

Mr. WILLIAM WHITE, Brightwater, Chairman of the Waimea Road Board, examined.

643. *Mr. Fell.*] I believe you held a run at Tarndale between the years 1860 and 1867?—Yes; I held the Tarndale reserve and about 10,000 acres of leasehold for seven years.

644. You kept the old accommodation-house there?—I built it.

645. In what direction did your country extend?—It extended towards Lake Tennyson, and included the highest part of the country in that district. It included what is known as the Highland Saddle.

646. At that time Saxton Brothers held the rest of the Tarndale country?—Yes.

647. Do you know the whole of that country?—I know it well.

648. The block of country lying between the Wairau, Acheron, and Waiau Rivers?—Yes.

649. What stock had you upon your country?—Cattle.

650. And the Saxtons?—Cattle and sheep.

651. Where was your house?—About three miles from Saxton's station. My house was close to what is called Fish Lake, in Tarndale proper, on the road to Christchurch.

652. Had you any garden there?—I kept a vegetable garden.

653. What did you grow in it?—Cabbages, carrots, parsnips, &c.

654. An ordinary stock of vegetables?—Yes, vegetables for the use of the house.

655. Did you find them grow well?—They grew splendidly.

656. You have been for some time a brewer at Brightwater?—Yes.

657. You have a garden there?—Yes.

658. Would the produce of your garden at Tarndale compare favourably with that of your garden at Spring Grove?—Certainly, so far as the vegetables are concerned.

659. You did not grow any fruit?—No; we did not try to grow fruit.

660. Did you grow any crops of any kind?—No. We tried English grass and it grew splendidly.

661. Did you try oats?—No. Messrs. Saxton grew oats at the Rainbow. I have seen oats there between five and six feet high, and a very thick crop.

662. There were no roads?—No; only horse-tracks.

663. You could not have got your crops to market had you grown any?—No.

664. How did your stock thrive upon the grass country?—I would like my stock down below to thrive as well now.

665. You know the Lakes?—Yes.

666. They are mostly shallow?—Yes; there is one deep lake, and the rest are shallow pools.

667. Have you ever seen the deep one frozen over?—Yes, on one occasion.

668. You have seen ice across it?—Yes, thin ice.

669. Have you ever seen it frozen over so that you could walk over it?—Only on one occasion.

670. Did you cross it then?—Yes; I drove some cattle over it.

671. What winter was that?—About 1863 or 1864.

672. I presume that must have been an exceptionally severe winter?—Yes, it was.

673. You have not seen it frozen so that you could walk over it on any other occasion?—Only on the one occasion.

674. Hampshire is your native county?—Yes.

675. Is there more snow-fall in the country you speak of than in Hampshire?—No; there is not. There is more storm, but not so great an average snow-fall as in Hampshire.

676. Is the cold as severe in Hampshire as it is at Tarndale?—At times the cold is very cutting at Tarndale; the winds are very cutting.

677. Can you say that you have the same persistent frost at Tarndale as in Hampshire?—No.

678. When the snow falls does it lie?—It sometimes lies for several days. In the winter the higher land has usually some snow upon it, but it only lies on the flats for two or three days.

679. On the flat surface what would you call a heavy fall of snow?—I should say from 15 to 20 inches.

680. Have you ever seen a deeper fall of undrifted snow?—No; I have seen it deeper in the gullies.

681. From your knowledge of the country do you consider if there were a road to get produce to market a population would be able to sustain itself in that district?—Readily, I should say. The ground is very fertile.

682. The country, generally speaking, is undulating?—Yes.

683. There are one or two main ranges?—Yes.

684. What is the character of the intervening country of which you speak?—Low hills.

685. Do you see the low hills going down the Acheron?—Yes.

686. Can you name some valleys which you would consider suitable for settlement?—The Alma Valley, the Sedgmore Flat, and the Upper Alma valleys and flats. The land appears to be of first-class quality.

687. Do you know Leaderdale?—Yes. If you go over the Highland Saddle, you drop down to Lake Tennyson, from which the Clarence River takes its rise. The whole of that country, except the very high hills, appears to me to be first-class land. In that neighbourhood, a few miles down from the lake, I have seen the indigenous grasses sufficiently thick that, if the detached pieces of rock had been got together, you could have made thousands of tons of hay, although the country was supposed to be fully stocked at the time.

688. There was still such a growth of grass upon it that you could have cut it for hay?—Yes.

689. Is there any quantity of land in the district, up and down the valleys, of that character?—Many thousands of acres.

690. Capable of carrying quite a considerable population?—Yes.

691. If that country were rendered accessible by a railway, do you think it would support such a population?—Yes, that is my honest conviction. Country of a similar character extends to the Hammer Plains.

692. Supposing a railway were constructed, is the fall of snow in the winter such as would be