

Interesting Stories

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Story outline

Petition against City Council Building Surveyor and City Valuator

The nurserymen carrying on business in Sandhurst have complained to the Council that Mr Knight, the building surveyor and valuator, has for some time been engaged in the trade, and that he is enabled, by his official position, to enter into unfair competition with them.

The Mayor seemed to take a hard line against George Knight during the Council's deliberations in this matter, seemingly supporting the complainants. And there must have been a lot of coordination among 2 or 3 men, in the way 'Letters to the Editor' were written and sent into the paper.

Cr Neill was the Mayor during this time that the petition and complaint was presented to the City Council.

But there was also the notion that the complainants was induced by sentiments of jealousy. George Knight gave good account of himself and the business ran by his sons. A nursery business sorely needed in Sandhurst which, when started, no others were available in the Sandhurst Council district.

This a long report, transcribed from the pages of the 'Bendigo Advertiser' of June/July 1877, as found in Trove.

As the compiler of this cemetery data, I was taken by the letter ([numbered #9](#)), shown last in the list, and entitled '**Human Pigeon Holes**'.

This letter was one of many printed in the letters section, over many decades, where the writer is able to jump/reply with superb irony.

George Knight was replying to an earlier letter written by someone calling himself 'Observer' ([letter #5](#)), referring to a small wooden building Mr Matchett complained of.

Mr Knight's [letter](#) that was printed in the paper as part of the Council report.

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A petition Presented to Council

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Sat 2 Jun 1877 Page 3

ORDINARY MEETING

The Council Building Surveyor has an unfair advantage.

A petition was read from J Cartwright, M Maher, C Lenne, J Ross, R Trevethan, H Rich, and T Moore, complaining that Mr G W Knight, the building surveyor and valuator of the city, carried on the business of nurseryman and gardener in competition against

themselves; and that his time instead of being devoted solely to the Council's interests was taken up to some extent in attending to his private business.

Some documents were attached to the petition, the object being to prove that Mr Knight was virtually the proprietor of a nursery and seedsman's business, and that he undertook gardening work.

The Mayor stated that several gardeners had spoken to him with respect to the wrong that was perpetrated upon them by Mr Knight, whilst being in receipt of £350 per year from the corporation, competing against them in their private business. He (the Mayor) had, upon being spoken to, said he could take no action upon a simple verbal complaint, but advised those who considered themselves injured to send a petition to the Council. For his own part, he thought that if the complaint was well founded, they should do something to remedy the grievance complained of.

He knew at one time that Mr Knight had tried very hard to become a mining surveyor, but they had not allowed him to take out his certificate, and he really thought it was not quite proper that the city valuator, and building surveyor should also carry on the business of nurseryman. He hoped the Council would look carefully into the matter, and see what could be done.

Cr Holmes proposed that the letter and documents attached should be referred to Mr Knight, in order that he might have an opportunity to reply before the Council proceeded to take action.

Cr Denovan considered this was the best course to pursue, and he seconded the motion. Cr Aspinall supported the motion, and in doing so said he was very sorry the Mayor had thought proper to pass **strictures** (*meaning a sternly critical or censorious remarks*) upon Mr Knight at this stage.

Mr Knight had been a long time in the employ of the Council, and he had always been looked upon as a good, and efficient officer. He was in receipt of what might be regarded as a fair, yet certainly not a high salary, but in any case it should first be proved that the complaints in the petition were based on facts.

To express a verdict on the case, before Mr Knight had had an opportunity of replying, would be acting prematurely and unfairly, and he (Cr Aspinall) would support the motion.

Cr Sterry suggested that the Council should appoint a committee to enter fully into the consideration of the complaint made, and that Mr Knight should then be called upon to make his statement. After some further discussion the motion moved by Cr Holmes was put and carried.

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Mr KNIGHT'S CASE

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Sat 9 Jun 1877 Page 2

A controversy is being carried on in the city Council which seems to be giving rise to a good deal of acrimonious (*meaning angry and bitter*) feeling amongst its members. The nurserymen carrying on business in Sandhurst have complained to the Council that Mr

Knight, the building surveyor and valuator, has for some time been engaged in the trade, and that he is enabled, by his official position, to enter into unfair competition with them.

To these representations Mr Knight replies, in effect, that the business of nurseryman is carried on by his sons, and that his interest in it is confined to that which must naturally be felt by a parent in the attempts of members of his family to establish themselves in trade. It is also alleged in a general way that he has devoted some portion of his time to private architectural and gardening work. This he denies.

He says that he has employed his leisure hours occasionally in drawing designs for friends, for which he neither expected nor received remuneration; and, in short, that, as a matter of fact, he has not used the time which should be devoted to his duties as an officer of the Council, for his own private and personal benefit.

The question, so far as the general public are concerned, is simply whether Mr Knight's duly attends to the work he has undertaken to perform - whether, in fact, he is neglectful of his duties, or whether he faithfully and efficiently discharges them, and whether he fairly earns the salary paid him by the Council. It really seems to us that it would be very hard if the family of a public official is to be prohibited from entering into business.

In no line in which they might choose to engage could they avoid entering into competition with a number of other persons; and it is difficult to understand how those persons could reasonably raise objections to their doing so on the ground that the father was receiving public pay. The contention against Mr Knight, of course, is that he is personally interested in the business ostensibly carried on by his sons.

Yet, even if that were the case, it may reasonably be urged in his favour, that so long as he does what he is paid for, he is surely at liberty to supplement his income either by his own work in his leisure time, or by the labor of his family. If Mr Knight is adjudged to be open to condemnation, it must be shown that he has neglected his duties, and that he is therefore an incompetent officer.

We do not understand that a specific charge of the kind has been made, and certainly if it were, and were also shown to be capable of proof, we should not hesitate to pronounce an adverse verdict in his case. The only approach to any such charge that we are aware of was made yesterday at the meeting of the Council by the Mayor, who stated that he had noticed that Mr Knight's office in the Council Chambers was frequently shut up when he believed it should have been open to the public. Undoubtedly this is a matter which should be inquired into.

We do not know whether Mr Knight has any clerical assistance. We believe not; and his duties are of such a nature as to require his being a good deal out of doors. The Mayor also stated that he had seen him inspecting gardens belonging to private persons during the hours which ought properly to have been devoted to the Council's interests.

It remains to be proved whether the office of the building surveyor and valuator is unnecessarily and vexatiously closed to the ratepayers, whether its being so closed is due to Mr Knight's neglect of his duties, and whether, whilst it is shut up, he is engaging himself in such business as the inspection of private gardens or otherwise for his personal benefit. The

matter is, so to speak, at present *sub judice* as it has been referred to a committee for investigation.

We shall, therefore, say no more about it at present, and need only further remark that our object in alluding to it is neither to defend nor condemn Mr Knight, our only desire being that strict justice may be done.

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The Building Surveyor.

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Sat 9 Jun 1877 Page 2

The explanation sent in by Mr G W Knight, building surveyor and valuator of the city, respecting the charge made against him by some of the gardeners of Sandhurst, to the effect that he was in the habit of neglecting his official duties in favour of private undertakings in connection with a nursery and seedsman's business ostensibly conducted by his sons, evoked a long discussion at the meeting of the city council yesterday afternoon.

Mr Knight's letter, which is a very lengthy document, goes to deny that he ever manifested any further interest in the business in question than any father giving heed to his children's welfare, might justifiably do whatever his position, and he states that during the past five years he has not received £12 altogether for services performed outside his duties to the corporation.

Immediately upon the explanation being read, Cr Holmes moved that it be considered satisfactory, and the motion was seconded by Cr Denovan. Cr Woodward, however, moved as an amendment that the matter be referred to a committee of three councillors for investigation. The amendment was seconded, and upon being put a majority voted in its favour. The amendment then becoming the motion, Cr Clark moved a further amendment, to the effect that the matter should be referred to the Finance Committee, and that all parties interested should be requested to attend the next meeting. Cr Woodward thereupon expressed his willingness to withdraw his motion, in favor of Cr Clark's amendment.

The discussion was at times rather warmly conducted. Cr Aspinall, in expressing his opinion that the explanation of the building surveyor was quite satisfactory, made some vague remarks with respect to the characters of the persons signing the petition, whilst the Mayor asserted that he had himself seen Mr Knight engaged in supervising gardening operations at an hour when he should have been in his office. Other councillors also evinced some feeling on the matter, but eventually the amendment moved by Cr Clark was carried.

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THE COMPLAINT AGAINST THE BUILDING SURVEYOR

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Sat 9 Jun 1877 Page 3

ORDINARY MEETING

The petition from J F Cartwright and other gardeners of Sandhurst that Mr G W Knight, the building surveyor and city valuator was the proprietor of a nurseryman's business, and was in the habit of devoting a portion of his time to gardening jobs, having been referred to Mr Knight, and a reply from that gentleman having been received, the matter was taken into consideration.

The following is a copy of Mr Knight's letter:-

Sandhurst, 8th June, 1877.

The Right Worshipful the Mayor and Councillors of the City of Sandhurst.

Gentlemen - My sons are as legitimately in business for themselves as it is possible for any young men to be. My eldest son is 23 years old and my second son is nearly of age; both, in fact, are men and have every right to be in business.

They work early and late at their trade, and are to be seen constantly and industriously conducting their affairs. That I will assist them, as any father would do, needs not two pages of proof these men have troubled you with. Of course I do, and it is most clearly my duty towards them.

I have yet to learn the right of any rival tradesmen (though these are not) to attempt to interfere with the channels of trade, or with my sons in the pursuit of their living and business, much less to investigate whether the proceeds of my sons' earnings are thrown into a general family feint or apportioned to them direct, by what right have these gardeners to thus intrude themselves into my family matters, or to call upon the council of this city so to do.

It is perfectly idle to suppose that my duties as city valuer give my sons a preferential advantage in the nursery trade; the same might be said if they pursued any other calling.

Two discharged servants, journeymen gardeners, **Henry Rider** and **Thomas Moore** - one of whom has left two years, and the other nearly one year - take upon themselves to define with accuracy, and state they are prepared to substantiate on oath, the precise family relations that exist between myself and my two sons, though absent all this long period of time.

Really gentlemen, this is preposterous. The writer is one Thomas Moore, though last to sign the paper. He worked for a short time with my sons - or for me if it pleases him any better - some two years ago, he was shortly after discharged.

Since that time he has been working at Sebastian (Eaglehawk), until within three or four weeks ago, when he joined as partner - one Henry Rider, whose name appears last but one upon the list. This man was a journeyman gardener in Melbourne, whose railway fare to Sandhurst was paid by me some year or more ago, to work with and assist my sons. He was subsequently paid off, and has since been, almost constantly employed with Mr Horwood.

It is only within the past month the advertising firm of Rider and Moore have suddenly flown into existence. How, therefore, can my sons or myself have

been systematically depriving them of their means of living?

Of the seven signatures four are gardeners, who, like themselves, are not even ratepayers at all, though they sign a document stating the hardship is, that they pay their mite towards my salary, whilst in truth and fact they do nothing of the kind. One other is a fruiterer in the Arcade, and a gardener. One is a vigneron and orchardist at Castlemaine, whose produce is not raised in this district at all, though he has a shop in High Street.

Surely this gentleman cannot complain.

The remaining but top signature, is the well known Mr Cartwright.

All these men but one are working gardeners, whilst my sons never go out to work to compete against them, but are nurserymen pure and simple - a totally different class of business altogether to that of a gardener.

I shatter the whole fabric of this petty document when I assure the City Council, and my assurance is supported by the solemn declaration of my two sons appended, that the firm of Knight Brothers, after having carefully examined the shop and nursery books for the past three years, find that during the whole of that long period, they have only executed eight orders for laying out and planting, out of which five were of the most trifling kind under £5 each of total costs, and the three others employed and paid their own men; they also find that no gardeners have ever been employed, but two of these very complainants - Rider and Moore - who were engaged, paid, and had the execution of these very works themselves, thus putting the bread into their mouths, instead of taking it out as they state, though, like thoroughly unfaithful servants, they attempt to spring at those who have been feeding them.

I think this disposes over a long period of time of that portion of their letter in which I am charged of "robbing them of their bread; also of neglecting the business of the city, by running, after work, and depriving them of their means of living."

During the five years I have been with the City Council, I have not received but £12 for horticultural plans, and the bulk of this was from Mr Horwood, for his greenhouse.

This gentleman, like most others, employed and paid his own gardeners, and men; of course my sons did not work there. I made this plan in my private time; it could not be termed general architecture, which I have refused continually. I have never made a single plan of a single garden in Sandhurst, nor received a single fee for so doing.

During the whole of this time I have never in my private hours laid out the

lines on the ground of but six gardens, four of which have been done for my friends gratuitously, work which Mr Hodgkinson, in the Government service, for so many years delighted to spend his leisure hours in, which was encouraged and utilised by the Government, not checked.

I am further charged of running to Melbourne to buy stock. Why I have not been to Melbourne for very nearly twelve months, until last Friday, when on leave of absence, I visited a friend in Geelong, and passed through Melbourne, staying there but a few hours; yet these gentlemen state unblushingly a deliberate falsehood.

The next statement is equally incorrect. Mr Watson offered me the work to design and superintend the construction of his entrance gates, wall, and drains. I thanked him, and told him I could not accept his kind offer, he then gave the work to Mr Brady, and I gave Mr Brady a few levels of the drains in the garden, for which I distinctly declined to make any charge, either to Mr Watson or himself.

Mr Watson is employing and directing his own gardener and men. I have given him several suggestions, which he is carrying out, when he is ready my sons will probably supply him with what he may require, and perhaps lay out his grounds.

Mr Davis employed and paid his own men, my sons supplied him with a few dozen trees, and assisted him to put them in. Mr Thunder is also employing and directing his own men, and my sons have no orders from him yet whatever. What an impertinence for these men to drag these gentlemen's name in any way before the Council of this city.

I dispose of the Echuca reference in an equally straightforward manner. I asked for and obtained a day's leave of absence. I visited Echuca for the express purpose of introducing my sons to business people there, and holding a sale.

I returned by the four o'clock afternoon train (stopping there but one day), leaving my sons behind to pursue their business.

In what manner can the journeymen gardeners of Sandhurst be injured by my sons' nursery sale in Echuca, 50 miles away from them? For the life of me I cannot conceive. I complain with reason that my personal freedom, and that of my sons, is attempted to be invaded by these men, and even my private holiday is intruded upon.

I will not surrender to these narrow-minded persons, whose trade has been benefited by the example of my sons, my right to spend every moment of my leisure in horticulture that I love.

I do my duty faithfully honestly, conscientiously, and well to the City Council and citizens of this city, and this is the most important matter to these my employers. I have spent five years of my life without a single complaint, which entitles me to claim protection from assaults from whatever quarter arising.

I have never yet left Sandhurst for a day during the whole time I have been with the City Council without asking leave of absence. It is always granted to me, and I know my duty to the town clerk too well to commit such a discourtesy.

I have the honour to be, gentlemen,
your most obedient servant,
GEORGE W KNIGHT.

Appended to the letter was a note from Mr J M Brady, architect, bearing out Mr Knight's statement respecting the levels he had taken of Mr Watson's garden. Also a declaration from Mr Knight's sons, supporting generally the statements made in the reply to the charge.

In connection with this matter, a letter from J F Cartwright was also read, asking that, in the event of Mr Knight denying the charge made against him, an investigatory committee might be appointed.

After the correspondence had been read, Cr Holmes moved that Mr Knight's explanation be considered perfectly satisfactory by the Council. He expressed the opinion that the action taken by the petitioners had conferred a benefit on the firm of Knight Bros, rather than wrought an injury. He thought that the firm of Knight Bros, were entitled to much credit and commendation for the action they had taken in establishing a nursery in Sandhurst, for before they entered into business the want of such an establishment had been long felt.

When the petition was brought forward for the first time on the preceding Friday, he had formed an opinion that the parties who signed it did so more from feelings of jealousy at the success of rivals in business than on any other account. Since the last meeting he had bestowed a good deal of thought upon the subject, and the more he considered it, the more strengthened became his opinion that the notion of the complainants was induced by sentiments of jealousy.

Cr Donovan had much pleasure in seconding the resolution, after having heard the straightforward statement made by the building surveyor. Mr Knight, he said, had always faithfully done the work belonging to his office, and he thought the Council should refuse to listen to complaints of the nature of the one under consideration, and decline to interfere in any way with his (Mr Knight's) son's business.

The Mayor could not agree with the motion, and in expressing himself to this effect he referred to the complaints that had been made of the building surveyor undertaking gardening work. He was quite willing to allow Mr Knight to dispose of his spare time in whatever manner he thought proper, but when it came to the building surveyor spending time in the middle of the day in supervising gardening work, he (the Mayor), thought it was time some check should be exercised.

And this was not hearsay, for he himself had seen Mr Knight inspecting gardens belonging to private persons during the hours which ought properly to have been devoted to the Council's interests.

He said that he had filled the office of mayor now for over six months, and during that time the building surveyor's office was almost continually shut, and the consequence was that ratepayers who, desired to see him had little or no opportunity of doing so.

He thought that a man in the position of Mr Knight should give up, in his employers' interest, even what might be to him a pleasurable pursuit. Besides this, it was unfair to other servants of the council that one officer should be allowed to devote a portion of his time to his own interests whilst the remainder were held strictly to their work.

Cr Sterry said he thought the reply was satisfactory so far as concerned itself, but they would have to remember that against it there were the statements of the petitioners.

For his own part, he saw no objection to a man filling in his leisure hours after any fashion that pleased himself. Still he thought it would be much better and much more satisfactory to all the parties interested, to clear the affair up, and in order to bring about this result, he considered they should invite all the complainants, with Mr Knight, to meet the Council, and state the facts in their possession.

Cr Woodward said the case only presented itself to his mind in one aspect, and that was whether they paid Mr Knight a sufficient salary to warrant them in expecting him to devote his whole time to the affairs of the corporation. If the remuneration were considered adequate compensation for his whole attention, then he should not be allowed to undertake outside work.

In his explanation Cr Woodward remarked, Mr Knight admitted that he had attended to other work, and accepted some remuneration.
Cr Holmes: He received no remuneration.

The Town Clerk, after referring to Mr Knight's statement, said that Mr Knight acknowledged that he had received some remuneration from Mr Horwood in consideration of his having prepared the plans for a hothouse for that gentleman.

Cr Woodward continued by saying that he understood Mr Knight received £350 a year for his whole time, but he had been given to understand that instead of devoting himself to the council's interest alone; the corporation had received the benefit of only about five or six months of the building surveyor's time out of the past year, the remaining period having been turned to his own private advantage.

However he did not desire to object to this if the Council did not think they were paying rather too large a sum annually for the services rendered. He suggested that the difficulty might be got over by transferring Mr Knight's duties as building surveyor to the city surveyor, and that for his services as valuator he should receive £200 per annum, and be permitted to utilise his spare time in any way he pleased.

Cr Aspinall rose to a point of order, contending that Cr Woodward was not addressing himself to the question.

The Mayor said he thought that Cr Woodward was addressing himself to the question, although he had gone a little beyond bounds.

Cr Woodward, in conclusion, said that as the Council would not allow the question to be discussed in all its bearings, he would at once move as an amendment that a committee of three councillors - namely, the Mayor, Cr Buckley and the mover - be appointed to investigate the matter.

The amendment was then put, and a majority voting in its favour.

Cr Clark moved as a further amendment that the matter be referred to the finance committee. He thought that the fact of Mr Knight's sons being engaged in business had nothing whatever to do with the Council, and if the building surveyor himself employed his leisure hours in horticultural pursuits they could say nothing against it.

He said he would deal with Mr Knight in the same manner as any other servant of the Council, but he thought that in the present case his explanation was quite satisfactory. The building surveyor stated that for the last five years he had not received £12 for outside services.

Some time since he had undertaken some architectural jobs, but since a complaint had been made against this, Mr Knight had done nothing in this way. If it were proved that the building surveyor had done something wrong then there would be some ground for complaint, and before they decided upon referring the matter to a committee they should satisfy themselves that the petitioners would attend to substantiate the charge they had made.

Cr Woodward: How can we do that until we try? Cr Clark continued by saying that he thought if they were to have the matter investigated by a committee, it should be a committee of the whole Council, so that every member might have an opportunity of considering the statements and fresh evidence that might be put forward by the petitioners.

He, therefore, moved his amendment - that the matter be referred to the finance committee, and that all parties be notified.

Cr Sterry seconded the amendment, regarding it as an improvement on the other.

Cr Aspinall, in supporting it, said he thought the reply sent in by Mr Knight was perfectly satisfactory. They had a statement from Mr Knight, showing how little outside work he had done during the past five years, and it appeared to him that the only matter which required attention at their hands was the statement made by the Mayor, to the effect that he had himself seen the building surveyor engaged in outside work during office hours.

But this might possibly have taken place on Wednesday afternoons, when all the municipal offices were closed and the officers could do as they pleased with their time. They might inquire into the Mayor's statement, but so far as the petition was concerned it should be allowed to rest where it was.

He believed that some of the men who signed it had been "got at." At any rate, some of the names attached to the petition - and one in particular - were those of men whom he would not allow outside his back door. They were satisfied that the whole of Mr Knight's time

should be given to the Council, but at the same time he thought that before proceeding further in this matter they should have more ample proof in substantiation.

It would be paltry to expect that citizens who had work done by the building surveyor, such as the laying out of gardens, etc, perhaps gratuitously, would attend the committee meeting to give evidence.

For his own part he failed to see what harm there was in Mr Knight drawing plans, or doing any other work he pleased, at home during the evenings. He made no charge for what he did, nor did he reap any pecuniary benefit whatever from the work he performed during his spare hours.

The Mayor: The people for whom he worked would take their plants from him.
Cr Aspinall: What has that to do with it?

The Council had no right to interfere in any way with Mr Knight's sons' business. Cr Woodward said he would withdraw his amendment in favour of that proposed by Cr Clark. The question to be decided was whether Mr Knight was devoting his time to outsiders.

He was not prepared to say he was doing so, but as he had admitted that in one instance at least he had received remuneration for outside services, he (Cr Woodward) thought there should be an investigation. He was sorry to see that certain councillors had thought proper to introduce personal feeling into the discussion, as he thought there was no necessity whatever for such a display.

They were paying fair salaries to their officers, and if they agreed to devote their whole time to the interests of the corporation, it was the Council's duty to see that the agreement was properly carried out. He was quite willing to withdraw his amendment in favour of that proposed by Cr Clark, for as a matter of fact the latter suited him best. Cr Holmes supported the amendment proposed by Cr Clark.

The Mayor, in again deprecating the action of the building surveyor in accepting work from private parties, referred to a letter which had been read at the meeting that day from Mr Matchett, complaining that a wooden building was being erected 4 feet 6 inches from his premises, in contravention of the local building regulations. He contended that if the building surveyor attended to his duties in a proper manner, such a complaint as this would not have to be made to the council.

Cr Aspinall said this matter could not then be discussed, as it was not before the council. Besides, how was the surveyor to know when a house was being built in a particular part of the city. He thought the discussion of this matter was premature.
The Mayor: It is not premature.

After some further remarks from Cr Holmes, the amendment as proposed by Cr Clark, that the matter be referred to the Finance Committee for report, and that all parties interested be requested to attend the meeting, was put and carried.

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Letter to the Editor #1
Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Tue 12 Jun 1877 Page 3

THE BUILDING SURVEYOR.
(To the Editor of the Bendigo Advertiser.)

Sir, - I have been surprised at the proposal to separate the offices of building surveyor and valuator, and confer the former on the city surveyor (Mr Steane). It is very evident this notice has not originated from the complaint made by the nursery gardeners, but it appears to me to have been arranged some time, and that Mr Woodward has been used as the tool to bring it forward. Is there any complaint of Mr Knight's inefficiency as building surveyor or valuator to cause a separation of the offices?

If there is, then by all means let the Council dismiss him and get an efficient officer in his place. Those two offices should certainly not be separated, but perhaps Mr Knight has been too particular in enforcing the Building Act, and by separating the offices and conferring the building surveyorship on Mr Steane, he will not trouble the Mayor or councillors by reporting and stopping works not built according to the Act.

I should have thought the city surveyor had quite enough to do, and, in fact, I know he has, to attend properly to his own duties, which are not always efficiently performed, as the late floods and the drains being constructed in the Reserve at present, will testify; and, to give an additional office to Mr Steane as building surveyor, will, I consider, be simply a job, for he is no more fitted for the position than I am to be a bishop.

Let any of the citizens go to the Back Creek Cemetery and look at the architectural monstrosity he has there committed in the gate entrance and fencing, and say if the interpretation of a Building Act should be entrusted to him. It is to be hoped the ratepayers will not allow the Council to ride roughshod over them, but let them know that they (the ratepayers) will have a voice in the matter. Apologising I for taking up your valuable space, I remain,
yours obediently,
A LOOKER-ON.

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Letter to the Editor #2

(To the Editor of the Bendigo Advertiser.)

Sir, - If our city councillors really have the interests of the ratepayers at heart, it ought not to take them many minutes to determine upon what should be done with the office of building surveyor.

Instead of the committee inquiring into Mr Knight's private affairs, I contend it would be far better for some member to table a motion for the abolition of the office, as it is nothing more nor less than a palpable fraud upon the already heavily-taxed ratepayers.

With the present state of our finances we cannot afford to establish a municipal benevolent asylum; and if this office is to be continued there can be but little doubt but what it will prove the nucleus of the institution referred to. As business men our councillors must

know that the building surveyor cannot possibly fill in one tithe of his time with municipal matters; the work is not there for him to do, and it is but natural that he should try and pass his leisure time in some rational way.

What, sir, I would like to ask, is to prevent the town surveyor from inspecting the plans of some ten or twenty a small tenements that may be erected during the year, and what is to prevent him from making the valuations also? I contend nothing whatever.

When Sandhurst was a mass of holes; when streets had to be formed, bridges and culverts constructed, the streets planted, and the White Hills gardens and Camp Reserve formed and planted, all this work, and the town clerkship also, was performed by one man (the late town clerk) quite as efficiently, as it is now done by three officers.

What then, sir, is to prevent the town surveyor from performing the offices of the building surveyor and valuator now that all the heavy work is done? In making the valuations the town surveyor would acquire a thorough knowledge of the defects and requirements of the different parts of the district, and I am confident that he could prevent some hundreds of pounds worth of damage being done to the culverts, bridges, and roads during the winter months, by personally inspecting these matters during the time he was making the valuations.

I think, sir, at a moderate calculation, the saving thus effected, together with the building surveyor's salary, would be little short of £600 per annum. I trust our councillors will see the necessity of carrying out the above suggestion, which is tendered in a friendly (and not fault-finding) spirit.

Should matters be allowed to continue as they are I hope the ratepayers will make this one of the test questions at the next municipal election.

Yours, etc,

11th June.

ECONOMY.

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Letter to the Editor #3

(Per favor of the Editor of the Bendigo Advertiser)

Sir, - Will you kindly permit me through your columns to reply to certain statements contained in Mr Knight's reply to the Council.

Mr Knight states that his sons are legitimately in business for themselves; if such is the case, how can he reconcile the fact that a few months ago he offered to dispose of the seed and nursery business to Mr Maher or, of the Arcade?

Mr Knight refers to me as a discharged servant.

Sir, the facts are these:-

Mr Knight wanted me to work ten hours a day, which I declined to do; a few days afterwards he sent me a memorandum to the effect that I was to begin to work the ten hours on the following Monday morning, or failing that to accept the same as a week's notice, which I told him I would gladly do. You will, therefore, see that it was optional with me whether I left or not.

During the same week Mr Horwood advertised for a practical gardener; I signified my intention of applying for the position, whereupon Mr Knight came to me and requested me to take no notice of what had passed between us, but continue to work as before; which I declined to do.

I did not apply to Mr Horwood then, but upon the advertisement again appearing in your next issue, I decided upon applying for the situation.

Mr Knight again came to me, with the same request, and the same result. On the Saturday, the day on which I was discharged (I use his own phrase), between the hours of three and four pm, Mr Knight came to me, and the following is what passed between us:- "Well, Mr Rider, are you going to leave us tonight?" I replied, "Yes." He then said, "Very well, but I did not think we had fallen out to that extent."

He then asked me where I was going to work. I replied, "At Mr Fawn's, Golden Square." He told me it was a place that would not suit me, and asked me, in the event of my not liking it, to return to his employ, an offer which I thankfully declined.

Upon my discharge, Mr Knight gave me a testimonial, stating that I was a first-class nurseryman, a good worker, sober, and steady, and that we parted over a very trivial matter; and that the situation would be open for me to return to. Sir, I now leave it to you and the public to judge whether I am a discharged servant or not.

Mr Knight states that he paid my railway fare from Melbourne. So far he is correct, but if Mr Knight chooses to remember, a short time subsequently to my discharge, I gave him notice to leave, and offered to pay him the amount of my railway fare. Mr Knight would neither accept my notice, nor the railway fare, but offered to forego the latter and give me 5s. extra per week if I would stop with him, which I was foolish enough to do. I ask, then, how can he honestly say that he paid my expenses.

He further states that I am not a ratepayer. All I know is this that I have received a notice from the rate-collector to pay a certain amount, and if I do not comply, will, I think, find myself in the wrong book.

Mr Knight says the advertising firm of Rider and Moore has only suddenly sprung into existence. I may remark that the firm of Knight Bros: preceded it by a week or two only. Mr Knight says his sons are nurseryman pure and simple. They are that truly enough. Where did they serve their apprenticeship, or gain their experience? Echo answers, where?

In conclusion, I can honestly say that I have not the slightest ill feeling towards the firm of Knight Bros; but on the other hand, wish them every success, providing that it is obtained in a fair and legitimate manner.

My objections are that others should be scandalised for their especial advantage, and that their father should be permitted, in his official capacity, to canvass the district on their behalf. Apologising for trespassing so much on your valuable space.

I remain yours respectfully.

HENRY RIDER.

36 Hargreaves Street, 11th June, 1877.

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Letter to the Editor #4

(Per favor of the Editor of the Bendigo Advertiser.)

Sir,- Will you kindly allow me through the medium of your valuable paper to state to the public the facts of my so-called discharge from the nursery of George W Knight.

During the short period I was in his employ I had the utmost difficulty in getting my salary; I got it in driblets, sometimes 5s, sometimes 3s, per week, according to the state of the exchequer. I threatened several times to leave him, and demanded my money, but he always had an excuse, saying that he would soon be receiving his salary and then he would pay me.

At last I told him that I was leaving the district, and that if my wages were not forthcoming I would sue him for the amount, whereupon I got it. He (George W Knight) then took me to Mr Holdsworth, the chemist, and told him that if he wanted a good man he could recommend me. Now, does this prove that I am a discharged servant? I leave it for the public to judge.

He told me the reason of his parting with me was the want of means, a statement which I heartily believed. I have a few other facts concerning Mr Knight's complicity in the firm of Knight Brothers to adduce, which I will give when the proper time comes.

Apologising for taking up so much of your valuable space,

I am, yours, etc,

THOMAS MOORE.

36 Hargreaves Street, 11th June.

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Letter to the Editor #5

(To the Editor of the Bendigo Advertiser.)

Sir,- In regard to the laxity of the building surveyor allowing a building to be erected in Mitchell Street, I must say that it is a disgrace to such a thoroughfare, and quite in opposition to the building regulations; if the City Council allow such a building to remain it is most disgraceful, when put side by side with Mr Pickles' coach factory.

We all know the hubbub that was created over that building. If this pigeon-box is allowed to remain, how can the Council or its representative enforce any compliance in regard to the different clauses contained in the building regulations. Let the Council mete out the same justice to one as well as another.

There is more in this than meets the eye. The Council shirk the trust reposed in them. When Mr Matchett complained why did not the Council visit the structure themselves, instead of referring the matter to the building surveyor? Talk about our old town clerk ruling the Council.

When such trust is placed in a servant's hands its the head of that servant that ought to see that there is no favor shown; but it seems the Council allow some of their servants to do as they like, whilst it is a crime for another servant to sell a few quarts of milk, as it might do

an injury to some one in the milk line.
So much for even-handed justice.
-Yours, etc.
11th June. OBSERVER

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Letter to the Editor #6

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Wed 13 Jun 1877 Page 3

THE CITY VALUER.
(To the Editor of the Bendigo Advertiser.)

Sir, - Having seen in the local papers that the Council are thinking about making a change in the city valuator and architect, by giving over the architecting to the city surveyor, and reducing the salary of Mr G W Knight and allowing him to make use of his spare time for his own benefit, I ask one and all of the city councillors why this should be done; why bolster up any man out of the general rates to give him an advantage over anyone?

There are plenty of men quite as capable as Mr Knight to value our property, and would be only too glad of such a nice little billet without interfering with any man's living; and no man who has such a responsible billet should be allowed to practice in anything or any business outside the ratepayers' work.

I don't wish to infer that Mr Knight would do such a thing, but how easy for a valuator to suit his own ends to undervalue a large property, especially where a large garden is looming in the distance, draw plans for a building, and get up the specifications for Darnton Watson.

Mr Knight was seen surveying Mr Watson's garden, and driving down the pegs himself. Ask Mr Horwood who laid out his garden, and gave every direction to the men doing the work, it's the Council's place to sift the affair thoroughly to the bottom.

Let the Council write to Mr Burke, at Woodstock; Mr Davis, at Quarry Hill; and Mr Darnton Watson, asking them whether it is Knight senior or junior. As to calling it Knight Brothers, how can it be that when the other lad is boots (*meaning boot cleaner or shine boy*) at Mr Potter's City Club Hotel. Let the committee of the Council bring those parties face to face that are able to give such evidence that will convince the Council of the truthfulness of the petition.

What has Mr Knight got leave of absence for? Only to go to Melbourne to look up and buy stock. Let the city officer be kept to the work of the ratepayers, and if the salary is not enough let them resign. Officers of trust should be so restricted from trading, even as the civil servants are.

By so doing it would make them above suspicion, even as Caesar's wife was.

- Yours, &c,
11th June. J F H CARTWRIGHT.

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Letter to the Editor #7

(To The Editor of the Bendigo Advertiser.)

Sir,- As one of the narrow-minded persons referred to in Mr G W Knight's letter to the City Council, and reported in your valuable journal of the 9th instant, I beg you will allow me space to remove Mr Knight's erroneous impression that I am the vigneron and orchardist from Castlemaine - pure and simple - which he evidently takes me for.

That I cannot wield the pen with such a powerful sway as Mr Knight is more the fault of my not being a born Englishman, but only a naturalised subject in this colony, and having to learn, like many other things, the English language by usage; therefore, I expect, from the well known love of Englishmen for fair play, that you will overlook my shortcomings in grammar, etc.

I beg to promise that I have been established as nursery seedsman, and florist in Sandhurst for over four years, considerably longer than the firm of Knight Bros, who, according to Mr G W Knight's statement, are the only qualified pure and simple nurserymen of Sandhurst. They may be the former, but they are not qualified nurserymen.

All the qualification they possess to give them that distinction they acquired under their father's tuition, and have not gone through a course of apprenticeship in a nursery of the colony. My qualification as nurseryman I beg to lay before you.

Although vigneron and orchardist at Castlemaine, my nursery produce is not solely raised there, but I have had a nursery in progress during the last three years within ten minutes' reach from the Town Hall of Sandhurst, situated near Golden Square on a 20 acre block, of which 6 acres, or thereabouts, have been brought under cultivation up to the present, and which are solely devoted to the rearing of trees, shrubs, flowers, and all hardy kinds of nursery stock in general.

There are some thousands of young trees and plants sown marketable, and others approaching such. I can trace my descent through a line of leading horticulturists to several Governments of the Continent to the 17th century, holding most important and influential positions. One of my uncles held the position of Director-General over all the Royal parks, gardens, and horticultural establishments of the Government in the kingdom of Prussia under the late king.

My father also held the important position of director of the State nursery at Cologne, on the Rhine, where my humble self, after quitting college, was apprenticed to a first-class nursery more than thirty years ago; and from that time till I came to this colony I extended my practical and scientific knowledge in some of the best Continental nurseries of Germany, France, and Belgium, which, on the whole, are considered on a par with the best of the world.

More than twenty years' practical experience as nurseryman in this colony concludes my qualification as such. It is not petty jealousy, as insinuated, which induces me to pen these lines, as true nurserymen and gardeners cannot afford to nurse such an unprofitable luxury; but the unknighly aspersions Mr G W Knight attempts to throw on the gardeners of Sandhurst as a class should be sufficient excuse for me to try to explain, and prove that

nurserymen must be gardeners before they can lay claim to style themselves as exclusively qualified nurserymen.

The nurseryman who is not a gardener, and consequently ignorant of the habit, nature, and general character of a plant when he sells it, cannot assign its proper place in a plantation. He may be a skilful plan-drawer, but the proper distribution of trees and plants require that he should have the requisite knowledge to see and calculate their different special developments and aspects in future years, which knowledge can only be acquired by extended practical study of the subject.

Mr G W Knight being so sure that he can shatter the whole import of the petition presented to the City Council by the gardeners of Sandhurst by his contradictory assurance of a three years' entry in the shop books of the firm of Knight Bros, which firm has only lately begun to exist, I must leave that part to be dealt with in its proper place.

- I am, sir,

yours, most obediently.

Sandhurst, 11th June. C. LENNE.

**

THE CHARGE AGAINST MR Knight

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Sat 16 Jun 1877 Page 2

The whole of the time during which the finance committee of the City Council sat yesterday from three o'clock until half past six was occupied in discussing the charge of neglecting his duty in favour of private business brought against Mr Knight, the building surveyor and city valuator, by various gardeners in Sandhurst Messrs J F Cartwright, Maher, Lemie, Ross, Trevelyan, Rider, and Moore stated the facts in their possession in support of the petition that had been presented, and Mr Knight, who with his two sons, was also present, replied to the charges.

The result arrived at ultimately was that, on a motion proposed by Cr Holmes, seconded by Cr Denovan, the Council declared Mr Knight's explanation satisfactory. Cr Woodward moved an amendment, which was seconded by the Mayor, but only Cr Sterry, with the mover and seconder, voted in its favor.

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Finance Committee Meeting.

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Sat 16 Jun 1877 Page 3

CITY COUNCIL

Friday, 15th June.

The committee met at the usual hour. Present: The Mayor (Cr. Neill) in the chair, Crs. Woodward, Bayne, Aspinall, Donovan, Buckley, Sterry, Clark, and Holmes.

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ALLEGED BREACH OF THE BUILDING REGULATIONS.

The letter from Mr Matchett, which was received at the last meeting of the Council, and consideration of which was then deferred for a week, was brought up by the town clerk.

The letter complained that a named Lenne had erected a small wooden building in Mitchell Street at a distance of only about 4 feet from the premises of the writer, in contravention of the provisions of the Council's building regulations.

This complaint having in the meantime been laid before Mr, Knight, the building surveyor, that gentleman sent in a reply, which was read, to the effect that he was not aware that the Council possessed any power to prevent any citizen from erecting on his own ground, in any position he pleased, a small building, entirely covered with iron, such as that concerning which complaint had been made.

The building regulations, he pointed out, made no distinction between Pall Mall and Irishtown. It was a mistaken idea to suppose that the Council possessed power to interfere as regarded the style or appearance of a building, and, moreover, in the case under notice, the material was not inflammable. A discussion took place during which some councillors expressed the opinion that the regulations should be altered so that they might have a more effective operation.

Subsequently Mr Knight was sent for, and he state that after Lenne had commenced to erect the building he told him that he should have applied to the Council for special permission under the circumstances.

Lenne had not done this, but had sent him a note stating that the building was only a temporary one, and would not be required for a longer period than three or four months. Seeing this, and the relation in which Mr Lenne stood towards himself as one of the persons who had signed a petition making certain charges against him with reference to another subject, he had not cared to interfere greatly in the matter. In any case he could not have stopped the erection of the building.

Cr Aspinall suggested that in future all applications for special permission to erect buildings should be referred to the Council. He objected to such buildings as the one about which complaint had been made going up - at any rate in some parts of the city.

Mr Knight said that in this case special permission had neither boon sought for nor obtained. But, as he had stated, he could not prevent any man from building a house on any part of his allotment that pleased himself. The only thing he could do in such a case would be to sue the offending party, and if the Council desired it he would do so in this instance.

Cr Aspinall said that special permission not having been given in this case, the person who erected the house should be summoned, and instructions should be given to Mr Knight that in future he would have to lay all applications of this character before the Council. He moved to this effect.

Cr Woodward thought it would better to alter the regulations, so that the Council might under them secure uniformity in the new buildings erected. In Melbourne and other places the building regulations provided that only buildings of a certain class should be erected, and he thought regulations of a similar description should be enforced in Sandhurst.

Some further conversation having taken place on the matter, Cr Woodward moved, as an amendment, that the matter be postponed for a week.
Cr Bayne seconded the amendment.

Upon the motion and amendment being put, the former was carried.

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THE CHARGE AGAINST MR KNIGHT.

The charge preferred against Mr Knight, the building surveyor and city valuator, of having neglected his official duties in order to attend to private business, consideration of which had been deferred from last week, was then brought on.

All the parties interested in the case - Mr G W Knight and two sons, Messrs J F Cartwright, Alf, Maher, Lenne, Ross, Trevelyan, Rider, and Moore - were present.

The petition sent in by the nurserymen and gardeners having been read, Mr Cartwright stated that the petition had been written and signed by him. In support of the charge he related what he knew, to the effect that on the 10th and 11th April last he had seen Mr Knight supervising the erection of a fence at the back of a florist's shop in Hargreaves Street, and besides this he had frequently seen him at Mr D Watson's place.

In reply to councillors Mr Cartwright stated it was not on a Wednesday afternoon when Mr Knight had interested himself in the erection a fence at the back of his sons' shop; he had seen Mr Knight at Mr Darnton Watson's at different hours of the day.

Mr Maher said he had not a very great deal to say in connection with this matter. All he wanted was that the Council would insist upon the surveyor refraining from accepting any ?nties outside those belonging to his office. He knew that Mr Knight had taken some gardening jobs; he (Mr Knight) had acknowledged having done so in one or two instances. He mentioned as instances that Mr Knight had superintended gardening operations at Mr Horwood's place, and at Mr Bourke's, at Woodstock.

In reply to Cr Donovan, Mr Maher stated that he had not seen Mr Knight at Mr Watson's garden. In reply to Cr Holmes he said he had never seen him superintending any gardening work whatever.

Mr Lenne said the only thing he wished to complain of was that Mr Knight had taken trips to Echuca for the purpose of conducting sales of plants and pushing business. In support of this portion of the charge he produced letters from tradespeople.

The Mayor inquired of Mr Lenne whether any "arrangement" had been entered into between him and Mr Knight in connection with a little building in Mitchell Street.

Mr Lenne said there had not.

The Mayor: "All right, only I have heard different."

Mr Lenne said that he had been told to call at the office of the building surveyor at the Town Hall, and upon his doing so Mr Knight spoke to him about the matter, saying that he should have given notice of his intention to erect the building. Mr Knight asked him what sort of a building it was to be, and he replied that it would be built of iron.

Mr Knight again said that notice should have been given, and that it would come before the Council, but as other buildings of a similar nature had been constructed perhaps no objection would be raised. A letter that had been sent in to the Council stated that the building was a wooden one, but this was not so.

The Mayor: Mr Knight did not say that if you stopped proceedings in this matter he would see that you were made all right with your building?

Mr Knight protested indignantly against insinuations of this character, saying that he could not be expected to sit quietly and listen to them.

The Mayor said the question was asked in Mr Knight's interest, as well as in that of the complainants. He had heard that an arrangement such as that he had spoken of had been entered into, and he was determined to find out whether the report was true or not. Mr Knight would have to listen to anything that might be said and answer any questions that might be asked of him.

Mr Knight said he had misapprehended the Mayor's intention, and apologised if he had exhibited any undue warmth.

Mr Lenne replied to the question to the effect that no such arrangement had been entered into.

Mr Ross said he had signed the petition because he had called upon Mr D Watson with reference to his gardening work, and found that Mr Knight had been given full charge of it.

Mr Trevelyan had no definite charge to urge. Mr Rider said he had good deal to say about this matter. He had been engaged by Mr Knight in Melbourne to come up and work at his nursery at Quarry Hill. The written agreement was signed by Mr G W Knight, who gave his address as the building surveyor of Sandhurst, his office being at the Town Hall.

While he was in his employ Mr Knight passed as the sole proprietor of the establishment, and gave all the instruction with respect to the work. He was by Mr Knight's express orders, sent to Mr Horwood's, Mr Christopher Moore's, Mr Murphy's (late of the Shamrock Hotel), and to Mrs White's (of Redan Hill), for all of whom he had done gardening work, under Mr Knight's instructions.

The work at Mr Horwood's was done under Mr Knight's personal supervision. He had known him to be away from his office supervising gardening work for as much as four days in the week, from between twelve and two o'clock until he (Mr Rider) left work in the evening.

Sometimes Mr Knight gave him an order for his wages. Sometimes Mrs Knight paid him, and sometimes the sons. When he left his employ, Mr Knight gave him a good character, although now he vilified him before the Council. He has no ill-feeling against Mr Knight and merely signed the petition because he considered it was a just one.

He knew nothing about Mr Knight, so far as Mr D Watson's garden was concerned, but he had known him to be at Mr Horwood's at all times during the day.

Mr Moore said that whilst he was in Mr Knight's employ, he was taken to Mr Gray's place at Back Creek, and set to work gardening, according to plans made by Mr Knight.

He was also taken to Mr, Bourke's place, at Woodstock, for the purpose of doing gardening work, under the instructions of Mr Knight, who accompanied him. He had heard too that Mr Knight had canvassed for work and he objected to this particularly, because other gardeners could not hope to compete in business against a man whose duties, for which he was paid by the Council, gave him such facilities for carrying on a canvass.

He could prove that Mr Knight had solicited work from Mrs. Ryan, of Golden Square; Mrs Lee, of New Chum; and Mrs Harris, of Bridge Street. He would back up Mr Rider's statement with regard to Mr Knight's having absented himself from his office. He could not say that he did so every day, but as a rule he was engaged in attending to the gardening business from about two o'clock in the afternoon. He was in Mr Knight's employ from June to October.

He knew Mr Knight was the building surveyor of the city at the time.

Cr Holmes: You did not think it was desirable to complain just at that time?

Mr Moore: Yes, I did. I complained to many persons that I did not consider it was right. Sometimes, he continued, Mrs Knight paid him his wages, sometimes his son paid him, and he had occasionally received an order from Mr Knight.

On one occasion he had a dispute with Mr Knight about his wages, and finally he (Mr Moore) threw down his spade. Mr Knight then came up to him, patted him on the back, and promised to pay him in a short time.

He might mention that Mr Knight had also solicited orders from Mrs C Hansen. Mr Cartwright remarked that Mr Knight had offered to dispose of his business to Mr Lenne.

Mr Lenne said that Mr Knight did call at his house, and stated that in consequence a dispute with his sons he wished to dispose of the business, and also the entire stock. He offered also to let him the shop on easy terms.

Cr Holmes: It's a pity you didn't take it - it would have saved all this corroboree.

In reply to Mr Woodward, Mr Lenne said the reason assigned by Mr Knight for his wishing to dispose of his business was because it was not being carried on to his satisfaction.

To Cr Aspinall, Mr Lenne replied that Mr Knight's offer left the impression on his mind that the business belonged to Mr Knight himself, and that finding that it was not satisfactorily conducted he wished to dispose of it.

Cr Holmes: Could he not, in such a case have found another man to carry it on?
Mr Lenne: No doubt he could, but he chose to offer it to me.

Mr Lenne, after making some remarks in regard to his building in Mitchell Street, said, in reply to Mr Knight, that the latter did not tell him that he (Mr Lenne) would have to take the full responsibility. It was stated that the building was only to be a temporary one, and he

(Mr Lenne) remarked at the time that there was no impediment, surely, in the way to prevent him proceeding with its erection.

Mr Knight then replied that he did not think there was. One of the complainants having made some remarks relating to a private matter that had no bearing upon the case, and which were objected to by some of the councillors.

Mr Knight said that, as city valuator and building surveyor of Sandhurst, he stood there without any complaint having been made against him that he had failed to do his duty in any one particular. He put in letters from Mr D Watson and others in his defence, and contended that he had never neglected his work; that the occasions on which he had visited Mr Watson's had been either on Wednesday afternoons, late at night or on holidays.

Mr Davis, whose name had been mentioned by the complainant, also gave him a few lines, allowing that he had not visited his place until after business hours. The character of the charge which had been brought against him was trumpery and paltry in the extreme. He had never visited Mr Horwood's excepting on Wednesday afternoons or after business hours.

Rider had worked for Mr Horwood for about a week, but he had during that time been under the directions of Mr Horwood himself. He trusted them, as gentlemen capable of weighing evidence carefully, to give a just decision in this case. He stood there as a magistrate as well as themselves; his word was as reliable at any rare as those of his accusers, and he asked should they tolerate such mean, contemptible actions as the men who had brought the charges against him had committed themselves to.

Some of these men had originally been servants in the employ of the firm, and turning the knowledge and insight into his private affairs they had gained in this capacity, they had fished into every phase of his character, and placed the result before them in the present charge.

And considering the facilities these men had had for making themselves acquainted with his private life, he thought they would agree with him that he had passed out of the ordeal very well indeed. But he asked were these men to be trusted in their word, or was it likely that anyone would employ either of them knowing the manner in which they had dealt with him?

The Mayor thought Mr Knight was accusing the petitioners very bitterly, and considered he should adhere to a simple statement of the facts.

He must remember that he was speaking as a servant of the Council, against whom a charge had been made, and not as the master of the room. The accusation against Mr Knight was not a very grave one, and amounted simply to a charge that he had neglected his duty, by devoting office hours to the furtherance of his own interests.

Mr Knight thought any display of warmth he might make was excusable, considering the circumstances of his position; but he would endeavour, however, to do as the Mayor desired. With regard to the statement made by Mr Lenne to the effect that he (Mr Knight) had offered to sell the nursery and seedsman's business, he did it simply through a dispute in which his sons were concerned. He had said to them, "Very well, my boys, if you can't carry the business on without fighting, I'll sell it."

Accordingly, he made an offer to Mr Lenne, he believed in writing, to part with the business, as he knew that he could not carry it on alone. An agreement existed between his sons and himself with regard to the business, which it was not his duty at that place to divulge. With regard to Mr Bourke's garden, he had never drawn out plans for it; all he did was to give a few suggestions. He made no charge whatever for these, and Mr Bourke had offered to come in if he (Mr Knight) considered it necessary, and substantiate what he had said.

Concerning Mrs Murphy's garden he had never been inside it. The work which had been done at Mrs Harris', in Bridge Street, was a paltry small job, not worth mentioning. With reference to Rider's statement that he had spent several days in each week between April and November in supervising gardening operations, he had simply to call the attention of the Council to the fact that he commenced his duties as valuer on the 1st of September, and from that date to until the valuation was completed he never had a moment that he could call his own.

Regarding the work that had been done at Mrs White's garden, he explained that he dropped into the shop casually whilst Mrs White was there, and hearing that lady request his wife to send a man to her place to do a little work, he asked Rider to go. In reply to the general charge that he had left his office to attend to gardening work, he said he had, during the last twelve months, worked for the Council fully 20 per cent in excess of his ordinary office hours.

After some further discussion, in which nothing of importance was elicited, the deputation withdrew.

Cr Holmes then said that the examination they had held simply bore out the observations he had made when the matter first cropped up to the effect that it simply arose from jealousy among tradesmen. He thought they should pass a resolution that, although the Council did not think Mr Knight blameworthy on the present charge, they objected to his undertaking outside work for a pecuniary reward.

They might admit that he had made a mistake, but still the mistake was so small, and the charge so paltry, that they could not well take much notice of it. He thought that they could not debar Mr Knight from offering suggestions to his friends on gardening matters, nor, indeed, did he see any reason why they should desire to do so, so long as he did not neglect his official duties.

Cr Donovan seconded the motion, holding the opinion that the case was not one which the Council should have been called upon to deal with. It was, he thought, paltry in its details, at the same time, the building surveyor should endeavour not to create a trade jealousy by accepting pecuniary recompense from outside sources. He should not do anything which might be calculated to place him in this position, and he sincerely hoped that this would be the last occasion upon which the Council's time would be frittered away as it had been that day.

Cr Woodward thought the complainants had not fully established their case, although, in his opinion, some ground had been shown for the complaint by the action of Mr Knight in offering to sell the business to Lenne. His reason for thinking so was because if the business were not Mr Knight's then he would have no right to offer it for sale.

The petitioners had not proved their case, but still the statements made had shown that Mr Knight must have had a potent interest in the nursery business. While therefore the former part of Cr Holmes' motion - to the effect the explanation was satisfactory - did not commend itself to his mind, the latter part - expressing the opinion that he should not engage in outside work - certainly did.

He would, therefore, move as an amendment to the fact that although that although the committee were of opinion that the charges against Mr Knight were not proved conclusively, there were ground for believing that Mr Knight had taken an active part in promoting the business interests of Knight Bros, and that the Committee were of opinion that he should in future confine his attention solely to his duties as an officer of the corporation.

The Mayor seconded the amendment.

Upon being put, after further discussion, Cr Holmes' motion - that the explanation of Mr Knight be deemed satisfactory by the Council, and that he be informed that he must not engage in any private business for which a pecuniary benefit may arise to him, or which may interfered with his duties to the corporation.

- was carried.

The committee then adjourned.

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*Letter to the Editor #8
Correcting an Error*

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Mon 18 Jun 1877 Page 2

The building surveyor.

- Mr C Lenne writes respecting an error in our report of the City Finance Committee meeting; as follows:-

"Sir,- In your valuable journal of Saturday, where the inquiry held before the City Council yesterday is reported, I find that by some mischance my name occupies a great part of a column, stating that Mr Knight did call at my house and offered to sell me his nursery.

As this information was given by Mr Maher, and not by me, and not being desirous of being credited with this particular, I beg you will give the kindness for justice sake, to correct the erroneous statement."

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*Letter to the Editor #9
ON HUMAN PIGEON HOLES.*

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Wed 20 Jun 1877 Page 3

(To the Editor of the Bendigo Advertiser.)

Sir, - I have searched back through all my architectural and other records, both ancient and modern, to trace the early history of the "**human pigeon hole**".

The only reliable data I can find hearing upon the subject is in "Darwin's Origin of Species" when early man was found with an iron ring around his waist and a sliding ring

around a pole, with the pigeon-hole-house upon the top, and the real first attachment to his home commenced.

From the earliest days of architecture, down to June A.D. 1877, the pigeon-hole has remained a permanent institution amongst men. It was transferred from Old England, where it is still a permanent institution, to the offspring colonies at the antipodes, where it is firmly established as a fixed living principle, the abolition of which would date an era in our present generation of too revolutionary a character altogether to be dreamt of.

It is perpetuated by the Governments of all the colonies; it is generally supposed that all control over the people would cease, and all distinction between high officials and the populace would be at an end, if anything happened to the human pigeon-hole.

It is revered by the Railway Department because it is the most inconvenient possible form of human contrivance for doing the largest amount of business in the shortest space of time; it is the triumph of modern engineering and architectural skill, entitling the promoter to the highest possible honours for ingenuity of device.

It is at once the greatest boon and blessing to a huge travelling population, because they bless the pigeon-hole continually. Ladies bless it with agreeable smiles - smiles that are squeezed out of them in their fight with the sterner sex for the coveted cardboard.

The Post Office authorities reverence the pigeon-hole - the sacred precincts of the penny stamp would be invaded were it not for the pigeon-hole. Do not the post-office officials hang on to the paper effigy until the cash is duly dropped on the right side of the trap-door.

How I have wished I was younger to enjoy the joke of coaxing the paper from the fingers of the authorities, and leaving the red-coat in the pigeon-hole to whistle for the coin. Oh! they are so perfect and convenient. The Telegraph offices, at least in this and most cities, still hold to the pigeon-hole.

Your confidential telegram, if it escapes being blown through the aperture, is carefully read aloud through this interesting opening, so that if the wind is setting in towards the ears of the bystanders, your family secrets are a thing of the past. The influence of example is very great.

The reverence for the pigeon-hole, to which all Government departments bow down, of course, must be copied by the thoughtless; we therefore have the smallest possible pigeon-hole, ape size, adapted, or adopted, to the theatre crush, where ladies, going in for a good evening's enjoyment, preface it with the squeeze at the knot-hole. Smile again sweetly, and bless the intelligence of all architects.

I am sorry I was born just now. Had I been consulted I would have been born when it was the time for cleverer architects to have walked the face of the earth, when the inhabitants demanded the man to abolish the nuisance, when pigeon-hole architects were all buried, and spoken of as living in times of barbarity, the ring and chain, existing in the museums only, to prove the origin of human pigeon holes.

We live in times amongst great anomalies. Bankers dealing in coin, valuables, notes, etc, exposed to rushes, tricksters, and forgers, are strangers to the pigeon hole. Municipal bodies, whose offices are rushed at least once a year by the whole of the citizens to hand in their tithe to the general good, are strangers also to pigeon holes.

All large merchants, storekeepers, and such, whose devices are planned at once to accomplish, in the simplest manner, the necessary business required are strangers also to the pigeon-hole. How slow, how surely, does the answer seem from the pigeon-hole, though the man behind may be an angel, he is made by the architect to appear as though he were ashamed to show himself.

Next comes the effort to focus; the hole is too high for the short, too low for the tall, and hopeless for the small boy to be seen at all. The pigeon-hole is also too small for man, even in his present savage state, Architectural authorities on "kennel construction," allot many more inches to our domestic Newfoundland.

In truth and sober earnestness, I say to citizens in every city, tolerate no longer the barbaric use of the human pigeon-hole; let straight, open counters in every case be used; let man meet his fellow-man face to face and transact his little business straight forwardly, and with expedition. It is as easy to supply railway tickets and furnish the operator with his stamp and case at his side and a counter before him, as it is to serve up the card-board through the pigeon-hole.

The same with the post offices, the telegraph offices, and the theatres. It is no experiment. Daily do we see how much easier and pleasanter it is to face a busy or a rushed counter than to face a rushed "human pigeon-hole," which is nothing more nor less than a barbaric vortex.

GEORGE W KNIGHT.

Sandhurst, 18th June, 1877.



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