

59. It has been wet occasionally?—We are very careful. I remember taking in wool on the “Hinemoa,” and that is the only time I remember taking in wool in the Sounds, and we are very careful not to get it wet.

60. Have you never taken it in from the surf-boats?—No, not from the surf-boats.

61. Captain Post told us of his experience of getting wool wet occasionally, and drying it. Do you know how far the wet goes into the bales under such circumstances?—No, I have no idea. I believe that in the small vessels they have to dry it. You must open it up and dry the wool. I have heard of them doing it.

62. You have never carried wool?—No, not wool. I have been with jute cargoes, but not with wool.

63. Have you noticed when lying alongside the wharves that it is customary to take in cargo while it is raining?—No, I have never noticed particularly; only on the occasion when we were lying alongside the “Pitcairn Island” on the occasion of which I spoke.

64. Have you noticed it in the case of steamers?—No, we seldom have time to look round; but this was a special occasion, when she was beside us, and I could not help seeing it.

65. *The Chairman.*] Do you know if the hatches were closed while the rain was falling?—They were taking in the wool when the rain commenced.

66. Do you know if they closed the hatches while the rain was on?—I could not say.

HARRY FRENCH ASHCROFT sworn and examined. (No. 38).

67. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—I am engine-room storekeeper on the “Tutanekai.”

68. You were aboard while she was alongside the wharf where the “Pitcairn Island” was loading wool?—Yes.

69. What did you observe of the weather-conditions while the wool was being loaded?—I passed a remark about the wool lying there while there was a heavy shower on.

70. Was it raining heavily?—A heavy shower.

71. What did they do with the wool?—It was lying on the wharf. I could not say how long, or the time it took them to take it back into the shed.

72. When the rain came on, did they take it back?—Yes, when the rain came on there were a few bales lying there. They got them back in a few minutes.

73. What was the condition of the wharf then?—Whenever there is a heavy shower on the Wool Wharf the rain lies about in pools.

74. When the showers were over did they resume the loading again?—Yes.

75. Where was the wool put?—Just tipped on to the wharf off the trucks.

76. Until such times as it was taken aboard?—Yes.

77. *Mr. Foster.*] Have you any idea of how long the bales lay there?—I could not say.

78. Can you make a rough shot as to how many bales were there during the shower?—There might have been forty, or sometimes twenty.

79. Do you understand the principle of the rain-gauge?—No.

80. Supposing a large flat dish to have been on the wharf, to what depth do you think the rain would have filled it?—I could not say. I have never taken sufficient notice.

81. Would it have wet you through had you been travelling between your ship and town—say, a ten-minutes walk?—You would have got pretty wet without a coat on.

82. Would you have imagined that the dumped wool would take up much of the water?—I could not say. I have never had anything to do with wool.

83. Did you form any opinion as to the probable danger which might arise from the wool becoming wet?—That is the only thing. I drew attention to it, and said it was no wonder ships took fire.

84. So you think there was a big risk attaching to it?—No, only I had seen in the papers that they were talking about damp wool, and then I passed the remark that it was no wonder when they took it in in the rain.

85. So, although you did not take any special notice of the condition of it you were apprehensive of the danger likely to accrue from the fact of its being taken in while it was raining?—I could not say.

86. *Captain Blackburne.*] Did you notice if the hatches were put on while the rain was falling?—No. I did not notice.

COLLIN FRANCIS POST, already sworn, was recalled and further examined. (No. 39.)

87. *Mr. Foster.*] From what you have heard in respect of this wool—you did not see it—but from what you have heard from the witnesses, would you, as master of a ship, receive such wool into your ship for carriage from here to London?—No, from what I have heard, I would not.

88. You think it would be dangerous?—Well, I should want to see to what extent the damp had penetrated.

89. From what you have heard, do you think it would have reached such a point as to become dangerous?—I should not like to say. It might have; but I know the majority of the wool-shippers would not ship wool without seeing that it was dry.

90. You see, if the captain of that vessel had been a careful man, he would have looked for those conditions to be present. That would be expected?—You must remember, too, that he might not have been there. The custom is when lying at the Wool Wharf for the wool to be brought down sometimes on lorries, sometimes it is brought out of the shed in trucks, and it accumulates there on the wharf in quantities: Then at the same time the wool is going in they may be filling in with scrap-iron for ballast, so they are not able to take it in as quickly as it is offered.

91. *Captain Blackburne.*] Have you noticed whether the steamers close up their hatches when it commences to rain?—If they do not they have an awning over them.