

3802. Did you ever hear since you left Thomas and Co.'s that any books had been burnt or destroyed?—No.

3803. I suppose you know most of the officers by sight who are employed in the Head Office of the Public Trust Office?—Well, I have never had anything to do with any of them except Mr. De Castro. He was the principal man. I was well acquainted with him. Mr. Hamerton I know very well.

3804. Do you know Mr. Wilson, the Solicitor?—No.

3805. Do you know Mr. Moginie, the Accountant?—No, not personally.

3806. Was the Rev. Mr. De Castro a frequent visitor at the auction-room?—He attended all sales on behalf of the Public Trustee. I do not think, speaking from memory, there was a sale conducted under the Public Trustee without Mr. De Castro being there. In fact, we used to wait sometimes for the arrival of Mr. De Castro.

3807. Why did you expect him to be there?—As far as I knew, I thought it was necessary for him to be there, so as to be able to see what prices the things fetched.

3808. Was he a frequent buyer?—He bid in the usual way, the same as other people.

3809. Was the Rev. Mr. De Castro very friendly with the late Captain Thomas?—Yes; very friendly.

3810. Were they on very friendly terms?—Yes.

3811. Now, would it be part of your duty to have the handling of all those effects, as storeman?—Yes; but they usually came in in bulk, and I was always instructed. In fact, I knew my business so well that I took it for granted the usual course was that if they came from any part of the city they remained intact until Mr. De Castro came and saw the goods opened. Anything which he thought necessary to take out and keep with regard to the people's friends I understood him to say he took them.

3812. Then, he frequently took things out nominally for the benefit of deceased persons' next friends?—Nothing more than papers.

3813. Did he never take a watch out, or a bracelet?—He has taken watches on several occasions, and said they were not to be sold at present, but would come in later on.

3814. Can you call to mind his taking a bracelet on one occasion?—No, I cannot.

3815. You have frequently seen him withdrawing watches from among the effects sent to Thomas and Co.'s?—Yes, saying they should not be sold at present, but would come later on.

3816. I suppose those watches would perhaps be some of the best of them?—Sometimes we would have a lot of different people's things come in together. As a rule, these would be in the estate of some gentleman who was known or had friends.

3817. Do you know whether Captain Thomas ever bought anything?—Very seldom. He bought very little of anything. He was not fond of jewellery in any shape.

3818. Do you know if Mr. Haybittle bought?—Yes, he bought.

3819. Was Mr. Bristow there in your time?—No.

3820. Did not Mr. Nairn buy?—Yes, on several occasions, in the usual way. I have a watch now that I bought several years ago.

3821. Was it a good watch that you bought?—An ordinary watch.

3822. Do you remember what estate it was in?—I think the watch belonged to a gentleman in Christchurch. I gave £2 for it.

3823. I suppose some very good things used to go into your auction-room from the Public Trust Office?—Yes, a lot of good things, and a lot of rubbish.

3824. There were some very valuable things?—Yes; a valuable ring and a gold watch now and again.

3825. Extra good?—Yes.

3826. Perhaps you remember some valuable jewellery belonging to a widow named Mrs. Dallon going into your auction-room?—No; I do not remember.

3827. Are private sales sometimes made?—I do not think so. I have never known it with Public Trustee goods. It might be done unknown to me.

3828. Supposing a private sale were made by Captain Thomas or Mr. Haybittle, such might have happened without your knowledge?—Yes; but I do not think they would do that without consulting Mr. De Castro.

3829. Then supposing that Mr. De Castro were willing that a sale should be made privately, do you think it likely it would be done?—If Mr. De Castro said so by all means it could be done.

3830. Were Mr. De Castro and Captain Thomas particularly intimate?—Yes; they were very old friends.

3831. And they were both looked upon as very good men?—Yes, they professed religion enough. I always found Captain Thomas a very good man.

3832. Was he very religious?—Yes.

3833. And of course the Rev. Mr. De Castro is very religious?—I cannot say about that. I am supposed to believe so.

3834. *Mr. Macdonald.*] Do you say that no private sales have taken place?—Not to my knowledge.

3835. Were you never familiar with any instance of watches or jewellery being taken out by Mr. De Castro from the sale without going to auction, and a price being fixed upon them?—The only way that might be done would be this: If Mr. De Castro or Captain Thomas or Mr. Haybittle came to any compact like that they would not allow me, as storeman, to know anything about it. I have known instances where people said, "I like that watch or ring; I will give so much for it." They might knock it down sharp at the time of the sale to Mr. De Castro or anybody else. I never knew an article to be taken out and kept until the returns were sent. That would be done in the office, and would not be known to me.