these auction-sales where these effects have been sold?—Yes, on one or two occasions.
3348. At which rooms?—Thomas's.
3349. Any other one?—No; I do not remember having done so.
3350. Did you ever buy anything yourself at Thomas and Co.'s?—I have.
3351. What article?—I bought a watch.
3352. Anything else?—Yes. I believe I bought, not for myself, but for a gentleman, a dress-coat and waistcoat—at least, I instructed the auctioneer to buy it for me, and I believe it was bought in my name.
3353. Anything else?—I do not remember anything else. I do not think I bought anything else.
3354. I suppose when you made those purchases you considered it within your rights and being the custom of the office to do so?—I never thought anything about it. I did not give it a moment's thought.
3355. Did you know whether any other officers had bought goods?—Oh, yes; I heard of other officers having bought goods.
3356. Did many of the officers buy?—I think most of them bought something or other.
3357. Who else besides Mr. Mognie, Mr. Wilson, the Solicitor, and yourself bought?—Well, of course, Mr. De Castro has bought.
3358. The Rev. Mr. De Castro has been a very large buyer apparently?—He bought a good many articles, I think; that is hearsay evidence.
3359. What other officer bought?—Mr. Stephens.
3360. Is he in the office now?—Yes.
3361. Any one else?—They all might have bought. I think Mr. Pyke bought a watch.
3362. Is he in the office now?—Yes.
3363. Then, it never occurred to you that it was somewhat out of place for any employé of the Public Trust Office to make such purchases?—No, it did not.
3364. *Mr. Macdonald.*] You keep the Assets and Claims books?—Yes.
3365. Is it your duty, as keeping a correct record of the assets of an estate, to take an inventory of all personalty in reference to the estate in the first place?—It is not my duty to take an inventory, but to note such an inventory as I get.
3366. Whose duty is it to make an inventory?—The police, as a rule, make inventories.
3367. What steps do you take when you hear of the death of an intestate in Wellington?—We write to the police for a report.
3368. Do you remember the estate of Mrs. Dallon?—I do remember the estate.
3369. Was any inventory taken there?—Not by me.
3370. Do you know of any clerk who took an inventory?—No.
3371. Did you inspect the personalty at any time?—I did not.
3372. Do you know anything of the personalty of your own knowledge?—I do not.
3373. Did you attend the auction-sale?—I did not.
3374. Do you ever check over the jewellery that remains in the safe with your Assets book?—I do not.
3375. Then, you may have a series of assets in your book that really do not exist?—I suppose I may. They never come to my hands at all.
3376. What is the object in keeping that book?—To enter assets and claims in.
3377. Is it supposed to be kept accurately as a record?—It is.
3378. How is it balanced?—There is no balance at all, so far as that is concerned.
3379. How have estates in your book closed then? Have you ever balanced?—No.
3380. Why?—It would be a waste of time if I did it. It is really a diary, a mere memorandum-book.
3381. Of no value as showing the real position of matters?—No.
3382. That, I suppose, is the reason why, when you start with an estate being a bank deposit of £500, you change that into a deficiency bill of £400, and when you pay £100 away in connection with claims you run a line through it?—It is simply a rough diary. We have all sorts of representations. If I get a record from an agent or a policeman, "This man owns three cows," down goes "three cows." If I hear afterwards that he had only one cow, the pen goes through "three" and "one" is substituted. I make an explanatory note that it is only one cow.
3383. Instead of being a mere diary, it would be more valuable if it was an exact record?—You must have some rough book of the sort.