

78. Do you believe that it was the train that set it on fire?—I cannot attribute it to any other cause.

79. *Mr. McCredie.*] Did you see the train pass?—Yes; about half an hour before that.

80. Did you see any fire coming from the funnel?—No.

CHARLES HENRY FOSTER, sworn.

81. *Mr. McCredie.*] You are an engine-driver in the employ of the Government of New Zealand?—Yes.

82. Do you remember the night you were driving the train when this fire took place?—Yes.

83. You had a very light load on?—Four carriages and a van.

84. Did you see the engine throwing sparks?—Not at all that night.

85. Did you notice Williams's house as you passed?—I did not.

86. You did not notice any sign of fire?—None at all.

87. There was no sign as the train passed?—No; I was running slowly on that particular night.

88. You did not have to get up a big head of steam or put on any fire?—No.

89. As far as you know, were your appliances in good order?—In perfect order. I did not see one spark that night.

90. Can you say in what direction the wind was blowing that night?—From due west, as far as I could see—right across the line.

91. *Mr. Poynton.*] On what side is Mr. Williams's cottage?—On the east side of the line.

92. About what time did you pass?—It would be about 11.40 or 11.45 p.m.

93. *Mr. Williams.*] You did not notice any sign of light or fire as you passed my place?—I did not.

94. Would you think it possible for a spark to set fire to my house?—Not very well, with the wind that was blowing.

95. *Mr. Poynton.*] Had you any appliances for arresting sparks that night?—Yes, there was the spark-arrester.

96. What sort?—We mainly call it the baffle-plate.

97. Was it in good order?—Perfect order.

98. Have all the engines on this line similar appliances for arresting sparks?—Every one of them.

99. *Mr. Williams.*] Have all the engines got these spark-arresters?—Yes, all the engines.

100. Does it keep the sparks from spreading?—It keeps the sparks from spreading. It catches them.

101. How do you account for the sawdust fires? Do you not reckon the engine does that?—No, I do not.

THOMAS COOPER, sworn.

102. *Mr. McCredie.*] What are you?—A ganger on the railways.

103. You know Williams's house?—Yes.

104. Do you know what it was before Williams went into it?—Yes.

105. It was used as a sawmill-house, was it not?—The first bit was, but there have been one or two other pieces put on to it since it was first erected.

106. It has been built up—one or two additions?—Yes.

107. You were in the habit of passing near it?—Often.

108. What would you have given for it?—As far as giving anything for it, I would not have given anything; it was on the road.

109. But apart from that, what was it worth?—About £20.

110. You have a house of your own there?—At Clifton.

111. And you have a rough idea of the value?—Yes.

112. Have you ever seen the house on fire?—No.

113. You did not hear any evidence on the line that this engine was throwing sparks on the Saturday night?—No.

114. Was there any sign of fire near the line next morning?—None.

115. If an engine has been throwing sparks there are generally signs of it?—Yes, because there is always a lot of dry grass about the roads.

116. *Mr. Williams.*] Do you think the engine would throw sparks to reach my building?—That I could not say. I could not tell how the wind was. If the wind was in the south-west it might, but if the wind was from the west it would not do it.

117. Why?—Because the sparks would not go across the line.

118. How was the line running?—I do not know how it runs just there, but a south-west wind would drive the sparks across. A west wind would not.

119. You know that the sawdust has been on fire several times?—Yes; it gets on fire by itself. It is never out. There are so many youngsters knocking about with matches that they are as likely to set fire to it as the engine.

120. *Mr. Poynton.*] Do you remember the addition being built to the house by Williams of new timber?—No, I do not. It may have been done without my seeing it.

ALEXANDER MCKENZIE, sworn.

121. *Mr. Poynton.*] What are you, Mr. McKenzie?—I am running-shop foreman in Invercargill.

122. I want you to tell me about the appliances for preventing sparks on locomotives, and to give a description of those used on this line?—We have the same here as in other parts of New Zealand.