

ceive. It is alleged that a boy named Charles Horton had been tormented. The boy denies it, the boy's father denies it, and Mr. Crofts himself says that he told the boy's father that there was nothing in it. (See evidence, p. 10.)

No. 7, "Having, in conjunction with Mrs. Van Asch, treated Miss Buckingham in such a manner that she has on more than one occasion come to my wife and myself to complain of the treatment:" There is enough of foundation in this charge to accentuate the absurdity of it. Miss Buckingham is an assistant in the institution, and during the early part of last year there was some slight friction between her and Mrs. Van Asch. It appears there was a close friendship between Miss Buckingham and Mr. and Mrs. Crofts. She, naturally enough, spoke about the matter to them. Mr. Crofts, who appears to have been keen for some years past to note whatever was amiss, did not throw oil on the troubled waters, but wrote a note to Miss Buckingham (see Exhibit N), which was answered by a note from Miss Buckingham (see exhibit F), and this note was, with very questionable taste, placed by Mr. Crofts in the hands of Miss Buckingham at the close of her evidence when he found that it was not favourable to his case. As the note was capable of many interpretations, I thought it better, in the girl's interest, to thoroughly investigate everything in connection with the matter, the result being that the surroundings of the note were found to be trivial, and the charge against the Director and Mrs. Van Asch as trivial. Miss Buckingham appears to be a very useful assistant, and possesses the full confidence of the Director and Mrs. Van Asch.

No. 8, "Having used salt mutton to a large extent in feeding the children at the beginning of 1891:" Salt mutton was used, but not to such an extent as to be injurious to the children.

No. 9, "Having put the department to an unnecessary expense in sending the children home for their holidays, and bringing them back to school:" There is no foundation whatever for this charge.

No. 10, "Having shown undue favour towards his own daughter and Mr. Allan in allowing them the privilege of learning drawing and painting from the lady teacher employed by the department to teach the children drawing, to the exclusion of other assistants:" The grievance here is that Mr. Crofts was not one of the persons selected by the Director to assist the lady teacher of art. Mr. Crofts appears to be physically incapacitated from deriving any advantage from these lessons. His eyesight is defective. As girls are taught in the classes, I think the Director exercised a wise discretion in sending his daughter to assist the lady teacher.

In conclusion, I desire to say that the unfounded charges Mr. Crofts has made, his mode of collecting and using evidence to substantiate them, his line of cross-examination as shown in the evidence attached, and his inveterate habit of borrowing money from all and sundry, lead me to the conclusion that he is an unreliable and unscrupulous man, quite unfit for the position he at present occupies.

In accordance with the provisions of "The Commissioners' Powers Act Amendment Act, 1872," I hereby order that Herbert Edwin Crofts shall pay the whole of the costs of this inquiry.

I have, &c.,

RICHMOND BEETHAM, Commissioner.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

[TAKEN ON OATH BEFORE RICHMOND BEETHAM, COMMISSIONER, AT SUMNER].

TUESDAY, 16TH AUGUST, 1892.

Gerrit Van Asch, sworn, saith: I am the Director of the Institution of Deaf-mutes at Sumner. I have recommended to the head of my department that Mr. John C. Allan should be appointed head assistant at the school, and for official business. Mr. Allan has been appointed. My reasons for making that recommendation were, first, that he is professionally the best man; and, secondly, because I objected to Mr. Crofts borrowing money from the parents of pupils and others connected with the institution. Mr. Crofts has borrowed £20 from Mr. W. Moorhouse, of Adelaide. I produce a letter from Mr. Moorhouse, dated 14th May, 1888 [Exhibit A]. I also produce a letter from Mr. Crofts to me, dated 11th December, 1888 [Exhibit B], asking me for the loan of £40. I lent him the money. He paid me back by instalments, with interest at 7 per cent.—£5 a month. In January, 1891, Mr. Crofts borrowed £6 from Mr. R. K. Simpson, a parent of a child in the institution, under peculiar circumstances. I received three letters from Mr. Simpson—C, D, and E—first letter, 19th January, 1891 [Exhibit C]; second letter, 2nd March, 1891, explaining why he wanted to see me [Exhibit D]; third letter, 27th June, 1891 [Exhibit E]. Mr. Crofts also borrowed money from Mr. Stevens, one of the masters. He borrowed £15 in 1888, which he repaid ten months afterwards. In May, 1889, he borrowed £9 at 7½ per cent. Mr. Crofts borrowed from Mr. Allan on 14th June, 1890, £18; on 13th April, 1891, £2: £10 is owing yet to Allan by Crofts. I will put questions on these points to Allan and Stevens.

Robert K. Simpson, sworn, saith: Letters C, D, and E are mine to Mr. Van Asch. Mr. Crofts borrowed £6 from me at three different times. He first borrowed £1. He was staying with me at the time. The second sum was £4. I thought he was short of money. Mr. Crofts then said his cheque had not been countersigned, and I lent him another £1. He said his cheque had arrived at Feilding. I demurred to lending him £2 for which he asked. That £6 is owing to me now.

By Mr. Crofts: You might have used the word "money" instead of "cheque." You saw me at Wellington. You did not tell me anything about Sir Edward Gibbes. You asked me if I was aware if some of the boys had been left behind. I received a letter from you dated from Christchurch. I do not remember telling you that you could repay me when it was convenient.