

addressed to the Locomotive Superintendent of what I actually saw last year. I was going back to the shed Green has spoken about, and getting out at Whangamarino and walking along the line I saw a fire burning alongside the railway, evidently caused by a train that had gone by half an hour previously. The crop was burning at the side of the railway. I found that for about 10 yards along the edge of the railway the swamp was on fire.

316. Is that mentioned in the report of the 28th December, 1898?—Yes, I think so. It was not on my ground, but I notified it. It seemed to me just what was happening on the plantations. I do not think attention has yet been directed to the fact that, although fires may occur along the roads in other districts, this is a roadless, uninhabited district. Except one house near Whangamarino I do not know of one habited spot between here and the Whangamarino Creek.

317. On the occasion of the big fire did you come up?—Yes, but I do not remember the day. I rode over and saw the damage a few days after it occurred.

318. You saw that the fire had a continuous connection?—My recollection is not very clear. I remember seeing a black track, which extended right to the railway. It was not a straight line, but a large black track of fire extending from where my plantation had been burnt to the railway.

319. Have you had any conversation with Mr. Kensington, the manager of the Government plantation?—Yes, but I could scarcely remember it.

320. He has assisted your father?—Yes. I asked him on one occasion what he remembered, and I think that was the only occasion on which I spoke to him about the fires.

321. Did he mention any cases of fires occurring through engines?—Yes, both Mr. Kensington and Mr. Clifton have mentioned fires to me.

322. *Mr. Poynton.*] The wattle-trees when once stripped are killed, are they not?—Yes.

323. *Mr. Cooper.*] Supposing a fire goes through your wattle plantation the damage done is not so great as the damage you have done by stripping the trees. Do you not get a better crop of young wattles than if you simply stripped the bark?—No; we get such a crop that we do not know what to do with it. It would cost too much to thin it out.

324. After you strip the bark from the wattles, what do you do: abandon the land?—The Government and ourselves have been experimenting in the matter.

325. But at the present time you practically abandon the land, do you not?—This year I have been clearing away some parts and burning others to bring up clumps of trees to let the air get into the patches that grow.

326. Is it not a fact that after a tree grows for fifteen years you strip it, and that is the end of it?—No; the proper way to deal with a plantation would be to strip the trees as they come to 8 in. or 10 in. or 12 in. in diameter, and next year get another crop. We began on that system, and when you calculate it out you ought to get a recurring crop for nearly ten years.

327. To whom do you sell the bark?—To some of the tanners in Auckland.

328. Can you produce account-sales showing the prices you have obtained?—Yes.

329. Did you sell any bark in 1896?—I could not say; I would have to look up my books.

330. Had you yourself been through the 500 acres burnt?—Yes.

331. Before it was burnt?—Yes.

332. Is there any system on which it was planted?—Yes, there were so-many trees to the acre.

333. Can you give us any information as to how many trees there were?—Yes. They were planted 18 ft. apart, and the rows of trees planted were from 3 ft. to 5 ft. apart. In a row there would be on an average perhaps four in a square yard.

334. It was not all of the same quality?—No.

335. Have you had it surveyed or examined by any one for the purpose of ascertaining the quality of the trees?—No; we have marked it on the plan. Mr. Macdonald saw it on the plan.

336. But Mr. Macdonald, in his report, says it may be 400 acres?—Yes, and when I state an area it is really a guess.

337. Of course, there was a considerable quantity burnt?—Yes. We know what we planted and what we bought for planting.

338. But as to what was burnt you have had no survey made?—No. It might be made yet. You can still see where the fire went.

339. I suppose the indication is there yet?—Yes.

340. Will you give a detailed statement from your books, so that we can get at the actual value of the property destroyed?—Yes.

341. You speak about an approximate area of 320 acres. Were those acres as good as your 100 acres that you took 100 tons off?—As far as I know they would be, but my father could speak better on that point.

342. *Mr. Oliphant.*] All this area was planted in accordance with the Forest Trees Planting Act of 1873?—Yes.

343. And you had to meet the requirements of the Act?—Yes.

344. Did you put in 400 trees per acre as required by the Act?—Yes.

345. And did you earn the grant of £4 an acre awarded under that Act?—Yes.

346. *Mr. Cooper.*] It would not have been very difficult for you to have had a survey made of the ground destroyed?—Well, if it is wanted we will get it.

347. Was the 500 acres not all covered with trees?—It was planted in an irregular way.

348. What is the total acreage of the two lots—378 and 380? Or can you say what area was covered by trees?—Well, in 378 I am certain there were 100 acres of first-class trees; in 379 there were 150 acres; and in 380 there were 80 acres; or 330 acres of good trees in all.

WILLIAM HENRY ANDREWS, SWORN.

349. *Mr. Oliphant.*] You reside in this district?—Yes, I am a small settler.

350. How long have you been at Wairangi?—Ten years.