

OIL IN GIPPSLAND.

BENDIGO DOCTOR'S INVESTMENT.

Charge Against Russian Fails.

John Skalberg, a Russian, Park street, West Brunswick, was charged before Judge Foster in General Sessions yesterday with having obtained £200 from Dr. Sharland, Queen's street, Bendigo, by false pretences. Skalberg was defended by Mr. Cullity (instructed by Mr. R. H. Dunn).

Mr. Sproule, who prosecuted for the Crown, said that the case for the Crown was that Dr. Sharland was deceived into parting with £200 by false statements deliberately made by Skalberg. On July 15 Skalberg went to Bendigo and saw Dr. Sharland. Skalberg offered to sell Dr. Sharland shares in a company, and suggested that Dr. Sharland should invest money in the formation of a syndicate to acquire an oil lease at Lakes Entrance. Several names were mentioned by Skalberg, including that of a major-general. Dr. Sharland eventually bought five shares in the company, but he said that he would seek more information before he invested in the formation of the syndicate suggested by Skalberg. A report by Mr. Richard Fair, an oil-boring engineer, was shown to Dr. Sharland by Skalberg, who told him that Fair had bored for oil in all parts of the world, and had been asked by the Government to report on the Gippsland oilfield. Skalberg returned to Melbourne, and wrote to Dr. Sharland, telling him that Fair and a Russian geologist who was an expert on oil had each contributed £200 toward the formation of the syndicate. Skalberg went to Bendigo again, and he repeated to Dr. Sharland verbally the statements that he had written about the investments of Fair and the geologist mentioned. Influenced by the reported confidence of Fair and the geologist in the venture, Dr. Sharland agreed to contribute £200. An agreement was drawn up by Skalberg under which Dr. Sharland was to receive 2,500 shares in a company that would be formed to work the lease at Lakes Entrance and a payment of £400 for his investment. As

to work the lease at Lakes Entrance and a repayment of £400 for his investment. As a fact, neither Fair nor the geologist had contributed any money toward a syndicate as suggested by Skalberg. It was on those false representations that Dr. Sharland was induced to part with his money.

Skalberg, on oath, said that Fair had told him that he was prepared to invest £200 in the venture, and a Russian geologist in Melbourne had promised to interest himself in the syndicate and to bring in capital. Fair had told witness that he could inform Dr. Sharland that he would invest £200 in the syndicate, and witness believed that the geologist that he had mentioned would also contribute.

Skalberg was found not guilty, and he was discharged.
