

85. Well, do you say the fire might have beaten up against the wind?—No, I do not.

86. It would travel in a south-east direction from the point at which it started?—It would travel towards the sea.

87. What was the nearest point to the line to which the fire had travelled?—That is a thing I am not able to say, because it must have started pretty close to the line.

88. *Mr. Poynton.*] Would it be half a chain, or 2 chains?—I think it might be about half a chain from the rails to the rough grass.

89. *Mr. Cresswell.*] And when the express passed you were looking at it from your door?—I was not at the door but in my paddock close to the house.

90. Had you been looking in the direction of the fire before the express came up?—Generally when I see the express coming I look to see the length of it.

91. And can you state positively that the fire was not burning before the express arrived?—Yes.

92. How can you do that?—Because there was no sign of smoke till the train came, and then there was only a little smoke when I saw it at first.

93. Had the train passed the spot before you noticed the smoke, or did you notice it when the train was passing?—It was when the train was passing. It had passed the spot a little.

94. How far?—About 3 or 4 chains.

95. The guard's van was 3 or 4 chains from the spot when you noticed the smoke?—Yes.

96. And what did you see—smoke, or flames?—The smoke got up, and the flames came soon afterwards, and it took me all my time to get my cattle and things out of the way.

97. Is the public road much used?—No; it is not a formed road.

98. Coming to the damage you have sustained, what do you estimate your total loss at now?—I do not estimate it at all now, because two men went over it and chained it, and valued it.

99. And you accept their figures?—Yes.

100. You are calling them as witnesses?—I suppose so.

101. You sent in a claim a few days after the fire, did you not?—It was a good few days afterwards.

102. And you then stated your loss would be about £50?—Yes.

103. Do you think now your loss would be in excess of that?—I believe it would. That was only a rough calculation.

104. Was it native or English grass that was destroyed on your land?—Native grass.

105. As a matter of fact, is the native grass not improved by having a fire over it?—It might improve it in two or three years.

106. As long as that?—Yes. It did not improve it last year, for there was nothing on the land. There is something on it this year.

107. We had had two exceptionally dry seasons prior to the fire?—Yes.

108. And the grass was very dry at the time?—Yes, the long grass was dry.

109. Have you sown it down since?—No.

110. Is the grass now as good as it was before the fire?—I believe it is.

111. Is it better?—I do not think so.

112. What is the ordinary thing allowed for erecting fences such as yours were?—I could not tell you what the fence cost when it was put up, because my boys did the work. Another thing is this: that stakes and wire are not always the same price.

113. Is 4s. or 5s. not regarded as a reasonable sum for a farmer for the erection of an average fence?—I do not think so.

114. It costs more than that?—Yes, a good deal more than that.

115. How far were you away from the spot where the fire commenced when you first saw it?—About 40 chains.

116. Of course, you could not tell at that time how far the fire was from the railway-lines?—No.

117. It was after you had viewed the locality that you came to the conclusion that it had started close to the line?—Yes.

118. *Mr. Purnell.*] When you first saw the smoke you say it was rising between the plantation and the railway-line?—Yes.

119. You were asked whether the fire could beat against the wind?—Well, it would beat itself back, but the wind was so strong it would not beat far back.

120. But as it might spread in that way you say you are not sure as to the exact spot where it originated?—That is so.

121. With regard to the damage, I believe the grass was not merely tussocks?—It was tussocks and grass.

122. And it was good feed?—It was fair feed.

123. What you actually lost with regard to that is about eighteen months' feed?—Yes.

124. Why have you not sown it down in grass again?—I would have to break it up again, and I was not able.

125. You had not the means?—Exactly.

126. With regard to your estimate, it was only a rough estimate, and you thought the Government would make inquiry?—Yes.

127. You did not even keep a copy of the claim you made?—I did not.

128. *Mr. Poynton.*] How long had your fences been up before the fire?—About six years.

129. What is the life of a fence of that sort?—Well, it is hard to say. Sometimes you have to put in an extra stake here and there.

130. Ordinary red-pine stakes?—Yes.