

23. Do you recollect if there was any particular willingness on the part of the Minister of Defence and also the Premier to meet the views of the deputation?—The Minister of Defence, Hon. Mr. Thompson, had Sir Arthur Douglas there to hear what the deputation had to say, and, as far as my recollection of the circumstances goes, it was the opinion, I think, of the Minister or Sir Arthur that it was establishing a precedent that would be perhaps a dangerous one—that is, allowing the decoration to be given to any one after such a lapse of time, as these things are generally done within a reasonable time after any act of bravery or heroism is performed.

24. Do you think if the influence of these deputations had not been brought to bear on the Government they would have conferred the New Zealand Cross on Mr. Wrigg?—I think if the persons who have taken exception to it had not done so the Government would have conferred the Cross on Mr. Wrigg; but it appears to me there is a sort of seesaw business over the whole affair, particularly by the setting-up of this Committee to investigate the matter.

25. What weight do you attach to the deputation waiting on the Government in the way of influencing the Government to confer the Cross on Mr. Wrigg?—Seeing that deputations in many ways are for the purpose of influencing Governments, a deputation of Auckland members waited on the Premier over the Stratford Railway quite recently, the object of which was to place the best views of the Auckland members on that particular line; and the same thing would apply to Mr. Wrigg's deputation waiting on the Minister of Defence and the Premier. They all believed then and now that Mr. Wrigg was entitled to the Cross, and that simply a lapse of time ought not to be a bar to what was considered to be a meritorious act.

26. *Mr. Hutchison.*] On the 27th September, 1897, the Government had formally declined to confer the decoration on Mr. Wrigg?—I was not aware that the Government had declined.

Mr. Hutchison: Mr. Chairman, I want to put in a note of the resignation of Cornet Wrigg as it appears in the *New Zealand Gazette* of the 20th December, 1861, page 511. [Exhibit No. 28.] [Exhibits Nos. 29, 30, and 31 were also put in.]

STATUTORY DECLARATIONS.

I, *Albert Wood*, of the Thames, in the Provincial District of Auckland, miner, do solemnly and sincerely declare that I remember well all the circumstances connected with the murder of Bennett White and the mailman in June, 1867. I was one of the troopers—about twenty-five or thirty in number—who were sent out to search for the bodies. When we reached the scene of the murder it was then too late to do anything, so we took cover in the scrub at Waiwhakatoitoti, keeping our horses bridled and saddled, and tethered to our legs, and remained in perfect silence throughout the night, neither lighting our pipes nor making fires. The next morning we searched for the bodies, but only Bennett White's head was found, and the carcass of the mailman's horse. The main body of our men followed the enemy's trail a long distance inland, while Lieutenant Thompson, myself, and two others went on to Ohiwa with a Native woman—*Ramari te Wai*—and a young woman and boy. Then we went up to the tableland to warn a surveyor's hand who was working there. We then returned to Opotiki, long after the main body had got back. The same evening it was arranged that Trooper McDonald was to go to Tauranga with despatches. He particularly wanted to go on urgent private business, also to do something for his brother-in-law, Angus Smith, who then kept a store. Mr. H. Wrigg wished to go too, as he had to transact some business, and get tracings, &c., for Mr. Gwynneth at the Survey Office, Tauranga. I begged my commanding officer to let me go, but as he said the two others had special reasons for going I would have to give way. There was no honour attached to going, neither was there any danger, and every man in the troop would have been glad of the chance of going. In my opinion, Mr. Wrigg was less entitled to special honour than any man in the whole Force, for he had done nothing whatever to deserve it.

And I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true, and by virtue of "The Justices of the Peace Act, 1882."

ALBERT WOOD.

Declared at Thames, this 23rd day of September, 1898, before me—James Finlay, a Justice of the Peace in and for the Colony of New Zealand.

I, *Arthur Steele Ford*, of Coromandel, in the Provincial District of Auckland, miner and engineer, do solemnly and sincerely declare that I was the second man to enrol as a member of the Bay of Plenty Cavalry corps, and am familiar with the names of those who distinguished themselves by acts of bravery, but I declare I never heard the name of Mr. Wrigg mentioned as ever having done anything out of the common. As a matter of fact, he was only in the corps for a short time, and was not regarded as a man conspicuous for bravery. There were troops stationed along the East Coast, and the only place that could be considered as being unsafe was a distance of three or four miles between Waitohi and Ohiwa, and even over that part there was very little danger, as the custom was for a detachment of the corps to ride through and see that the route was clear. I recollect the occasion on which Mr. Wrigg claims to have displayed such valiant conduct as to merit the distinction of the New Zealand Cross; but the matter was regarded in a very different light at the time by his comrades, who saw nothing above the common in what he did, nor more than most of us were in the habit of doing when required. The man who carried the despatches on the occasion referred to was Trooper Donald McDonald, and Mr. Wrigg merely accompanied him, and nothing of moment was reported at the time as having occurred during the ride from Opotiki to Tauranga. I am sure that, had there been any special danger attached to the journey, the fact would have become known to those of us who were in the corps at the time and performing active