

of articles in safe shown to and examined by witness.]—There is just about as much information here as there is in my Assets and Claims book.

3424. There is a good deal of "&c." in there too, is there not, Mr. Ronaldson?—Yes.

3425. So that if you took that book now in your hands, supposed to be a record of particular articles in detail, and you wanted to check the articles with it, you could not possibly check it?—I could not possibly. I do not see any more particulars in it than in my Assets and Claims book.

3426. Do you think your system of rough details in your book, or in that book, is a proper method, and an accurate method, of keeping the records of personalty that come into the Public Trust Office?—I certainly think they ought to be kept better.

3427. Do you think the system is a proper record?—I should certainly say not.

3428. *Mr. Loughrey.*] Should there not be a proper inventory?—Yes.

3429. If this jewellery had been handed to you, would you have taken an inventory?—Yes, undoubtedly.

3430. Would it not be a very easy matter to abstract any valuable article from those parcels?—I think the more valuable, as a rule, are shown in that book, so far as I can see.

3431. *The Chairman.*] Supposing a valuable article was not entered in the Rev. De Castro's private book, what is to trace it then?—Nothing whatever.

3432. You have to depend upon the integrity of the officers?—You want some system, in case the officer dies.

3433. *Mr. Macdonald.*] Will you read the entry in Dallon's estate: "Box of jewellery, parcel of papers, &c." Would you look at that account sales of George Thomas and Co. You see a number of articles mentioned there as having been sold on the 28th March. Supposing that a valuable bracelet had disappeared between the office and the auction-room, how could you trace it?—I cannot see that you could trace it at all.

3434. *The Chairman.*] And the bracelet which we find is missing in Mrs. Dallon's estate might have been included in the "&c."?—Yes, as far as I can see.

3435. *Mr. Macdonald.*] Having looked at that, what is your opinion of Mr. De Castro's book now?—I think it is of very little value as a record. I am quite aware it is a very unsatisfactory way in which the matter is conducted. I should either be in charge of intestacies or not.

3436. You have felt it is an unsatisfactory way. Have you remonstrated?—In a conversational way, I dare say I have expressed dissatisfaction.

3437. You have felt considerable dissatisfaction?—I have, undoubtedly.

3438. *The Chairman.*] You are nominally in charge of an important branch of the ledgers, and yet you are not in charge?—In that respect I am not. I have to take it "as read," so to speak.

3439. Do other officers post your ledgers?—My cadet. Of course, the entries come through me first.

3440. *Mr. Loughrey.*] So you have no knowledge of what is comprised in the parcels?—None whatever. They never come before me.

3441. *Mr. Macdonald.*] Although, in point of fact, you are in charge of intestate estates, and therefore responsible for recording the assets, the jewellery department does not lie with you?—It does not.

3442. *The Chairman.*] In other words, the Rev. Mr. De Castro does not trust you with the jewellery?—It seems so; or anybody else.

3443. Or particulars of the parcels?—Not except they are scheduled by the agents.

3444. Does he favour you with the particulars of his "&c.s"?—No.

3445. *Mr. Loughrey.*] The "&c.s" give you no more information?—No more than you see yourself.

Mr. THOMAS TEAGUE STEVENS examined.

3446. *The Chairman.*] What position do you hold in the Public Trust Office?—I am Ledger-keeper.

3447. Similar to the position of Mr. Ronaldson?—Yes; wills and trusts, M to Z.

3448. How long have you been in the Service?—I think, about nine years in December next.

3449. Now, will you explain to the Commissioners what your duties are in relation to wills and trusts, seeing that you are in charge of the ledgers that keep those accounts?—I have to repeat what I said in my personal report. I have, I may say, the management of an estate in all its particulars, from its incoming to its outgoing, provided it goes out during my term of office; and my first duty, when an estate comes in, is to read the will or the trust deed, because it may be an estate under a trust, and make such notes of either or both as may be necessary for my future guidance; and then I enter up the estate in a book called Assets and Claims book; and, as the estate progresses in the way of receipts or correspondence, I deal with it as may be necessary. If it is a matter of not very great importance I deal with it without reference to the Trustee; if important, I refer to him.

3450. What do you do with respect to the personal effects and chattels?—That would depend entirely upon the position of the estate and direction of the sale. If the estate were solvent there would be no necessity for selling the personal effects, or any part of the estate.

3451. Presuming you have to sell, what then?—Then we should sell.

3452. But before you sell the effects that come into the office that appear to go through your Assets and Claims book, have you any control of those effects—jewellery, for instance?—No, I have no control whatever of it.

3453. Where does the jewellery go?—The Chief Clerk has charge of the jewellery. It is part of the estates in my ledger that he has control of. I have a minute of particulars in my Assets and Claims book, but beyond that I have no right to assume the charge of the jewellery.

3454. Have you no right to ask any questions about it?—Yes, I should say I have a right to do so.