

3865. Now, did Mr. De Castro say anything else to you?—Not a word. His wife came up, and that cut off the conversation as quickly as it commenced. That was all that passed between us. I walked away when his wife passed the gate outside. He said, "There is my wife." He walked away and I walked away also.

Mr. HAMERTON, Public Trustee, further examined.

3866. *Mr. Loughrey.*] With reference to this inquiry about the private letters in Mrs. Dallon's estate, I wish to draw your attention to a letter dated the 21st April, 1888, from a Mrs. Curtis. I would like you to read that letter. It is one of the private letters obtained from Mr. De Castro's safe. [Letter read by witness.] Please read aloud that portion of it which refers to the lace, and Mr. Grey will take it down?—"I am quite ready to keep to my offer about the lace. If you send it back to me, I shall send you £5. I do not like to think it may go to anybody else."

3867. Would you, after reading that letter, come to the conclusion that the lace was valuable?—Yes, if this lace produced is the lace referred to.

3868. *The Chairman.*] Are you aware that the reason that Mrs. Dallon kept that lace separately from her clothing, and kept it in her jewellery-casket, was because it was more prized than any other of her articles of clothing?—I was not so aware.

3869. Are you aware she kept that lace in her jewellery-casket?—I cannot say that I was aware of it.

3870. Now, Mr. Hamerton, we have been told by Mr. Morrison that when he brought to the Trust Office that casket which contained jewellery and that piece of lace, he handed it to you, and you looked over the things?—It is quite possible; I do not recollect.

3871. You remember the other day that you admitted that you sent him with this casket of jewellery to Mr. De Castro at the time he brought it here?—Yes; it is likely; I cannot call it to mind.

3872. Then, seeing the matter in that light, do you not think it probable that that piece of lace is the lace referred to in that lady's letter?—I should think it is.

3873. And had you read that letter previously, would you have come to that conclusion?—I should.

3874. Now, looking at the fact that Mr. De Castro has told the Commissioners that he read all the private letters, and that he burned a great many that he looked upon as unfitted to keep, do you think it likely that letter escaped his attention?—If he read them all it ought not to have escaped his attention.

3875. Well, then, do you think it very probable, looking at the circumstances surrounding this particular matter, that the Rev. Mr. De Castro had a knowledge that that lace was of value?—Well, I should not like to say whether that letter was impressed upon Mr. De Castro's mind. If he read that letter he must have had a knowledge that the lace was of value.

3876. Well, then, looking at the circumstances in another light—that these letters were confined in Mr. De Castro's private keeping for all these months—more than a year—ought he not to have informed himself of the contents of that letter before dealing with the estate? Why hesitate with the answer?—I was hesitating for this reason: that it is quite possible a man might read a letter amongst a very large number of letters and not take particular notice of an expression contained in that letter.

3877. Well, read the expression again: "I am quite ready to keep to my offer about the lace. If you send it back to me I will send you £5, as I do not like to think it may go to anybody else." That letter was written by a lady in England to Mrs. Dallon. Now, Mr. Hamerton, as a sensible man, do you think it likely that the Rev. Mr. De Castro has not read that portion of this particular letter that has been in his keeping for more than a year?—I should say that he would have read it.

3878. Then, so far as regards any particular expression in any letter, do you think, presuming that the Rev. Mr. De Castro read this letter, that this particular portion may have escaped his memory and attention?—Yes, that is what I think.

3879. You really think it has escaped his attention?—I think it may have done so.

3880. And if he told you that it had, would you believe it?—I know perfectly well in reading over numbers of official letters—

3881. I am only asking your opinion. If the reverend gentleman told you it had escaped his attention would you believe it?—I should believe it.

3882. Well, how was it that the particular lace did not escape his attention?—Well, as I understand—I do not know whether I have a right to say.

3883. I merely ask you how was it that this particular lace did not escape his attention?—[No answer.]

3884. Are you quite well acquainted with the fact that he had the lace in his house for a considerable time?—The understanding that I have is that he took it home to inquire of his wife her opinion of the value. Well, I believe that statement, and I further believe that lace would have been returned if his illness had not come on.

3885. You do?—I believe it.

3886. And you believe that that lace which the reverend gentleman took to his house many months ago to find out the value of it would have been returned?—I do.

3887. Are you aware how many months it remained at his house?—It was several, but I do not know the number.

3888. Are you aware that it was more than six?—I was not aware.

3889. Very well. Are you aware that it was more than three?—No, I am not.

3890. Are you aware that it remained several months?—Yes.

3891. Do you know the size of that lace?—I see it there,