

254. You swear positively that Captain Bower was not there at that time?—I am certain he was not there.

255. Why?—Because I knew all the officers that went out on the expedition.

256. When did he leave?—He came there some three or four weeks afterwards.

257. How long was he away in Tauranga?—He was away for months and months.

258. Did you see Mr. Lingard last night or this morning?—No; I do not know any one here in Wellington, except in the Native Land Office.

259. You have seen no one, then?—No.

260. Are you aware of the statements that Captain Bower has made in reference to this Order in Council of the 10th March, 1869?—No.

261. I will read you one thing he said, viz.: "In accordance with this order (Major St. John then commanding the district at Opotiki, being since deceased), it affords me very great pleasure to recommend Mr. Harry Wrigg, late Cornet, Bay of Plenty Volunteer Cavalry, to be a recipient of this highly-coveted distinction, to which, in my opinion, he is fully entitled for his act of bravery in voluntarily carrying despatches from Opotiki to Tauranga (and returning), through a country swarming with hostile Natives along the route, where, on the day before, they had murdered two old settlers (Mr. Bennett White and the mailman, whose name I forget), and at a time when the rivers were in high flood, and exceedingly dangerous to cross. Strictly speaking, perhaps, I should not now be making this application as I was not the commanding officer of the force or district, but I was District Adjutant (through whom all orders were issued), and I am quite certain that had the late Colonel St. John been alive he would have made every effort to obtain the decoration for Mr. Wrigg. It may be said also that the claim should have been made before, but I respectfully submit, amongst others, as a precedent, that Colonel McDonnell received his cross in 1886 for an act of bravery in 1863, or twenty-three years after. A perusal of the accompanying documents will, I feel sure, enable you to strongly recommend Mr. Wrigg's claim to His Excellency the Governor's most favourable consideration." Now, Captain Bower has told us, and has contradicted himself at times, that he was there, and then that he was not there, and then that he was certain he was there. Now, you say positively that you are certain Captain Bower was not there in the month of June, but he was away months before, and did not return until some weeks afterwards?—Some weeks afterwards. He was in Tauranga.

262. *Mr. Monk.*] You told the Committee that you belonged to the company of which Captain Bower was captain, No. 2?—Yes.

263. Who commanded during Captain Bower's absence?—Well, you see it was this way: When the order came for reinforcements to go down to Opotiki, Major St. John was deputed to take volunteers from the 1st Waikato Regiment to go down there, and then anybody that liked volunteered to go. In that way he collected one hundred and fifty or two hundred volunteers from every company in the 1st Waikato Regiment, and then we formed what they called an expeditionary field force, and we went down. That is the way it was done.

264. In your special position, you were, so to speak, the right-hand man of Major St. John, and you would be sure to have known if Captain Bower was there?—I should have known it. I was always about. When I saw Captain Bower and his wife they came down and stayed there for some time, and then went away, and I lost sight of them.

265. What do you call the office in which you were?—The orderly-room.

266. That would be frequented by officers, would it not?—Yes. They all go there.

267. An adjutant especially would have been more frequently there than any other officer?—Yes.

268. The orderly-room might be considered strictly the office of the adjutant?—Yes.

269. And Captain Bower was not there and not in that position at that time?—No.

270. But Captain Walker was?—Yes.

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FRIDAY, 28TH OCTOBER, 1898.

ARTHUR STEELE FORD sworn and examined,

1. *Mr. Hutchison.*] Your name is Arthur Steele Ford, is it not?—Yes.

2. You live at Coromandel?—Yes.

3. You are a mining engineer?—An engineer and miner.

4. You were a member, I believe, of the Bay of Plenty Volunteer Cavalry Corps in 1866?—I remember that.

5. You were a member from the very beginning, were you not?—I think I was the second man that was enrolled.

6. How long did you remain a member?—I remained there until the goldfields broke out at the Thames.

7. When was that?—I think it was at the beginning of 1868 that I went to the Thames Goldfields.

8. Were you acquainted with all the other members of the troop?—Most of them. I was acquainted with all of them at the time.

9. And I suppose the Opotiki occurrences were pretty well known all over the place soon after they happened, and discussed among the residents?—Every one knew what occurred within a few hours.

10. You knew Mr. Wrigg, did you not?—Just slightly.

11. How long was he a member of the corps?—As far as my recollection carries me, about a couple or three months.

12. You remember the news of the murder of Bennett White and the mailman coming into Opotiki?—Yes.