

331. *Mr. Lane* (to *Mr. Duncan*).] What do you mean by stopping an engine?—I meant in the general way that I put it.

*Mr. Henderson*: You want to go very much further into details on a question of this kind.

ALFRED HARRIS, examined.

332. *The Chairman*.] What are you?—Owner of the “Torora.”

333. Where do you reside?—In Wanganui.

334. How long have you owned the vessel?—About two months now.

335. Are you a mariner or mechanic?—I am not a full-fledged engineer, but have been connected with all kinds of machinery about thirty years.

336. At Home?—Home and here. I have not been running marine engines, but could run a dozen machines that a marine engineer could not run.

337. Where were you employed at Home?—I was working for my father in Somersetshire.

338. On what kinds of machinery?—All kinds. On a steam ploughing plant.

339. Your father was a manufacturer of them?—No; he used to own them.

340. You have driven that class of machinery at Home?—Yes.

341. How long have you been in New Zealand?—Twenty-three years now.

342. Have you been engaged in work in machinery since you have been here?—Yes, in flax-mills. I have had charge of five flax-mills for Messrs. Johnston and Co. and my own. I have worked eleven steam-engines. I was the charterer of the first oil-engine, the “Moana.” I chartered her when she first had the engine put in.

343. How long is that ago?—Three years. Seven years before that I had a Priestman oil-engine. We had a difficulty in working that, and I found that mechanical appliances of oil-engines were quite different from steam.

344. Three years ago you chartered this “Moana” from Mr. Lane?—Yes.

345. Had it an oil-engine?—Yes.

346. Did you go with the vessel?—No, the Marine Department stepped in and put a difficulty in the way of our working it.

347. Did you get over that difficulty?—Yes, by throwing up the charter of the boat.

348. How long did you hold the charter?—We had the vessel four months.

349. Did you use the engine during that four months?—Yes, as well as we were able to.

350. Who drove it?—The man is in Greymouth now.

351. Who is he?—A seaman, but not a certificated man.

352. Did he drive the engine?—Yes, better than any other man that worked her.

353. Did any other man try to drive her?—No, not in my time, because when we had the difficulty with the department we threw up the sponge.

354. Do you know her speed?—About four knots. It was only about eighteen-horse power in a vessel about 100 tons. Eighteen-horse oil-power in an oil-engine is only about one-fifth of steam high pressure.

355. Did you have any accident during the time you had the contract?—No, I did not know she was a Priestman until we got her down. She is very much more complicated than the other makers.

356. What experience have you had with oil-engines?—I have been watching them carefully by studying and manipulating different makers. I consulted the late Chief Inspector of Machinery, Mr. Mowat, shortly before he died, as I wished to have some motor power, and I asked him if he could advise me.

357. What did you do as the result of your seeing him?—I waited for developments, and got the “Gerty,” steamer.

358. Then what did you do?—I went to Auckland and saw the oil-engines that were working there, and found them working like a piece of clockwork, and not refusing duty. There was a man there who had charge of the “Torora” for about six months, and I questioned him quietly, and he said there was never a hitch.

359. How long have you had the “Torora”?—Two months.

360. Have you been on board when she has been at sea, or only when she gets into the harbour?—When she gets into the harbour. I went round with her to see how she acted in Auckland Harbour.

361. What speed had she?—About seven or eight miles.

362. How long were you on board?—Just in the afternoon.

363. Who drove her?—A. Subritzsky. I applied to the department to allow me to put a man on board who was experienced in oil-engines. I presented two—one who had had nineteen months' charge of oil-engines, and the other only nine months. The man with the nineteen months' experience I found, in going to Auckland to get the proper qualification or references from the original owners, that they refused to give these references. Some of these owners were in a fix themselves. Donald and Edenborough wanted a man to go down to the Islands, and the department would not give him the license. Then I advertised for a marine-certificated man with an experience in oil-engines.

364. Did you get any applications?—Yes.

365. How many.—Some five.

366. Did you accept one of the five?—Yes; but when I put a question to each of the five they all replied that they had never driven oil-engines.

367. You selected one?—Yes. I employed him because he had high-class references, and a varied experience of machinery.

368. How long did he remain on the vessel?—We sent him to Kaipara, and he promised to take a man with him that was not a certificated engineer, to show him how to work the engine,