

useless. If they had anything like a wire-gauze net to let the steam go through it would stop all the big sparks.

128. Whatever they use it does not stop them?—No; it is perfectly useless. I know what it is. On a threshing- or a traction-engine nobody would dream of not having a gauze cover.

129. Do you mean to say that a traction-engine or a threshing-engine does not throw out sparks?—No; and we have them standing between two stacks. Of course, they have not the same draft as an engine. I have seen the cap taken off a threshing-engine, and the stack was set on fire.

130. *Mr. Cooper.*] Can you fix the time when you saw this engine-driver?—I told Mr. Maxwell, and he has the date. It is either four or five weeks ago.

131. You only reported verbally?—That is so. He took a note of it.

132. *Mr. Brookfield.*] Did you tell him what you had seen and what you had been told?—I told him what I saw, but I do not know if I told him what I had been told.

133. You are a farmer?—Yes; but I served my time in a locomotive foundry. I have also been in a civil engineer's office, although I have not practised in this country. I have also been the resident engineer on a railway in England, and I have driven locomotives time after time.

FANNY WALLACE, SWORN.

134. *Mr. Brookfield.*] You are a daughter of Mr. James Wallace, living at Papatoitoti?—Yes.

135. Is it a fact that you and other members of the family are continually watching for fires from the engine?—Yes.

136. What particular time do you watch?—When the trains pass.

137. On the trains passing do fires occur?—Yes.

138. Often?—Yes.

139. Can you give me any idea how many have occurred within the last two months?—I have a statement here taken from my diary. It is as follows: 1899—30th December, one fire in railway paddock; 1900—12th January, two fires in Buttle's; 17th January, one fire in railway paddock; 22nd January, one in Buttle's; 22nd January, one in railway paddock; 23rd January, two in railway paddock; 24th January, two in Buttle's; 27th January, one in back paddock; 29th January, one in railway paddock; 30th January, one in paddock below orchard; 1st February, one in railway paddock; 1st February, one in back paddock; 2nd February, two in Buttle's.

140. These fires have occurred on your father's place?—Yes.

141. Have you personally put out fires?—Yes.

142. You and your sisters and other members of the family?—Yes.

143. In fact, I think you keep appliances on hand?—Yes.

144. What do you keep?—Branches, bags, and a broom.

145. You can speak, I think, as to other years besides this year: have many fires occurred on other occasions?—Yes.

146. In the summer or the winter?—In the summer.

147. What causes those fires?—The engines.

148. Sparks?—Yes.

149. You have gone out time after time: has there been anything else except the engine that could have caused the fires? Has there been anybody about?—No, nobody.

JAMES GREY, SWORN.

150. *Mr. Brookfield.*] What are you?—A farmer, living at Papatoitoti.

151. Do you live near the railway-line?—About a mile and a half from it.

152. Do you know anything about fires that have occurred at Wallace's place?—Yes.

153. What can you tell us about recent fires?—I was coming past there about a month ago, and I saw a fire that was likely to take possession of his whole place. I went in and worked hard for upwards of a couple of hours.

154. Where had the fire come from?—It had come from the railway. I had no doubt of that.

155. Is that the only one you know of?—I have known of plenty, but I had no cause to put out any of the others.

156. Do you know of other fires occurring along the railway?—I did not actually see any others.

157. Except this particular fire you did not see others?—They have passed my memory now. I may have seen others.

158. Have you seen other fires on Wallace's or the adjoining property?—I remember one, about two years ago, that nearly carried away a haystack belonging to Mr. Wallace.

159. Where did it come from?—It came from the railway.

ROBERT CARRUTH, SWORN.

160. *Mr. Brookfield.*] You are a farmer?—Yes, at Papatoitoti.

161. Near Mr. Wallace's?—Yes, my land adjoins Mr. Wallace's.

162. Do you know anything about fires occurring on Mr. Wallace's or your own place?—Frequently I have had to send men to assist in putting them out.

163. Have you gone down yourself?—No; I have not been able to attend to fires for the last sixteen or seventeen years through ill-health and lameness, but I have always sent help.

164. Have you seen fires as they started or shortly afterwards?—Immediately after they started I have seen them, or perhaps not until they were half-way across Mr. Wallace's field.