

302. And one paddock of 150 acres was burnt?—Yes.
303. The whole of it?—More or less; it was no good afterwards. There were only spots left here and there.
304. And a certain quantity of it was completely destroyed?—Yes, about 80 acres.
305. What do you reckon is your loss?—Well, the paddock has not been much good to me since.
306. It was let to a tenant at the time?—Yes, for three months, I think.
307. How much was he to pay for the three months?—£13.
308. How long had the tenancy run?—About half the time.
309. And after the fire you returned him his money?—I returned him £6 10s. The tenancy was stopped, as there was no feed for his sheep.
310. You actually lost £6 10s. then?—Yes.
311. Did you use the paddock for any purpose for some time afterwards?—Not for about nine or twelve months later.
312. What did you do with it?—I broke up 50 acres of it for turnips.
313. That is all the use you have had of it since?—Yes.
314. Did any feed grow last year at all?—A little.
315. What would be the value of the paddock for a year?—I reckon it is worth about £25 a year to me.
316. And you had no use for it for a year in consequence of the fire?—That is so.
317. Have you sustained any other loss beyond the fencing and the feed?—No.
318. And you claim £64 for the fencing and £25 for the loss of the feed?—Yes.
319. On your return home did you go and view the place where the fire started?—No.
320. *Mr. Cresswell.*] When did you first decide to make a claim on the Railway Department?—Directly after I saw the damage I made up my mind, but I think it was two months before I made a claim.
321. I think you then claimed £61 4s. for fencing and £22 10s. for the grass?—It was something like that, but I have lost the memorandum.
322. You are now claiming more: Is that in consequence of the valuation that was made for you?—I had not seen the full damage to the grass when I made my claim. I thought it was not so bad as it was.
323. If a new fence were put up of the same description as the old one you would consider you had been fairly dealt with?—No.
324. Would you not be better off with a new fence of the same description as the old one?—They could not do it.
325. How old was the fence that was burnt?—I could not say. I had purchased the property some years previously.
326. How long before?—About five years.
327. Was it an old fence then?—It was a good gorse fence.
328. How long had it been erected?—Several years, I expect.
329. Is it not a fact that as early as the April following—three months after the fire—the grass on this patch that had been swept by the fire was even better than the rest of the grass on your land?—No.
330. Was there any decided difference?—It was a good thick sort of grass, and there was none at all after the fire. Only the chickweed came up.
331. If an independent gentleman is brought who visited the place in April, and swears that at that time the grass on the part that had been swept by the fire was even better than the rest of the grass, would you say his evidence was dishonest evidence?—I would. You could not judge by the grass that was on it then, because the fire went over the whole of it. What was left was scorched.
332. Had the grass recovered itself by April?—No.
333. It would recover itself pretty quickly after a rain or two?—No. In a dry season when it is burnt it takes a long time to recover, and probably it will never be what it was before.
334. *Mr. Purnell.*] With regard to the 80 acres you say were completely destroyed, had any grass grown there three months afterwards?—No.

JOHN BROOKER, sworn.

335. *Mr. Cresswell.*] You are an engine-driver on the Hurunui-Bluff line?—Yes.
336. How long have you been an engine-driver?—About twenty-four years.
337. And nearly all that time you have been on the line between Oamaru and Christchurch?—Yes.
338. You were the driver on the express from Christchurch to Oamaru on the 27th January, 1898?—Yes.
339. What was the number of your engine?—No. 30.
340. What train had you?—About twelve total.
341. Was that an ordinary train?—Yes, for the express.
342. Did your engine have spark-arresting appliances fixed to it?—Yes.
343. Were those appliances in good order on the date in question?—Yes, in perfect order.
344. When last did you examine them before the fire?—They are examined daily.
345. Then, you would examine them that morning before leaving Christchurch?—Yes.
346. Did you examine them after the fire?—At night, at the end of the journey.
347. And they were still in good order?—Yes.
348. Did you see any fire on the date in question at the spot referred to?—No.