

25. Please keep to what appeared to yourself in 1887, before the contract was entered upon?—I was rather taken with the appearance of the country. You then come to another piece of country, which narrows as you get to the junction with the Hope. The Hope flows into the Buller forty miles from Motueka, and that is a part which is fairly good, I think, but covered with bush, of which they had cleared a lot, and have runs on it. When you get over the Hope Saddle you go down Clarke's Valley—a long, narrow valley falling from the Hope Saddle to Clarke's River—and then into the Motupiko, which flows into the Motueka River. The projected line goes down Clarke's Valley, comes to Motupiko, and crosses the Motueka up Norris's Gully. There is a tunnel at Spooner's Range, at Norris's Gully.

26. You get out of this valley into where?—Into the Motupiko Valley, and from the Motupiko Valley into the Motueka Valley. That is a large, wide, open valley, and, of course, the whole country looks good—a little better than it is, I am afraid. The Tadmor, Sherry, and Baton Valleys are all to the north, and are comparatively fertile, and there is a good deal of settlement there. It is a wide stretch; and then you come in across Spooner's Range to Belgrove, where you are in a fertile valley that runs to Nelson.

27. What is the general character on each side of the dividing range?—Of course, there is a good deal of difference. On the one side you have country which has been denuded of its bush for a great many years, and it is now all under grass, some of it being native grass, and some—a little—English grass.

28. Open pastoral country?—Yes. Now, as to the west, you have black-birch on the hills, and on the low ground red-pine and white, red principally. From Jackson's across to Lake Brunner you get very heavy forest, mostly pine on the low country and birch on the high. There is a great space called Bruce's Paddock, which contains about 4,000 acres open land.

29. Generally agricultural?—Yes. You have that open country, and then you come to the lower end, where it is broken up in places, owing to the denudation of the hills, and you have *débris* on it. It is cut up by the streams, and you have no more vast patches of good country; but you have, in places, broken country, which on the part down there is covered with dense forests, and they are, of course, very valuable in some places.

30. That is how it struck you in 1887?—Yes.

30A. How long did you remain in the country?—About three months.

31. You took a flying survey?—No, I went over the country.

32. You went over the line of the proposed railway?—Yes, and formed a general idea on the subject.

33. You went Home again in 1887?—Yes.

34. Hon. E. BLAKE.] That was your first visit; you went Home in 1886?—Yes.

35. Hon. E. BLAKE: Mr. Wilson post-dated his visits by a year.

36. Mr. Hutchison: How long did you remain at Home?—I came out in September, 1889.

37. That is three years more than you remained at Home?—Yes.

38. Within which time the contract, as we know it, of 1888, was concluded?—Yes.

39. You came out again in what month in 1889?—September, I think it was.

40. In what capacity?—Engineer-in-chief and general manager.

41. Who up to that time acted as general manager?—Mr. Alan Scott.

42. Did Mr. Scott continue in the service of the company?—Yes.

43. As what?—As assistant land manager.

44. Before you had left England on the second occasion we know that the debentures had been floated, enabling the company to undertake further works. What had been done, if anything, during the time you had been in England?—We had completed—I can give you the dates, I think—we completed in 1886 the Brunnerton to Stillwater; that was a short piece let in 1886. When I was in the colony I let a contract from Stillwater to Nelson Creek, and it was then in progress. I let it before I went Home in 1887.

45. Sir R. Stout: That is the Grey Valley?—Yes; that had been done while I was in England; from Stillwater to Kaimatu was done in 1887.

46. That is towards the east?—Yes.

47. Mr. Hutchison: Then, the works were proceeding both east and north from Stillwater?—Yes.

48. When you arrived, what was the point the works had reached on the contract for the works north and east?—We had completed the Stillwater to Nelson Creek in 1888, and the line was open for traffic to Ngaere in 1889. In 1889, just after I got here, that was finished, and was opened for traffic; the piece to Kaimata was also done. Then I let further contracts—the contract to Springfield, to Kaimata and Stoney Creek; and I let contracts to Nelson Creek, to Ahaura, and Ahaura to Reefton.

49. Was that the position when you arrived in the colony in 1889?—Speaking generally, yes.

50. I want you to give us more particularly into the surroundings of the railway, and the country through which the railway was to be constructed, than you could have done from a flying visit?—Yes, when I got out here before the surveys were flying surveys—5 chains from east to west—and there was simply a reconnaissance survey from north to south. We had working surveys completed on the drawings as they were made. I first gave instructions for the surveys to be completed to Reefton; part of them had been completed.

51. Dealing with that section of the line first, did you go over the country and make yourself acquainted with that part of the land?—Yes.

52. I want you to indicate to the Court now more particularly what the character of the country was?—That country, as I said before, is a wide valley with a great many streams flowing into the Grey--feeders. Of course, we are going up the north and east line. We cross a great many streams which flow in from the ranges, and we cross the feeders.