

295. You never heard of this ride taking place?—No. Carrying despatches was nothing. People did it in the ordinary course of duty. I have known a man to carry despatches eighty miles, thirty miles through the enemy's country, without thinking anything of it.

296. You are a military man, and have some experience in colonial military matters?—It might be necessary, where Volunteers were not on regular pay, to be called for, where the men are simply Volunteers, and not on regular pay. If kept on regular pay they would be simply ordered to go. If not on regular pay, they might be called for as volunteers to go.

297. Did not Cornet Wrigg volunteer to perform this duty?—I cannot say.

298. You are not aware that he did so?—I am not aware that he performed it. If he did it he was not doing more than hundreds of troopers might do. Hundreds of others have done more.

299. You are prepared to pit your individual opinion—and you at that particular time were a hundred miles away from this particular district—against that of the officers with Mr. Wrigg. You say it was quite a usual thing for soldiers to carry these despatches, and think nothing of them?—It was their ordinary duty.

300. Did you know any of the officers of this Bay of Plenty corps?—I know Cornet Smith and most of them—almost all the men of the Bay of Plenty Cavalry; at that particular time I did not.

301. Do you think you were justified, in this letter you sent to Adjutant Bower, in comparing Wrigg to "Paul-up-a-Tree"?—I did not compare him. As far as I recollect, I think I said that from what I heard he had done nothing more than other men had done.

302. *Mr. Lewis.*] Captain Preece, you had a good deal of experience amongst the Maoris, and were accustomed to their habits?—Yes.

303. In the case of a slaughter of comrades, when a body of Maoris swooped down, did they generally hang about or clear out—they generally cleared out?—Yes.

304. Their tendency always is to clear out?—Yes.

305. Would that tendency be increased or diminished by the fact that a hundred armed men had camped upon and searched the spot?—It would be increased.

306. When you say that the services rendered by Mr. Wrigg were not of such a mighty distinction, were you referring to the fact that the Victoria Cross is not usually awarded for carrying despatches?—I did not say that it would not be awarded for carrying despatches. It might be to some man who had done some meritorious thing. It would not be awarded merely for carrying despatches through an enemy's country. There are numerous instances of men carrying despatches through the enemy's country who were never rewarded.

307. *Mr. Field.*] Captain Preece, you say you were not at Opotiki at the time this alleged ride took place, but were there afterwards?—Yes.

308. Are you intimately acquainted with the country between Tauranga and Opotiki?—Thoroughly. I have ridden up it hundreds of times.

309. Do you know whether the colonial forces were camped at Opotiki at that particular time?—I knew the camp at Opotiki was where the church was.

310. Do you know the place where the troops were camped in 1867 when this man Bennett White was murdered?—Yes; I know the camp. The ordinary camp was where the church was.

311. You said just now there were only two rivers you considered dangerous between Opotiki and Tauranga?—Yes.

312. I want to know how far the crossing is from the river at Opotiki to the camp?—About a mile.

313. We are right in inferring a man could cross in perfect safety as far as the hostile Natives were concerned?—I should think so.

314. Then, you mentioned the name of another river; that river is less dangerous, but still dangerous to some extent. Where is that river?—About four miles down from Opotiki to the crossing. It would be between four and six miles down.

315. Was it between Opotiki and Ohewa?—Yes; it is the Waiotahi.

316. Those are the only two rivers you regard as dangerous between Tauranga and Opotiki?—Yes.

317. You regard the last one, the Waiotahi, as only dangerous at certain times?—Yes. It must be an extremely heavy flood to make the Waiotahi dangerous.

318. Did you consider that the road from Opotiki was dangerous so far as the risk of river-crossings was concerned?—When a storm was on it might be dangerous.

319. Not otherwise?—No.

320. I understood you to say you had afterwards known a number of the men who belonged to the Bay of Plenty Volunteer Cavalry?—I was in charge of the Opotiki district for three months, and the troop was paraded under me twice. Cornet Smith was then captain, and J. F. Connelly lieutenant.

321. Do you know whether members of that corps were members of the corps spoken of in 1867?—Most of them were.

322. Did you ever hear any of them enlarging on the fact that Mr. Wrigg had done any act of bravery in carrying that despatch?—I never heard Mr. Wrigg's name mentioned.

323. You also say you knew Trooper McDonald. Did you ever hear him refer to any act of conspicuous bravery done by himself or Mr. Wrigg?—No. Still, my knowledge of Trooper McDonald was slight; he might have carried despatches with Mr. Wrigg.

324. Had these two men, Trooper McDonald and Cornet Wrigg, done anything conspicuous would it not have been a matter of common talk in their troop?—I think it would. I have heard of the occurrence in other districts. In the very Opotiki district I heard of courage shown by Lieutenants White and Rushton long before I was in the district.