

267. You swore you only wrote to Captain Bower for the purpose of putting yourself into communication with him. You did not know at that time Mr. Wrigg was claiming the Cross?—I did not know Captain Bower had recommended him.

268. In the letter you wrote to Captain Bower, did you make any nasty insinuations about the alleged courage of Wrigg, comparing him with a Maori called "Paul-up-a-Tree"?—Yes.

269. "Paul-up-a-Tree" was a man recognised among soldiers as a coward. Did you compare Mr. Wrigg in your letter to "Paul-up-a-Tree"?—As far as my recollection goes, I think I said, "From what I understand, he has not done more to deserve the Cross than "Paul-up-a-Tree."

270. You did not know him at all?—No, not personally.

271. You said in your recommendation that you sent into the Defence Department he was getting the Cross for services which did not warrant so high a distinction?—Yes.

272. You told us you did not know the condition of the Natives at the time in that particular spot?—Undoubtedly I knew the condition of the Natives.

273. You know nothing about the Natives being in this particular locality at this particular date? You did not know when you wrote that letter to the Defence Department what hostile Natives were in the vicinity of Opotiki?—Undoubtedly I did. I was in the Opotiki district directly afterwards, and heard the whole circumstances of the raid.

274. You never heard anything of the ride?—No.

275. You never heard Mr. Wrigg's name?—No.

276. Did you know McDonald went?—No; I knew Trooper McDonald, but never heard of Mr. Wrigg.

277. Was Trooper McDonald in the ride? Did you ever hear him say he was?—No.

278. You never heard him mention he was in the ride in any shape or form?—No.

279. You did not know until lately that he was in the ride?—No.

280. Who informed you?—I simply saw it in the *Gazette*, I think.

281. *Mr. Morrison.*] You have stated in evidence, Captain Preece, that you were at Wairoa in 1867?—Yes.

282. How many miles is that from Opotiki across country?—Over a hundred miles, I should think.

283. How long would it take for news to travel from Opotiki over to the particular place that you were stationed at? Communication was very slow, I suppose?—Probably a fortnight.

284. You have informed the Committee that whenever there was fighting you heard all about it?—Of course, you would hear all about fighting as soon as it occurred.

285. Is it not possible that volunteers might be asked for from companies or troops for forming danger-escorts to carry despatches and yet never be heard of?—Yes. Despatches were carried in dangerous times and thought nothing of after. They did not think they were entitled to the New Zealand Cross every time they carried despatches.

286. Is it not possible that troops in various times went with men while carrying despatches and performed dangerous and hazardous work, and you never would hear anything about it?—It is quite possible.

287. You say you felt it very much when you heard about Mr. Wrigg going to receive this New Zealand Cross?—Yes.

288. You entered a very vigorous protest against this person receiving the Cross?—Undoubtedly.

289. You laid down certain conditions under which the Cross should be conferred?—Yes.

290. Are you acquainted with the Order in Council in 1869, under which this Cross is given?—I have not heard of it for a number of years.

291. You made a strong point of the Victoria Cross for bravery under fire, and you thought the New Zealand Cross should be conferred on the same lines. Would it surprise you to know that this Order in Council gives His Excellency the Governor power to confer the New Zealand Cross on members of the Militia, Volunteers, or Armed Constabulary, who may particularly distinguish themselves by their bravery in action or devotion to their duty while on service? So the position you take up is, any one receiving the New Zealand Cross must have been under fire. I suppose you are an old military man?—I have not served in the Imperial army. I saw a great deal of field service in the colonial Forces.

292. You are not aware of volunteers being asked for for the purpose of carrying these despatches from Opotiki?—No.

293. You are prepared to place your opinion, seeing that you were at the time several hundreds of miles away from Opotiki—means of communication being so slow that it was sometimes a fortnight or more before you could hear from this particular place—against district adjutant Captain Bower and Captain Percival's?—I should not rely upon Captain Percival. I should not believe his oath.

294. Are you prepared to put your opinion against Captain Bower's, who was present at the time? Captain (late District Adjutant) Bower says that, "In accordance with this Order (Major St. John, then commanding the district at Opotiki, being since deceased), it affords me great pleasure to recommend Mr. Harry Wrigg, late cornet Bay of Plenty Volunteer Company, 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 a route where only 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." Are you, Captain Preece, prepared to put forward your individual opinion against these words?—My opinion is the country from Opotiki to Tauranga was not swarming with hostile Natives. It is a matter of notoriety.