

1517. Who is that from?—It is from my brother.

1518. Then the property was in your office for sale?—I know nothing of this at all. I never made an offer of the property at all. I have told you that it was not in our hands for sale, but I cannot tell you what transpired in our office. For nine months I was so seriously ill that I was away from the office; so far as I know, the property was never offered by me.

1519. Was this about the date of your illness?—No; that was from 1884 to 1885.

1520. Yet you never knew that it had been in your office for sale, although Stark promised you that he would never sell without letting it pass through your hands?—That was after this. I have no recollection of such an offer as this having been made at all; but if I had any knowledge of it it would have made no difference at all in the offer made subsequently.

1521. Has your brother a good knowledge of the value of land there?—He is generally guided by myself; I generally do the buying.

1522. He would not have been likely to have wanted to buy for the money he offered it to Vines for; you gave evidence that you would be held to have bought?—What I said was that Stark would give £500.

*Hon. Mr. Ballance:* He offered it to Ross, not to Roberts.

1523. *Mr. Dargaville.*] I wish to ask you whether the offer of £16,000 made to Stark for the property was a *bonâ fide* offer, and whether Stark was in any way cognizant of the quarter from which it came—first, whether it was a *bonâ fide* offer?—Certainly.

1524. Second, whether or not Stark was cognizant of the quarter from which the offer came?—Certainly not; I do not see how he could be.

1525. So far as you are aware, no one but yourself and your clerk knew anything about it?—Yes, and my brother.

1526. Now, I ask you further, as you are on your oath, whether your estimate of the profit you expected to make by cutting up this property and selling it was genuine as the basis upon which your offer was founded? I ask you that on your oath?—As nearly as I can remember it was.

1527. *Mr. Montgomery.*] Now I ask you if you offered to or through Mr. Roberts ten acres, with house and buildings, in March, 1884?—Not to my knowledge—not to the best of my knowledge and belief.

1528. Do you swear that you did not?—I have not the slightest recollection of any such thing.

1529. Your answer is, that according to the best of your knowledge and belief you did not; but you do not swear that you did not?—I am as certain as a man can be of anything.

1530. But Roberts is positive that you did?—To the best of my knowledge I did not offer it to Mr. Roberts or to any one else.

1531. *Dr. Newman.*] I wish to know whether you read the whole of that telegram from your brother?—Yes.

1532. Was the property in your hands, or at all in the hands of your firm—whether you were ill or not?—Not that I am aware of.

1533. Did Stark ever talk to you of the value of it?—He never alluded to it: the only allusion I ever heard was that he wished he had built a house on a ground floor.

1534. Have you had many transactions in business with Mr. Stark?—Yes.

1535. Were you in the habit of discussing the value of many properties with Stark?—Whenever we went in for a speculation; or when I advised him to go in for a speculation I also showed him the grounds upon which I thought it would be profitable.

1536. Can you not recall to your mind any conversation as to this?—Yes; I can recall a conversation on the day of the offer to Mr. Ross.

1537. Any other time?—I told him several times that it was the finest property I knew of.

1538. I would like to know what Stark told you of the property and of his anxiety to sell?—I cannot recollect anything about his anxiety to sell.

1539. Were you aware that he was anxious to sell the property for the last three years?—No.

1540. Were you aware that he made efforts to sell?—Yes; he may have made efforts to sell.

1541. Are you aware that he did make various efforts to sell this property?—I say that I had no knowledge of any offer except that to Ross.

1542. Are you aware that he made many efforts to sell: The question is a fair one, and you ought to have no difficulty in answering it?—I have no knowledge except of the offer made to Ross—I think that is a distinct answer to the question; but I have heard all sorts of rumours.

1543. *Mr. Wilson.*] You said the other day that you were not quite sure that you had telegraphed to your brother?—Yes.

1544. Were you consulted by any one as to the value of the property before the purchase was made?—By the Government?

1545. Purchase by any one?—I never was spoken to by any one connected with this transaction.

1546. *Mr. Gore.*] I would ask you some explanation of this telegram. I understood you to say that you never had this property in your office, but from what you have read it is evident that you did have this property in your office for sale?—No, I did not.

1547. Would not that telegram lead you to believe that it was in your office?—It would, perhaps, lead me to believe that Stark must have authorized an offer or it might not; but not that an offer was made.

1548. *Mr. Holmes.*] It has been suggested that you were in partnership with Mr. Stark up to the time he went to England. Were you a partner?—No; certainly not.

1549. What is your business—buying and selling land?—That is part of my business.

1550. What is the rest of it—a land agent?—Yes. I am connected in business with a good many things.