

569. Is that lately?—I think, so far as my memory serves me, it would be about three years ago.

570. Has it turned out well?—It is paying very well.

571. Do they use cyanide for that?—Not at present.

572. Without cyanide it is paying very well?—Yes. That, I may say, is entirely a new development. It is apart from anything we have known of yet. It is a parallel belt of reefs northwards of anything that has been worked yet.

573. You told Mr. Bell that the development of the forests and the cutting of the forests north of Reefton would necessarily mean the closing of the mills nearer the seaport?—Not necessarily. What I meant to say was this: that as the timber is exhausted nearer the seaport a demand would be created for timber inland.

574. Do you know whether the prices of timber have been improving of late?—I cannot say.

575. Supposing the price of timber were increased, you might have forests at a considerable distance from the seaport worked profitably?—Just so.

576. And you might have forests along the line and forests at a distance worked at the same time?—Yes.

577. So that the sequence put to you by Mr. Bell need not necessarily follow?—That is so.

578. *Mr. Bell.*] Where is this Victoria Range reef?—It is to the eastward of any known reef worked in the Inangahua district.

579. How far is it away from Reefton?—It would be about twelve miles, I suppose.

580. In which direction?—North and east, towards the Lyell.

581. And has a company been formed to exploit this reef?—There are two companies.

582. And who has formed them?—There are two registered companies. I cannot tell you who constitute the shareholders, but the ground was held at first for some time after it was discovered by the Anglo-Continental Company.

583. What did they do with it?—They wasted a lot of money in trying to develop it, and their representative gave it away, and gave away a good property. It is a really valuable property.

584. *Dr. Findlay.*] Has it been worked since?—Yes.

585. And profitably?—Undoubtedly.

586. How many ounces to the ton does it produce?—I think the stone has given 1 oz. to the ton.

587. *The Chairman.*] In reply to Dr. Findlay, you said that the cost of cartage from Grey-mouth to Reefton was £10 to £12 a ton immediately before the railway opened?—Yes.

588. Can you tell the Commission where that was from, and about what time?—I am only speaking generally.

589. We do not care much about generalities: we want something definite?—I know; but, speaking generally, that was the freight for machinery.

590. Do you know, of your own knowledge as a storekeeper, say, fifteen or twenty years ago, what the cost was on goods and produce from Brunnerton to Reefton?—£8 to £10 and £12 per ton.

591. Did not all the wagoners have the same rates?—Yes, but it varied at times.

592. Say, fifteen years ago?—I should say the freight was about £6 or £7 per ton.

593. Now, you told Dr. Findlay that the freight has been reduced to 16s. per ton, with 2s. 6d. added for town delivery?—I strike that as an average. The railway freight varies, of course, from 5s. to £1 17s. per ton.

594. But, as an inference from that, you say the cost of living has been reduced by 30 to 40 per cent.?—Yes.

595. Does that mean that the boardinghouses and hotels charge 30 to 40 per cent. less than they did before the railway opened?—I would not say that of the hotels or boardinghouses; but I am speaking of the actual cost of produce consumed by the miners—storekeepers' supplies.

596. Is it a fact that the cost of living in Reefton is from 30 to 40 per cent. cheaper?—Yes, I say so.

597. You told us boardinghouses and hotels are just charging the same?—I did not say so. We used to pay two guineas a week, and we can get it now for one guinea.

598. At the hotels?—Yes.

599. You say that in all probability, if the railway-line is extended, or if these large coal-measures are connected by private enterprise with the present railway, there will be from ten to twelve hundred miners working in five or six mines?—I am of that opinion, within the next ten years.

600. Can you tell us how much coal these ten or twelve hundred miners are likely to produce per year?—It would run into 1,000,000 tons, I suppose.

601. Can you give the Commission any idea where this 1,000,000 tons are likely to be consumed?—A very large percentage will be consumed in the colony.

602. Then, you say that probably there would be five or six sawmills in addition to the present mills: can you tell me how long Perotti's mill at Mawhera-iti has been in existence?—I think about twenty years.

603. Are you aware that there was a sawmill at the Ahaura for some years?—Yes.

604. How many sawmills were there in the Reefton district fifteen years ago?—I do not think there was above one.

605. Had Lockington not a mill?—It was more recently.

606. Well, before the railway was made?—Lockington was there before the railway was made.

607. Did not Corcoran have a mill?—He had a mill for a very short time.

608. Did Maine have a mill?—Maine was the first mill-owner.