

175. How far was the train from the spot when Clark drew your attention to the smoke?—A quarter of a mile or so.

176. *Mr. Poynton.*] You ordered the platelayers to go back?—I threw out a note or called out to them.

177. That is the custom?—Yes; that is the orders we have.

178. The department renders every assistance in case of a fire?—Yes; the platelayers went back directly. I watched them going back.

JOHN STUDHOLME, sworn.

179. *Mr. Purnell.*] You are a sheep-farmer, living at Coldstream?—Yes.

180. Do you remember the fire?—Yes.

181. You assisted to put it out?—Yes. I was riding on the road at the time, and halfway to Hinds I saw a fire. I rode up as quickly as I could and assisted to put it out.

182. Did you visit the spot afterwards to see where the fire originated?—No. I saw signs of the fire later on, when I was passing in the train. I saw that the plantation was burnt.

183. Did you notice whether the grass between the plantation and the line was burnt?—I did not notice that.

184. Do you know whether Mr. Moore's and Mr. Mackle's fences were burnt?—The only fences I went over were three of Mr. Mackle's.

185. At the time did you know whether Mr. Moore's or Mr. Mackle's fences were burnt?—I know the boundary-fences were burnt.

186. I think you recently examined Mr. Mackle's fences to see what damage they sustained?—Yes.

187. What length of fencing has been destroyed?—The total length of the fencing on the three sides of Mr. Mackle's section I did not measure by chain, but by a map of the place on a large scale, I find the total chainage is 199·4. There is a small piece in the north-west corner that was not burnt. It was all burnt except that piece, and I do not know the actual length of it.

188. What is the length of the boundary-fence?—59 chains.

189. Therefore, you would have to deduct 29 chains from the 199·4 chains to get at Mr. Mackle's loss?—Yes.

190. Did you know the fence before the fire?—Yes.

191. Were all the fences in good order?—They were thoroughly stock-proof.

192. What would it cost to replace the fences?—I could not say what it would cost to put up fresh gorse fences altogether, but my valuation of making the fences stock-proof with stakes and wire is 6s. 9d. a chain.

193. It was a stake-and-wire and gorse fence before?—Yes.

194. Does that include the cost of clearing away the *débris* of the fire?—No.

195. You necessarily have to remove that?—Yes; the fence would have to be cut level.

196. What would that cost a chain?—1s. a chain.

197. You have had experience in these matters?—Yes, a great deal.

198. And, although the fence may be made stock-proof, the effect of a fierce fire would be to damage the bank permanently, would it not?—Yes, it would damage the texture of the sod. It would never be so strong again, and it would be liable to be pulled down by sheep.

199. Your estimate does not include damage for that?—No.

200. You know the paddock that was burnt?—Yes.

201. Was there good feed in it before the fire?—I do not think there is good feed in any part of the district; it is all so dry.

202. Was it average feed?—Yes, because there had been no stock in it for some time.

203. What would that paddock be worth a year to the owner?—It would be difficult to say.

204. *Mr. Poynton.*] If he let it out to some one who wanted it, what would it be worth?—My valuation for my own purposes would be 2s. 6d. an acre a year.

205. *Mr. Purnell.*] Feed was scarce that year, and he would have had no difficulty in letting it?—That is so: feed was exceptionally scarce.

206. *Mr. Cresswell.*] I suppose if other evidence is called as to the measurements of the fences destroyed, and the evidence differs from yours, you would not be confident about your measurements?—I could only say what it was on the map. It is a map I have always found very correct.

207. Did you know the fences before the fire?—Yes, I knew Mackle's.

208. You did not know Mr. Moore's?—No.

209. Do you know when the fence was put up?—No.

210. How many years have you known it?—Well, I forget when it was put up. I think it was put up when I was in England.

211. How long ago was that?—I have been Home so many times that I really do not know when it was put up.

212. It was several years old, at any rate?—Yes, but a gorse fence would be none the worse for that.

213. Would you call it a gorse fence?—Yes, with stakes and wire running through it.

214. Gorse fences have not been very satisfactory in this district for some years past, have they?—It depends on how they were made.

215. Have they not been dying out in all directions?—Not so much as in other parts of Canterbury. I have had a few gaps.

216. If a fence were put up at 6s. 9d. a chain, would it not be a better fence than the old one?—The stakes would be better, but it would not keep stock out better than this fence would at the time of the fire.