stained with foreign grease or anything of that kind. That is another thing I have had to be very careful about. I very often find packs coming in covered with grease and oil, and I cut them adrift, and if I find the grease has not penetrated to the wool I cut that piece out and put an overall patch on it, but otherwise I do not think there is much danger. Possibly if the bales were damp they would take fire in a mass such as there would be in a ship's hold—that it would generate heat sufficiently to take fire, because the heat cannot escape as it does in these stores. I do not suppose it would take fire in the stores.

262. *The Chairman.*] Do you think it would be advisable or not that the packs themselves should be dipped in a solution of some sort to make them less combustible?—I think it would be a very rare occurrence where this would take place.

263. That is, whether fire would take place from the pack?—I think there are very few cases of that kind to be found.

264. It appears to me that the end of the pack could catch fire, either from friction or any other cause, and being alongside another pack there must be some little room for a current of air?—Oh, yes; but I do not think there is very much danger arising from friction from the bands on wool or flax, by reason of the fact that the bands are buried.

265. *Mr. Foster.*] Some of the bands are fairly flush—in fact, on the sides the bands do not fall in quite flat?—I think in wool or flax the bale would take before the band, in most cases.

266. Take the diagonal band across them—they do not bury except at the ends?—Yes, they are not buried. I dare say they would come in contact there. I do not think there is much chance of friction causing it to fire, because wool is screwed in tight. It is not likely in these large steamers; but, with considerable vibration, where the cargo is continually on the move, then there is a danger of friction that would cause fire.

267. *The Chairman.*] The packages are not always of the same description, but one wool-bale is like another?—Yes.

268. *Mr. Foster.*] Would you think that, with other conditions being favourable to fire—that is to say, a high temperature—that this friction might be the trigger to set it off?—It might do. I cannot conceive that it could be in wool, because there is no moving-about with wool.

269. In regard to the circulation of air in the hold, I take it that when the wool is packed, no doubt tightly screwed in, the ends being rounded off, there are spaces at the ends?—Yes.

270. So that if the pack was to ignite, there would be sufficient air even up through such spaces?—There might be.

271. And, therefore, in these spaces a huge conflagration might result?—Yes.

272. *Captain Blackburne.*] Is the cargo of these steamers screwed in?—Sometimes.

273. Not generally?—When they have plenty of room they do not screw it, but if they want to make room and to take a full cargo it is screwed in.

274. *Mr. Foster.*] It is jacked in?—Yes; they do not screw it in like they do on sailing-ships. I think very few steamers do screw it—they use screw-jacks.

275. *The Chairman.*] Do you consider that skins are more likely to ignite or liable to spontaneous combustion than wool—skins in bales?—Skins in bales, if they are wet—I should say they would.

276. Sooner than wool itself?—Yes, they would putrefy sooner.

277. *Mr. Foster.*] Have you any suggestions to make in the direction of the detection of faulty packing in any stage, either from the country or from the fellmongers, in the stores, or from the stores into the ships—in fact, at any stage?—Well, certainly it ought to undergo supervision, and you would think the owners of the stations would have proper people to look after that.

278. But, assuming a condition of carelessness?—I am afraid a great deal arises from that.

279. But it is detection before getting on to the wool-ships?—I cannot say which would be the best method to adopt for that.

280. As to ascertaining the temperature, at any stage, of the contents of the woolpacks, have you any suggestions as to any possible means which would easily detect it? You use the steel pricker?—Yes, and I could not find anything better.

281. Then, in order to be sure of any test with the pricker, you would have to leave it in the bale some time?—If there was only slight moisture I should try the heat, but if there was considerable moisture and heat you could detect it at once—in a few minutes.

282. But supposing it had barely set up any heating, would it be possible to detect the damp from the instrument you use?—No, you could not detect the damp.

283. So that unless you examined it twice, or a considerable time after it came into the store, you would be liable to oversight?—Yes. That is the reason I recommended some years ago, when we had so much trouble with fellmongered wool, that it should be in the store for at least a fortnight before it was shipped.

284. How long do you think it would be with wool in a wet condition before clearly demonstrating to you that it was in a heated condition?—In a wet condition it will do it in an hour in the summer-time.

285. It will show considerable heat?—Yes. I have seen a bale of wool dropped overboard and picked up immediately, and before night of the same day it has been quite hot, and I have frequently seen it in surf-loading conditions where it has been too wet to put into the hold, and they have left it on the deck, where it would generate heat very soon in the summer-time.

286. *Captain Blackburne.*] Much quicker in the summer-time than in the winter?—Yes.

287. *Mr. Foster.*] We have had it in evidence that wool from a wreck—saturated wool—was days and weeks, I think, and the condition of the wool was not affected?—I can only say that I never saw such a case. The Chatham Island wool was taken on board at the Chathams quite hot from the "Jessie Readman," and they left it on the deck.

288. One witness mentioned the loading at the railway sidings, and, speaking of the conditions of the railway-trucks, he thought at times there might be an inch or two of water in the