

THE ARRESTED RUSSIANS.

POLICE COURT PROCEEDINGS.

DREGER'S STORY.

Yesterday afternoon, at the City Police Court, before Mr. A. S. Roe, P.M., the hearing was commenced of the evidence against the two Russians, August Maren and Frederick Johnson—who were arrested at Kellerberrin last Saturday week on a charge of having on or about April 20 last, at Doodlakine, conspired together to cause Johnson in the course of a hearing against Ernest Dreger, at Kellerberrin, to wilfully swear that he (Dreger) went to Kellerberrin for the especial purpose of obtaining a gun. Detective-Sergeant Mann prosecuted, and accused were undefended.

Ernest Dreger, a native of Lettland, Russia, deposed to having arrived in Western Australia in 1907, and worked as a farm labourer and clearer until the end of 1908, when he left the State on a German company's steamer as fireman, and he was paid off at Rotterdam, and went on to London, arriving there in June or July 1909. His health was bad, and he went to the Greenwich Seaman's Hospital, where he met Maren who was called by some "Peter Jansen," and others "John Jansen." Witness left the institution about a week after Maren, and went to the Scandinavian Sailors' Home, where the last named had gone, and they both became friendly. Maren told witness that he was a native of Lettland. Witness stayed at the home a week, and then signed on as a fireman on a South African bound steamer. After this voyage he again returned to the Scandinavian Home, where he received a letter from Maren which informed him that he (Maren) was staying at a boarding-house and asked witness to see him. Witness went to the address given and saw Maren. The family with whom he was staying was named Ligum, and witness there met the accused Johnson, who was known as George Rosenberg. Maren introduced witness to the last named and the members of the household, and witness visited the place three or four times a week. He assisted Maren financially, and went out with him and Miss Sarah Ligum. The Ligum family subsequently shifted to a house, No. 13 Elkin-street, near Commercial-road, London. Witness afterwards worked on a steamer on a round trip from London to Liverpool, and on his return Maren was known by his friends as Yalnet—the Lettish name for John. In May, 1910, witness signed on as a fireman on the steamer Port Chalmers for Australia, and arranged with Maren to stow away accused Johnson on the boat. Witness intended marrying Sarah Ligum, and it was decided before he left London that he should send tickets home from Australia for the girl and Maren. The steamer Port Chalmers called at Albany, Western Australia, where Johnson left the ship. Witness stayed on the vessel until it reached Adelaide, from which place he went to Port Pirie, and met a fellow-countryman named Peter Older, with whom he returned to this State on either August 16 or August 17, and went to Kellerberrin. On September 20, witness sent tickets to London for Miss Ligum, Maren,

and his (witness's) two brothers. Accused's ticket was sent in the name of August Maren because he had sent witness a letter stating that he had changed his name. In December last, witness met accused Johnson, who told him that he had also changed his name from Rosenberg, and he, too, went to Kellerberrin with witness and Mr. Older. Maren arrived in Fremantle on the R.M.S. Otway on March 7 last, in company with Miss Sarah Ligum and witness's two brothers, who all came out as immigrants. Johnson and Older had left the farm on which witness was working at Kellerberrin by this time, and the new arrivals were taken there. Maren camped with Johnson and Older at an adjacent farm. After a few days trouble commenced between Maren and witness because of the former's wish to take Miss Ligum with him. The whole party went to Doodlakine between March 20 and March 24, and obtained a clearing contract, between them, from Mr. Frowse. Witness had several rows there with Maren, and some time during the four following days went to Northam to look for work for his two brothers, as they intended leaving the party with witness. He did not, prior to departing, tell either of the two accused that he was going to Kellerberrin to get a gun, and had never told them so. Two men, one of whom had a rifle and a gun, boarded the train, in which witness travelled, before Northam was reached, and he conversed with them and wanted to buy their rifle for shooting kangaroos. They offered him the gun for 25s., and said that the rifle belonged to the Government. At Northam witness bought the gun for 22s. 6d. Witness returned to Doodlakine the same afternoon, and did not go near Kellerberrin that day. At the camp witness displayed his gun to the two accused and Peter Older. On March 28 he, at the request of Johnson, went to Kellerberrin to take legal action against some Austrians for money due for fencing, and on April 5 also visited the town, at Older's request, to look for Johnson, who had borrowed the latter's horse on the previous Saturday, and had not returned to the camp. During that month, Maren claimed a better right than witness to Miss Ligum, and they had a fight. Johnson sent for the police, and on April 20 P.C. McKay, stationed at Kellerberrin, visited the camp. He noticed witness's gun, and said it was stolen property. Witness was taken to Kellerberrin and charged with the theft of the gun, and on the following day was tried at the local Police Court. Accused Johnson gave evidence against witness, who had told him that he had purchased the gun from a Kellerberrin butcher. Johnson stated to the Court that witness had, during the four weeks he was at Doodlakine, gone to Kellerberrin many times, especially for the gun. This testimony was false. Witness was sentenced to three months' imprisonment by the Court.

Detective-Sergeant Mann applied to amend the charge by adding after the words "Ernest Dreger at Kellerberrin," the following:—"Charged with stealing a gun." The application was granted.

At this stage the further hearing was adjourned until 11 a.m. on Wednesday next.

Mr. Roe instructed that the two accused were to be provided with smoking requisites if they desired them.