

DESTRUCTIVE FIRE AT MARI- BYRNONG.

A destructive fire occurred on Sunday night at Maribyrnong, by which Mr. George Petty lost the three splendid brood mares, Lady Heron, Gildermire, and Agitation, with their foals. Mr. Petty was down in the paddocks with a few friends about dusk on Sunday evening, when the mares and foals were put up for the night in some loose boxes near the river. About 7 o'clock Mr. Petty made his usual visit of inspection, and saw that all was safe. He then went into the house, and had not been there much more than half an hour when he heard some one calling from the opposite side of the river. He went outside to ascertain what was the matter, and then saw the strong glare of a fire in the direction of the boxes where the horses were put up. He at once hastened to the spot, but by the time he reached the sheds they were burnt to the ground, and the three mares and foals were so many charred heaps among the ruins. From a monetary point of view the loss is a very serious one, as the stock could not be valued at less than £4,000, while such mares as Gildermire and Lady Heron it is almost impossible to replace. The latter mare gave promise of proving the most successful brood mare in Australia, having already produced such animals as Beatrice and Argus Scandal. Agitation, the dam of Romula, was also a very valuable member of the Maribyrnong stud. A very general feeling of sympathy was felt for the great loss Mr. Petty has sustained by this fire. Lady Heron had a remarkably fine filly foal by Marquis, the first dropped this season. Gildermire's foal was a filly, also by Marquis. Agitation had a filly foal at foot by Angler.

The origin of the fire is accounted for in this manner :—The groom who had the mares in charge was in the habit of sleeping in the shed, so as to be at hand in case of any accident. He had placed a box of matches over the door of the box in which Gildermire was kept, and it is supposed the mare, being in for the first night, was uneasy, and in moving round the box must have shaken down the match-box, and afterwards trod on it, and thus ignited the matches.