

810. Do you know Mr. Wilkinson, who lives opposite to Stark's property?—I do.

811. Is he a good authority on the question?—No: he is a journalist, and has no knowledge of land.

812. If he said that he had an offer of the land from Mr. Stark at £3,500 would you consider that to be correct?—I should not. I can only say in reply to such questions that it is not likely such offers were made without my having information of them.

813. We have it in evidence that this offer was made by Mr. Stark himself?—I should doubt any of these statements unless I saw the authority to sell or a letter from Mr. Stark. I cannot credit it.

814. It was stated that Mr. Randerson and another had the property offered to them for £7,000; that they offered £5,000, and were told that they might get it for £6,000?—I do not believe it. I would not give credence to such a statement for a moment.

815. Why?—Because it is such an absurd value.

816. Had Mr. Stark told you what he intended to ask for it?—When I offered him £450 an acre for a piece, as I have said before, he smiled at the offer, and said he was surprised at my making such an offer.

817. Did he say what he would take for it?—No, he did not.

818. Has there been much land in this neighbourhood sold by the foot?—This property is not for sale; Burgess's is the only property offered for sale, and that is not cut up.

819. *Mr. Dargaville.*] In your calculations about the probable profit you say, after allowing for a battery-site and the house £8,500, there would be 5,000ft. available at £2 10s. per foot. Assuming that the Government contented themselves with five or six acres for battery purposes, can you put an approximate value on the balance?—I should require to know the exact plan of the piece the Government propose to take, and as to how the property would be subdivided.

820. Assuming that they took it as favourably as they could for the purposes of sale of the remaining portion, could you approximately—I do not say within £1,000—even estimate what would be the value, to sell, of the remainder? Would it yield for the next three or four years anything like £10,000 or £12,000?—Certainly it would.

821. The Government would then, probably, with good judgment, be able to sell the balance for that?—Yes. I know I could if placed in my hands for sale.

822. In fact, if easy terms were offered, you would be prepared to make the Government an offer based on this estimate?—I would make an offer if I could buy it on terms which would suit me. I think, myself, that it would be injudicious on the part of the Government to sell an inch of the ground from the present battery-site to the narrow neck, for they would have to buy it back again. I mention this because if it is suitable for defence at all it will be necessary to keep the whole of the lower portion of the property.

823. What will be the value of the balance after five or six acres are taken out?—Given a reasonable time to sell, and provided it is offered on reasonable terms, it should be worth £10,000 or £12,000, assuming that the depression will not last for a long time. If there is any movement in land it will realize that amount.

824. *Mr. Barron.*] You say it was understood that Mr. Stark was a candidate for Parliament?—Yes.

825. Can you say when?—No.

826. Was it a year ago?—No; it was notified in the Press at some recent date.

827. Since last session?—Yes.

828. Do you know for what seat he was reported to intend to stand?—For Waitemata, I think.

829. *Mr. Peacock.*] Reference has been made to the fact that Mr. Stark laughed at the offer, submitted through you by a gentleman whose name you did not know, of £450 per acre. You have also stated that you had no reason to discredit Mr. Kingsford's statement that he was offered the house and five acres for £3,500, or the house and ten acres for £4,000. Is it possible that Mr. Stark's laughter was at the absurdity of such a high price being offered as £450 per acre?—He simply laughed at the offer, and said that the land was worth more than that amount, and that he would sell it at per foot.

830. Could he have thought that you were making fun of the thing by making such an offer?—No.

831. Then, if he not did understand your offer to be not a genuine one, and laughed at it, as you say he did, and at the same time was offering the property at a smaller amount, he must have been misleading you?—It was not the same portion of the property at all. The price for which I submitted the offer was the best portion of it.

832. Do you not consider that the land about the house—the cultivated land—is the most valuable part?—No; it is not so to my mind.

833. Not the drained and cultivated part?—It is all drained. The best site of all is that nearest the narrow neck. The whole of the property is well situated.

834. Is there anything to account for such an enormous difference between these two parts of the property?—All I can say in regard to that is that I would not place reliance upon any statement that has been made not borne out by the fact of a written authority to sell by Mr. Stark or by a written offer. From what I know of Mr. Kingsford I have no reason to disbelieve his word; but I should be inclined to discredit any one's statement unless I saw written proof.

SIR,—

Wellington, 19th July, 1886.

I signed my first evidence without making necessary alterations, as Mr. Watkins said he was anxious to have the evidence printed, and the alterations could be made afterwards. The following are the chief corrections, all of which will, I am sure, be in the memory of the Committee:—