

PENTRIDGE ACCOUNTS.

Official to be Tried.

— Charged with having as a member of the public service stolen, between November 14 and December 9, £193/18/6½, the property of the Crown, Sergius Forster, aged 33 years, of Richardson street, Middle Park, appeared in the Coburg Court on Friday. Mr. J. Macnamara, P.M., and Mr. W.E. Cash were on the bench.

Detective-sergeant F. T. Piggott prosecuted and Mr. W. S. Doria represented Forster.

William Joseph Gleeson, senior writer in the governor's office, Pentridge, said:—Forster was a fifth-class clerk at Pentridge at a salary of £247 a year. On November 14 last, when going on leave, I balanced the cash books of the prisoners' moneys, petty cash, and the collection accounts books. With Forster I checked the prisoners' moneys, which amounted to £196/11, and handed him £52/8/ collection money for goods supplied, also money and vouchers to the extent of £100/0/8, that being an advance account. For these moneys I received receipts from Forster. I also handed him the keys of the safe. On December 7 I returned from leave. Forster said that he had been very busy, and he did not have the cash book quite ready for me on the following morning. I reported to the inspector-general and the governor of Pentridge that Forster was not in attendance on duty. At about 1 o'clock Forster appeared and said:—"I'm awfully sorry, I took some money, and tried to get it back, but failed." He said he had lost the money at the races. The books showed a deficiency of £193/18/6½.

William Alex Taylor said:—I attended at Pentridge to carry out work for the prisoners. I did not receive moneys for the accounts produced.

Henry Alexander Bolle, clerk in the auditor-general's office, said:—On December 9 I visited the governor's office at Pentridge, where I made an inspection of the books and accounts from November 16 to December 5 of the present year. The first account which I inspected was prisoners' private moneys. I found that on November 16 there was a bank balance of £330, cash, stamps, and sundries taken over, £196/11, moneys received from November 16 to December 5, £52/7/4, together with an amount of 9/9 unpaid, making a total of £580 8/1. On December 7 the bank balance was £330, payments made from November 16 to December 5 and cash, stamps, and sundries in hand amounted to £126/16/2, making a total of £456 16/2, leaving a shortage of £123/11/11. The advance account was £100, and was taken over on November 14 by Forster. From that date to December 5 payments amounting to £16/16/2 were made. Cash and vouchers in hand were £20/0/9, leaving a shortage of £63/13/1. The next account was that of prisoners' earnings, totalling £6/13/6, purporting to have been paid

totalling £6/13/6, purporting to have been paid to William A. Taylor, dentist, for professional services to prisoners. No receipts were forthcoming in these cases. My audit disclosed a total deficiency of £193/18/6.

Detective E. Ethell said:—In December I went to Middle Park, where I saw Forster, who was questioned regarding shortage of money—belonging to the Government. He said: I have been expecting you; I will tell you all about it. Upon being taken to the detective-office he wrote a statement, in which he said that he had been employed at Pentridge since 1922. Upon being left in charge at Pentridge during Mr. Gleeson's absence he succumbed to the temptation in the first week he was in charge. He then took £40, and lost it at the races. The next week he took more and got deeper into the mire. He said that it had been his intention to replace the stolen money, but he was unable to do so. Forster also said that he could not give any reasons why he had taken the money. It was a sudden fall.

Forster was committed for trial at the sittings of the General Sessions on February 1.

Bail was accepted in one surety of £200 and Forster in a like amount.