

3892. You see it is a very small packet. How long would it take for any lady to value that lace?—A minute.

3893. Then, as the sacred custodian of the effects of dead people, this lace being a portion of them, was Mr. De Castro justified in keeping that lace even twelve hours at his house?—No.

3894. Was there any excuse for it?—No.

3895. And yet you believe that he intended to return it?—I do.

3896. Then, why did he not return it when the Commissioners first called upon him to come before them and give evidence?—I could not say.

3897. Are you aware that he was some days in town at his own house, in Willis street, before he met the Commissioners?—Yes.

3898. Perhaps you were informed by his wife that the lace was in a pigeon-hole in his study?—I was not.

3899. Well, you are aware that Mr. De Castro was many days at his own house in Wellington since returning from the country?—Yes.

3900. And you are aware he was at the Public Trust Office frequently between the time he returned from the country and the day when he first met the Commissioners?—Yes, I think so.

3901. Then, how was it that he never brought the lace back until the last morning on which he was under examination—last Saturday?—I could not say.

3902. Then, are you aware that he has told the Commissioners lie after lie in connection with this lace?—I think the Commissioners called my attention to it on a previous occasion.

3903. Do you believe the statement which he then made?—I should like to see the particular statement before answering.

3904. You shall have a copy of his evidence; and I ask you again, are you still of opinion that the Rev. Mr. De Castro would have restored that lace to the Trust Office had the Commissioners not discovered that it was missing?—I am.

3905. Then, do you think, if this Commission had not now been sitting here, that it would have been in the Trust Office to-day?—Possibly not.

3906. Was it not after a diligent search had been made in the safe and in your strong-room by your officers that Mr. De Castro returned that lace to the office?—Yes.

3907. *Mr. Loughrey.*] Have you read Mrs. Curtis's letter from England to Mrs. Dallan carefully?—Yes.

3908. Have you come to any conclusion as to the position which Mrs. Curtis would likely hold in English society?—She would probably hold a good position in society.

3909. *The Chairman.*] Now, Mr. Hamerton, will you state to the Commissioners the conversation, or conversations, which you have had with the Rev. Mr. De Castro, and with Mrs. De Castro, if any, in reference to this lace matter. Be good enough to state fully and precisely?—The only conversation with Mr. De Castro was after his examination here. He came into my room and stated that the Commissioners had been questioning him about the lace, and he said that he had taken it home to inquire the value from his wife, and that of course the lace was of no value to him. Mrs. De Castro I did not converse with at all on the subject.

3910. Now, tell me on what day he spoke to you in that way?—It was the day that he was examined.

3911. It is important we should know. Was it the day the Commissioners sent for you immediately after he had been examined that he told you what revelations had been made?—I cannot recollect the date; but it is fixed on my mind in this way: that when Mr. De Castro came in he was a little flushed, and I thought from that circumstance that he had been rather pressed in examination.

3912. And you sympathized with him?—No.

3913. Well, you did about his illness?—Of course.

3914. And his agitation when he went into your room?—It was his heightened colour I noticed.

3915. Was that the last day on which he was examined here?—I think so.

3916. Had the lace come to light before that?—Yes; before he saw me.

3917. And you received his explanation?—Yes.

3918. Were you, in fact, satisfied with it?—I was satisfied with his explanation.

3919. And with his good intentions?—I was.

3920. *Mr. Macdonald.*] Mr. Morrison has told us that you yourself examined the bracelet which is missing when it came into the Trust Office. Do you recall the bracelet to your memory at all?—I cannot. Really, I do not recollect a single article that was in the box. I wish I could recollect.

3921. *Mr. Loughrey.*] Will you now give the Commissioners some further information concerning the mortgages at present existing in the office. Is this not the list which was furnished by your department to the Commissioners?—Yes.

3922. Is it a full list of all the securities?—As far as I know, it is.

3923. You have told the Commissioners that the law upon which you make advances is that advances shall not be made to more than half the amount of the valuation?—Yes; of the amount of private valuation—that is, our own value.

3924. Do you always insist on private valuation before making advances?—Yes.

3925. Invariably?—Invariably. It has been relaxed—I think five, six, or seven years ago—in two instances, I think, where the value furnished by the Property-tax appeared to be very large, and the Board did not insist in those two cases on the private valuation on account of the expense.

3926. Do you take into account at all the property-tax valuation in considering the application for a loan?—Yes; it is an element of consideration; we do not depend on it.

3927. Will you look at the list as furnished by your department to the Commissioners. The first is the Auckland Provincial District. How many mortgages have been effected by the office