

4345. Has that latter promise been carried out?—No. I advise the district agent in Christchurch now. A little time ago I had an interview with the district agent—in fact, I have had several interviews with him about this particular loan. The district agent called upon me and told me they were not going to send me down to value. I said, “The Public Trustee told me I was to do it.” He said, “No; we have got two other names.” Mr. Hamerton was communicated with on the subject, and he wrote back to say that the Public Trustee could not alter his determination, because I had shown direct hostility to the office.

4346. Then, notwithstanding his promise to you at the time of severing your connection with the Christchurch agency to employ you as valuator, having all the necessary qualifications, he subsequently wrote expressing his determination that you should not be employed, you, in his opinion, having shown hostility to the Public Trust Office?—That is what the district agent told me.

4347. When Mr. Hamerton announced his intention of making the change at Christchurch, did he express any dissatisfaction with the way in which you had hitherto conducted the business?—No. He said, “I wish to sever the connection in a nice, gentlemanly way.” When I left I said, “Now, Mr. Hamerton, are you perfectly satisfied with the way in which I have conducted the business?” and he said, “Perfectly.” I then said, “Have you anything against me?” and he said, “Nothing.”

4348. When he formally announced it by letter, did he state anything?—On the contrary, he thanked me very much for the energy and zeal I displayed in the conduct of the business.

4349. During the whole time the business was in your firm's hands, had you ever a letter of complaint or fault-finding with anything you had done?—No. We had friction in small matters of detail, such as must occur about all sorts of trivial things. Letters were written to us by the clerks in a style that we objected to. Mr. Barns and I thought them somewhat impertinent, and written in too formal a manner. They were letters such as no business house would allow to go out.

4350. I presume your accounts in connection with the Public Trust Office in Canterbury were always audited?—We had an audit about the beginning of the year. Mr. King, the Government Auditor, did the auditing then. He took two days. I asked him at the end of the audit if everything was right and to his satisfaction, and Mr. King said, “Yes; I am pleased with everything. This is the best office of the lot.” When I came up here I told Mr. Hamerton that Mr. King was very much satisfied with everything in his inspection of our accounts. I said, “Now we are resigning we had better have a regular audit.” Mr. Hamerton distinctly told me he did not want one.

4351. Then when was the previous audit made?—The previous audit was made six or eight weeks before then.

4352. The Public Trustee did not consider it necessary or advisable, in taking over the important trust again from you, to have at that period a fresh audit?—No; I suggested the audit to him for my own sake.

4353. Has he ever communicated with you since he expressed that view about having an audit?—No.

4354. Do you know a Mr. J. C. Martin, who belongs in your city to the legal profession?—Yes; he is Crown Prosecutor at Christchurch.

4355. Have you known him long?—I remember him as a lad in Harper and Co.'s.

4356. Have you had much business with him or communication with him while conducting the Public Trust agency in Christchurch?—Yes. He acts as solicitor for the Trust Office. His firm always acted in our time.

4357. I presume that he is a friend of yours and you are a friend of his?—I have never met him anywhere outside the office. I have never met him at the houses I go to.

4358. Then, are you friendly with each other in business?—Always have been. We have always had a chat when we met.

4359. Then, do you regard him when you meet as a friend?—Certainly.

4360. Have you no reason to regard him otherwise?—Not the slightest.

4361. Do you remember anything of a lawsuit against the Public Trustee in connection with an estate in your district—that of Hugh Wright, a lunatic?—Yes. Miss Wright used to come in, and Mr. Barns used to see her when she called. We were never asked to advise in that case. I remember that lawsuit in which a solicitor named McConnel, since suspended for two years, acted as solicitor in Wright's estate, and he raised a suit which the Public Trustee defended.

4362. Who advised the Public Trustee to defend that action?—I do not know who advised him.

4363. Were you ever asked to try and settle the matter?—No; we were never asked to try and make a compromise.

4364. If you had been asked, do you think you would have succeeded?—It is doubtful, with a man like McConnel to deal with.

4365. Are you aware that the amount in dispute was only £500?—Yes.

4366. And were you ever asked by the Public Trustee to advise him on the question of that dispute?—I do not think so; I have no recollection of it. It was never referred to me personally.

4367. Then, the Crown Prosecutor must have been communicated with directly by the Public Trustee?—I should think so.

4368. Do you feel that you have been very harshly treated?—I do not feel it particularly. I think that the Public Trustee ought to have been more courteous. I asked to be allowed to wind up with the end of the quarter (31st March), but he was not courteous enough to do it.

4369. Then, looking to the fact that you and your firm had been acting for such a length of time for the Public Trustee, and that the business was removed from you after a few days' notice, without receiving any satisfactory reasons for such action, do you think it is likely to injure your business?—The telegram was sent down in such a form from Wellington that I immediately went down to