

469. It is quite possible that Mr. Edwards, having left the district, might not have heard of Wrigg's gallantry in conveying the despatches from Opotiki to Tauranga?—No, he might not have heard of it.

470. *Mr. Wilford.*] We have had the word "voluntary" trooper mentioned, Mr. Kelly: might I ask you whether this would be the description of a man who was not serving for pay—who might be working in a store, or engaged in any other occupation, and who, on the call to duty, would offer his services?—He would be compelled to go if he was paid; but he might have done duty voluntarily without being asked.

471. Might not a man describe himself as a voluntary trooper who would be there, an individual in the district—who had no rank, and was not in the line, and yet who could volunteer his services in a moment of emergency?—I suppose it is a misnomer. There were no men exempt there. The only men exempt were those employed by myself as butchers, storekeepers, and bakers.

472. Would not George Leaning be exempt?—He was in another store.

473. He would get paid from the time he started?—Yes, if on duty.

474. *The Chairman.*] I understand you were contractor to provision the army?—Yes.

475. You were, therefore, intimately acquainted with the troops?—I had a contract for the troops all along the coast where they were stationed—Tauranga and Opotiki included.

476. During 1867?—Yes.

477. *Mr. Monk.*] Can you tell me whether or not Captain Bower was there?—Yes.

478. At this particular time?—I am sure he was.

479. Can you say if he was there when you got to Opotiki at the time of the actual murder?—I am not sure; but he was stationed there, and should be there.

480. *Mr. Hutchison.*] Mr. Edwards is an Assessor now?—Yes.

481. In a statutory declaration he says: "I recollect the time—the 26th June, 1867—when the late Bennett White, a storekeeper, of Opotiki, and a Native mailman named Wi Popata, were murdered on the sea-beach at Waiotahi, some four or five miles from Opotiki, by the Hauhaus, under Te Maikoha, when some friendly Natives from Whakatane brought in the news that they saw the dead bodies of White and Wi Popata lying on the beach late in the evening. The next day Major St. John mustered the field force, and we proceeded to the scene of the murder, accompanied by White's Maori wife and some other Natives. I think some of the Bay of Plenty Cavalry went out with us, but I am not quite sure if Mr. Wrigg went with them. I know he was a cornet in the Bay of Plenty Cavalry at the time. After searching about for some time the Natives discovered White's head amongst a lot of sea-drift. The bodies had been carried away by the ebb-tide during the night, and were only recovered some time afterwards some miles down the coast towards Whakatane. After scouring the country for some distance inland—and traces of the enemy could be plainly tracked for some distance, but we failed to come upon them—some returned to Opotiki, Mrs. White carrying her dead husband's head in a handkerchief, and it was buried in the churchyard." Do you doubt that?—No, I do not doubt that.

482. Would that be the way the Ureweras came down?—They had tracks of their own that you could never find out.

483. It goes on to say: "I remember that two or three days after this, Trooper McDonald, of the Bay of Plenty Cavalry, being sent to Tauranga with despatches by Major St. John to the officer commanding at Tauranga, Lieutenant-Colonel Harington, I think. Trooper McDonald was about to be married, but as there was no minister at Opotiki his intended wife accompanied him, and some of his comrades of the Bay of Plenty Cavalry escorted them as far as Ohiwa to get them beyond the most dangerous part of the beach. Once across the Ohiwa Harbour they were in a friendly country, as friendly Natives lived along the coast at Ohope, Whakatane, Matata, and Maketu, and on to Tauranga. It was on this occasion that Mr. H. Wrigg is said to have carried Major St. John's despatches to the officer commanding at Tauranga, Lieutenant-Colonel Harington, through most dangerous country infested with Hauhaus. I give this a flat denial." Are those other feats which Edwards speaks of such as you would be likely to speak of?—I think so.

484. You cannot say how long it was?—It was months afterwards.

FRIDAY, 7TH OCTOBER, 1898.

Hon. W. T. JENNINGS sworn and examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] You wish to take the evidence of Hon. Mr. Jennings, I understand, Mr. Hutchison?—Yes.

2. *Hon. Mr. Jennings.*] Might I be permitted to make a statement before any further evidence is given, Mr. Chairman?—Yes.

*Hon. W. T. Jennings:* Well, I may state in regard to this case that it has not been in any way a political matter, nor has political partisanship been shown by myself. Mr. Wrigg never interviewed me in the first instance at all. A gentleman in Auckland, who has occupied a very responsible position in that city for over twenty years, and who now is in the same position, spoke to me about Mr. Wrigg receiving the Cross. I may say this gentleman is one who holds very strong views antagonistic to mine politically. After hearing his statement I said it was a pity the matter had been allowed to remain so long without a claim being made. This gentleman then gave me the typewritten opinions of some twenty or more military gentlemen. I took the papers home and carefully read them, and then came to the conclusion, particularly after reading Captain Bower's statement of the affair—which statement, I understand, he now repudiates—that Mr. Wrigg was entitled to recognition. I told the gentleman above referred to I was satisfied, after reading the opinions of the military men, that Mr. Wrigg deserved the Cross, and that I would help with other Auckland members in securing that object. About a fortnight after this I met Mr. Wrigg,