

EXHIBIT No. 32.

Despatch reporting Murder of Mr. Bennett White and the Mailman (an Arawa) by the Hauha Maoris; also reporting his proceedings.

SIR,—

Camp Opotiki, 28th June, 1867.

I regret to report that at 10 a.m. on yesterday, the 27th instant, I received intelligence of Mr. Bennett White, a settler of Opotiki, and the mailman (an Arawa) having been murdered by the Hauhaus on this side of the Waiotahi River. I immediately paraded the Volunteer Cavalry Corps, but found it impossible to cross the river on account of the tide, and had to wait until the afternoon. I also sent orders to Ensign Jeffs, commander of Waioeka Redoubt, to cross the river and establish his force on the road leading from that post to Waiotahi. This he duly performed yesterday without any result. I have not heard what he has done this day. In the afternoon Witiira, a Native chief, came into camp and reported having seen two headless trunks lying on the beach; also that he had been fired upon by a large body of Hauhaus. Consequently, with the Volunteer Cavalry Corps I took fifty men, crossing with the afternoon tide, with a view of driving the Natives from their position into the ambushade laid for them in the Waioeka Road. It was dark when we got to our camping ground, but this morning we found traces of the rebels having recently been there, and the head of the unfortunate Mr. White frightfully tomahawked. Having ascertained that the Natives had disappeared from Waiotahi (I am still in hopes that they may have fallen into the ambushade laid for them), I at once made up my mind what to do. The spot where the murder took place confirms the statement made to me by Rakaraka as mentioned in my letter to you dated the 25th instant. They consist of a band of Whakatoeas still up the Waioeka, and up this, fine weather or bad weather, I start to-night, for these reasons: the communication between Opotiki and Tauranga is at present impassable, and no land can be cultivated in safety on this side of the Waiotahi. The perpetrators of this outrage are merely a band of murderous fanatics, and until they are extirpated or swept out of the district, there is no hope of quiet for the settlement. Under these circumstances, and after consulting with Captain Skene, my second in command, in the absence of Major Mair, I have called out the first and second-class Militia to furnish garrisons here, at Waioeka and at Opotiki proper, and march myself with one hundred and twenty men and twenty Natives up the Waioeka this day. The coast between here and Tauranga I am keeping open by patrols of volunteer cavalry. The whole responsibility having been left upon my shoulders for the safety and protection of the district, I trust the Hon. the Defence Minister will approve of the steps I have taken. I have not time to write more fully at present, but will send a full report by next mail.—

I have, &c.,

J. H. H. ST. JOHN, Major Commanding Opotiki District.

The Under-Secretary, Colonial Defence Office, Wellington.

EXHIBIT No. 33.

SIR,—

Defence Office, Wellington, N.Z., 2nd September, 1895.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 30th ultimo, covering the petition of Mr. George Johnston Small, of Wanganui, and asking for a report. In reply, I have the honour to inform you that to gain the New Zealand Cross the recommendation must be a spontaneous one on the part of the officer commanding the forces at the time the "act of conspicuous bravery," is supposed to have been performed. Twenty-seven years have elapsed without any such recommendation or favour having been made, and that condition still obtains. The department has therefore nothing before it, and is powerless to act.

I have, &c.,

ARTHUR P. DOUGLAS, Under-Secretary for Defence.

The Chairman, Public Petitions, M. to Z. Committee.