

11. By, as we know it, the assignment of the Chrystall contract to the Midland Railway Company?—Yes.

12. Did you come out with them as engineer to the colony?—I left London, I think, in November, 1886, and reached New Zealand in January, 1887. I went over the line, and went back to England about April, 1887.

13. Before you came out to the colony in December, 1886, had any works been made by the company in connection with the construction of the railway?—It was January, 1886, when I was in New Zealand.

14. Hon. E. BLAKE.] Then, you went out in November, 1886?—Yes.

15. And returned in April, 1887?—Yes.

16. Mr. Hutchison.] Before you came out to the colony, then, on that occasion, had any works been let in connection with the construction of the line?—There had been let to an English contractor contract No. 1; that was from Stillwater towards Jackson's.

17. Do you recognise this map [map produced]?—Yes.

18. What is it?—It shows the line running up the Grey Valley to Reefton, and then shows the initial peg in the railway. The first contract, from Stillwater to Jackson's, is on the east and west line. [Map put in. Exhibit No. 2.] The second contract, which we also let, was to make up a small piece of unfinished line between Brunnerton and Stillwater Station. Part of that piece had been done by the Government, and we finished it.

19. What else, if anything, had been settled before you left London?—We had ordered all the rails, rolling-stock, and a certain amount of bridge-work; and that had all been shipped, and arrived in the colony before I got out, or most of it.

20. You say you went over the proposed line, north and south, and east and west?—Yes. I went over the line from Springfield across the Otira Gorge and down to Stillwater, and then I afterwards went up from Stillwater to Reefton through the Buller Gorge right through to Nelson.

21. Then, you traversed the whole of the proposed line, from east to west and from south to north?—That is so.

22. Will you give us a general description of the country traversed by this line?—From Springfield, for the first three or four miles there are coarse shingled terraces. The first work of any importance is the Kowhai Bridge. Then we cross the Little Kowhai River. Then the line rises, and we get on to a terrace about 300ft. above the Waimakariri River, and that is a very rough part of the work; and we have to pass over Staircase Gully, which necessitates a bridge 240ft. high. After that we come to light country, and that brings us down to the Cass River; and then we go down the Cass Valley into the Waimakariri Valley, across the Waimakariri. Across the Waimakariri we come to the Bealey River. We cross the Mingha, and keep up the valley of the Bealey, and that brings us to the foot of the Arthur's Pass line. That is where the incline line begins. That rises to the summit with a grade of 1 in 15, after which we drop down and cross the valley to what is called "The Second Summit," and tunnel into the cliffs about 500ft. high above the river, carrying the grade down after crossing the gullies with one or two bridges, and running up the Rolleston to the development. Across the Rolleston you come down to the other side till we come to the Otira, and then down to the Teremakau, and from the Teremakau across to Jackson's running through a flat country to Lake Brunner, and from Lake Brunner to Stillwater.

23. You might describe the features in general—the topographical features?—The valley of the Grey is a comparatively wide one, and we then run up to Reefton, and that is a part of the country where there is, of course, more settlement and indications of settlement than in any other part of the district. It is low foot-hills on one side; and next we come to the eastern side of the river, with a lot of foot-hills and fairly level country, with heavy bush in some places and fairly good land, for the West Coast. Before going to Reefton we have to cross the saddle which separates the watersheds of the Inangahua and the Grey, and get through the tunnel there, and run down to Reefton, and the line stops at the south side of the Inangahua. That is as far as our line goes in that direction.

24. The line was not made then. I ask you to treat the country as you saw it in 1889?—Of course, the whole of the Grey Valley at certain places, as at Totara Flat, is comparatively good. They are growing English grass there, and where the bush has been cleared they were grassing it; and at Totara Flat they were growing oats. It is an open valley with cultivation, and after that, beyond Reefton, there is a considerable amount of settlement as far as the Inangahua River twenty miles north of Reefton. There is a good deal of limestone on the south side of the river. There are some runs there, and the people are doing very well. It is a good grass country; and also in many parts of the Inangahua there are patches of good country. Where you get into the valleys and round the creeks you have fairly good country. Of course, in the forests you have poorer land, but still you have patches and places which would do for settlement. In many places the bush is cleared, and in many it is light, and in other parts very heavy forest. Beyond this to the Inangahua it is of very much the same character. It is open, and there is a lot of land there and beyond Inangahua, and you come, four or five miles up, to the gorges of the Buller River. The Inangahua runs into the Buller River at the Inangahua Junction. You then immediately get into precipitous country. It is very picturesque, of course, and there are little patches used for grazing and for agriculture and settlement. Then for about twenty or twenty-six miles you have the Buller Gorge. Of course the characteristics of the Buller Gorge are that you have very steep slopes, perhaps not as steep as Sir Robert Stout said the other day, but you have places through which the work would be very costly. I estimate the cost would be about £12,000 or £13,000 per mile. Then you come to the Maruia, and you have a very picturesque place, open country, and there you have some good land. I have heard it is so, but I have not been there myself; it has the appearance of being good land, though, of course, it is bush mostly. You have a good settlement at Hampden; and, on the whole, the land is good. We have had offers of £2 per acre.