

217. In other words, 6s. 9d. a chain would put up a fence of the same description as the old one, but it would be a new fence, and consequently a better one?—It would not re-erect a new gorse fence.

218. *Mr. Poynton.*] But it would be an equally good fence, and it would be new?—It would be equally good, except the sod itself, which would be a good deal injured by the fire.

219. You have allowed nothing for the clearing away of the remains of the old fence. Would not the old material be worth something?—No; the fire was too fierce. The stakes would certainly be worth nothing.

220. Not for firewood?—It would bring a trifle for firewood, but the bulk of the stakes had been burnt clean out.

221. What about the wire?—It might have a value for tying down stacks of grain, but no value for fencing purposes.

222. Would not the old material compensate for the trouble of removing?—I think it would compensate for the trouble of removing the wire. What I meant was that the 1s. a chain would go towards cutting the charred gorse even.

223. Would not the old material be worth at least 1s. a chain?—The stakes would be worth nothing, and it is difficult to say what the wire would be worth.

224. Roughly, would it be worth 1s. a chain?—That would be an extreme value for it.

225. Was Mackle's land in native grass?—No, it was in English grass.

226. I suppose you agree that a fire sweeping over native grass does not do it much harm?—I think it ruins the feed altogether.

227. Temporarily?—More or less permanently. If it is burnt in the spring it does the native feed a good deal of good; but if it is burnt in the autumn, especially a dry autumn, it almost completely ruins the tussock feed.

228. Mr. Moore says it is no worse now?—Well, I never will allow a shepherd to set fire in any part of the native grass except in the spring. I have had various parts of the tussock feed burnt in the autumn by mistake, and it has never been so good.

229. You have already said this was a particularly dry season, and that there was a great scarcity of feed?—Yes.

230. The previous season had also been dry?—Yes.

231. Are your values directed to Mackle's property as well as Moore's?—To Mackle's only, with the exception of a portion of the boundary-fence.

232. *Mr. Purnell.*] Farmers consider that when wire fencing has been subjected to a severe fire the wire is valueless afterwards?—Yes; but it all depends on the nature of the fire.

233. You would not use this wire for anything?—No.

DAVID HENRY MILLER, sworn.

234. *Mr. Purnell.*] You are a storekeeper, living at Hinds?—Yes.

235. You know both properties—Mackle's and Moore's?—Yes.

236. Did you assist to put the fire out?—No; I was not there.

237. You have examined Mr. Moore's fencing, have you, and also the paddock that was injured by fires with a view of ascertaining the damage?—Yes.

238. You are well acquainted with the value of fencing material?—Yes.

239. Did you actually measure the fences that have been destroyed?—I did.

240. Was anybody with you?—Mr. Staunton.

241. Can you tell us the chainage?—There are 160 chains of Mackle's fence actually destroyed.

242. Does that include the whole of the boundary-fence between Mackle and Moore?—No; that is Mackle's share.

243. What would it cost to replace the fences?—I have worked out the cost of material, but not the cost per chain. In Mackle's case it would require 1,120 stakes, allowing seven to the chain, and the cost, at £1 4s. per hundred, would be £13 8s. 9d. I may say the price of stakes and wire was less at the time the Government asked me for a quotation to replace this. Then, eighteen straining-posts, £2 5s.; 33 cwt. of wire at 13s. 6d., £22 5s. 6d.; clearing the old gorse and the old fences away, 160 chains at 1s. 6d., £20; erecting 160 chains, at 2s. 6d. a chain, £20; staples, say, £1 5s.; total, £71 4s. 3d.

244. Mr. Studholme estimated 1s. a chain for clearing away. Why do you say 1s. 6d.?—I have had experience in these things, and I put it down at 1s. 6d.

245. That is a common price?—Yes. The work is worse than clearing away old gorse.

246. With regard to the cost of putting up the fence, is 2s. 6d. a chain reasonable?—I think so.

247. Supposing the fence had been re-erected at the time of the fire, the cost of material would have been less?—Yes. Wire was about £3 a ton less, and the stakes would be about 4s. a hundred less.

248. What would be the difference in the cost?—Roughly speaking, it would be £10.

249. Were the fences in fairly good order at the time of the fire?—Yes.

250. You have seen the feed that was burnt?—No; I was not over the feed immediately before the fire.

251. You have only made an estimate of the cost of the fences?—Yes; but I have let out sections there for settlers at various prices. In fact, I think I let a section that year at 4s. an acre for the twelve months for the feed. It depends altogether on the state of the feed.

252. You have heard what previous witnesses have said who knew it. They say it was good feed?—Well, it would be worth more than 2s. 6d., as stated by a previous witness. The native grass is the best for sheep in a dry year.