

GOLD DIGGINGS AND THE GOSPEL

THE WESTLAND DIARY OF THE
REV. G. S. HARPER 1865-66

Edited by the Rev. Jonathan H. Haslam

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The Rev. George S. Harper



Born in Yorkshire, England, in the year 1840, George S. Harper was received into the Methodist ministry in 1864. He arrived in New Zealand in 1865, and was appointed to the Christchurch Circuit. A few weeks later he proceeded to the West Coast goldfields at Hokitika, where he became the first resident minister of any church in the whole area.

An article in "*The N.Z. Methodist Times*" (7/10/1911) says: "It is not every man who is fitted to face a crowd of gold-diggers, but George Harper filled the bill to perfection . . . He could knock about among them with a ready wit, and a keen appreciation of all the vicissitudes of a digger's lot." He laboured on the West Coast for one year only before returning to Christchurch. Later he pioneered Methodism on the Thames goldfields.

Altogether he exercised his ministry in the following Circuits: Christchurch, Hokitika, Thames, Wellington, Blenheim and Nelson. While at Nelson his health failed, and he retired to Sanson.

The "*Times*" article referred to above says inter alia:

"The excitement and strain of his goldfields' experience proved too much for him. In 1878 he was laid aside from active work by nervous prostration, from which he never really recovered."

He died on 24th September, 1911, and was buried at Palmerston North.

FOREWORD

During my Ministry in Brooklyn as Second Minister in the Wellington Central Circuit (1935-39), through circumstances which I shall briefly relate I came into possession of the MSS record of pioneer ministerial work on two New Zealand goldfields. The writer was the Rev. George S. Harper, and he entitled his record, "*Gold Diggings and the Gospel, a Young Preacher's Life and Work on New Zealand Goldfields,*" the two goldfields being those of Westland and Thames. To his MSS he added an informative preface in the following terms:

"From 1865 to 1878 the writer was engaged in the active work of the Christian Ministry in the Colony of New Zealand. Nearly four of those years were spent in pioneer and pastoral work on two of its principal goldfields.

Laid aside by overwork and loss of voice, he has sought to beguile many otherwise weary hours in writing the story of those happy and stirring times. My diary, from which extracts are made in the course of the following pages, was written in a condensed form for friends in England, and was never intended for the eye of the public. Hence it has been pruned and supplemented where it was deemed necessary; but on the whole it is a transcript of the original. Some brief records in the diary have been made additionally interesting by information derived from the "Handbook of the Mines," and other sources.

"The experiences recorded may be regarded as a specimen of pioneer Christian life and labour on the great goldfields of modern times. And, it is with devout gratitude that the author places this volume at the feet of Him whose are "the silver and the gold" as well as "the cattle upon a thousand hills," and to whose Christ was to be given of "the gold of Sheba" as an earnest of the ultimate consecration of material wealth to the spread of the Kingdom of God."

The Rev. G. S. Harper died on 24th September, 1911, in Palmerston North, some 18 months before my appointment to the Cuba Street, now Trinity Circuit. I never met him, but I met his widow, son and daughter while in that city. Just why, or when, this MSS came into the possession of the Rev. S. J. Serpell I do not know, but prior to his death in Thames in July, 1918 he gave it to a mutual friend of long standing of us both, the late Mr Sam H. Ferguson who. not long before his own death at Hataitai, Wellington in June; 1935, gave it to me.

This booklet is concerned with Mr Harper's work in Westland, and as the possessor of the MSS I have been asked to condense the record to suitable dimensions for publication by the Wesley Historical Society in view of the forthcoming Centenary of Methodism in Westland in 1965. Selection from Mr Harper's deeply interesting record has not been at all easy, but I have done my best, leaving the story to be told entirely in Mr Harper's own words. *Jonathon H. Haslam*

NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the Alfred and Isabel and Marian Reed Trust and the Edith Winstone Blackwell Foundation for generous donations towards the cost of this publication.

Thanks are expressed to author and publisher of J. Halket Millar's "*Westland Golden 'Sixties*" (A. H. & A. W. Reed) for permission to reproduce certain photographs from the book. Those appearing on pages 8, 16, 20, 21 and 22, are from the Photographic Collection of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

It should be noted that in J. Halket Millar's book—opposite page 32 — the captions under the photographs of John Rochfort and Reuben Waite were inadvertently changed over. They are correctly named in this book.

The Council of Wesley Historical Society (New Zealand) express appreciation of the Rev. J. H. Haslam's "labour of love" in preparing the Diary for publication.

Photographs of the Ross, Hokitika, Kanieri and Greymouth Churches are reproduced from "*The History of Methodism in New Zealand*," by William Morley, D.D.

Grateful thanks are expressed to the descendants of John Wallis Barnicoat, for permission to reproduce the unique sketches of Hokitika.

The Rev. Dr Harry Ranston, who was minister at Hokitika from 1909-12, states that the photographs of the Ross and Kanieri Churches (pp 30 and 35) are of the original buildings; that of the Hokitika Church (p. 40) is of the second building erected in 1874. The picture of gold-slucing operations on (p. 22) he identifies as probably being the Mount d' Or Mine at Ross, which was still operating during his Hokitika ministry.

Finally, it should be noted that Kaniere of these days is spelt "Kanieri" throughout Harper's manuscript, and this spelling has been retained in the present publication.

L. R. M. Gilmore,
Secretary.

CHAPTER ONE

Appointment and Arrival

The original inhabitants of the West Coast were the Maoris. At the time of the gold discovery they were few in number and of little tribal note. Their seven and a half millions of acres of land were purchased by the Government in 1860 for a few thousands of pounds in all. Ample reserves, however, were allowed them which have proved sufficient for their needs.

Gold was known to exist to these natives, but like those of Otago, they were ignorant of, or indifferent to, its real value till its discovery by Europeans—Different persons have claimed the honour of the discovery, but the best authenticated claim is that of a party of surveyors who found the metal in 1859 in the valley of the Buller River. In the following year the late Sir Julius von Haast, the Geologist of the Canterbury Government, reported that the West Coast of the South Island, and especially the Canterbury Province, had extensive and rich goldfields.

Now that the existence of the precious metal in payable quantities was assured, miners and adventurers from all parts of the Colony began to flock to the new El Dorado. During the first months of 1865 more extensive discoveries were made in the South. The excitement caused by these finds became intense, and the news spread to all parts of the Colony and Australia. The result was that a vast rush set in, population poured in by sea and land till at least 50,000 souls had gathered on the various diggings.

Many of the miners were old diggers from other countries and were physically the pick men from many lands. While some were of a reckless character and addicted to drinking, gambling and fighting, and the majority indifferent to religious ordinances, as a rule they were law-abiding men. Not a few were earnest Christians, who, with devoted business men in the other parts, did much to bring about a brighter religious air. The great majority of the population was Protestant, but Roman Catholics, chiefly Irish, were numerous.

As Hokitika became the chief port of the goldfields, it attracted a large population. Several of these were earnest Christian men. They felt the want of religious ordinances, and longed for opportunities of Christian fellowship. For some time the Sabbath was scarcely observed by the citizens. Ungodliness in various forms abounded till these devout men felt that something must be done to stem the tide of utter worldliness and sin. Several of these men were members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, and during the winter they wrote urgent requests to the officials of the Church in Christchurch for the services of a resident minister. Before help reached them they had inaugurated public worship on the Sabbath in unfinished buildings or in the open air. One of these laymen was a French Canadian named C. Powell, who addressed large gatherings in the streets. Another, who was then unconnected with any

church, was Mr D. W. Virtue, a devout and earnest preacher of the Gospel and highly esteemed.

On the 3rd of July, 1865, the repeated requests of the Hokitika brethren were considered at an official meeting in Christchurch, when the following resolution was passed — "That the Rev. G. S. Harper be requested to proceed to the West Coast goldfields to organise and establish Methodism in connection with the Christchurch Circuit." To this appeal I felt it my duty and privilege to respond; and in due course I proceeded to my new destination. In the following pages will be found the story of my pioneer life and work. The expenses of my mission were borne partially by the Church in Christchurch, and partially by the Church and by sympathisers on the goldfields. At first few appeals were made to hearers for contributions, and never in the open air services. It was not till places of worship were erected that systematic contributions were solicited, when it was felt that the work should then at least be self-supporting.

Soon after his arrival in the Colony the writer was appointed one of the ministers of the Christchurch Circuit, but in response to the appeals of the Hokitika brethren, the officials of the circuit consented to his removal thither for a definite period. At the same time his senior colleague, the late Rev. James Buller, was requested to accompany him in order to introduce him to the people, or to precede him to prepare his way. About the middle of July, Mr Buller proceeded overland on horseback, while later the writer went by steamer to Hokitika. Four months of happy toil on the Plains preceded the departure from the port he had so recently entered from the Fatherland.

To a young preacher of the Gospel that Thursday night, the 27th of July, 1865, was a time never to be forgotten. The night was clear and frosty; the moon shone brightly over the steep sombre hills of the harbour; the vessel was a reputed late American blockade runner with three immense funnels, and her decks were crowded with hundreds of miners and business men. The destination was hazardous in the extreme. The "City of Dunedin," a steamer bound for the same port had been wrecked a few weeks before on some spot unknown, for there was no survivor to tell the tale. The preacher was a stranger to all on board, and to the thousands to whom he was voyaging. Then there was a sense of the responsibility of his mission. All conspired to make that hour one of the most eventful in his life.

On the morning of the next day we were steaming abreast of the snow-crowned Kaikouras; and on the next we arrived in Nelson, where we took in coal and provisions. The western shores of the Island were sighted on the Sabbath. The weather was overcast and cold, and the only place of warmth accessible was in close proximity to one of the huge funnels of the vessels. From these funnels at times the flames shot forth, and at night presented a weird appearance. On the afternoon of the following day a sudden squall struck the vessel off a rocky part of the coast, and for a time she made no headway against wind and current. As a gale was evidently coming on, we

stood out to sea in the darkness and wished for the morn. In the night several vessels were driven ashore, while others were never heard of again. The bad weather continued another day and night; and as it was impossible to reach our destination we returned to Nelson for fresh coal and provisions. Starting again for the surf-beaten coast, we were met beyond Cape Farewell with such a heavy swell that we took refuge for a day and night in the West Wanganui Inlet. With a fair wind and a smoother sea we again steamed for our destination; and on Monday morning, August 7th, we were nearin"-the desired haven with ardent hopes of being able to "cross the bar^" of the Hokitika River, and so avoid having to remain in the offing for days and even weeks, as was the fate of some. No pilot was at hand, but as the sea was comparatively smooth it was determined to attempt the crossing at high tide. As we rose from breakfast the cry was heard, "There, we are crossing," which seemed to be con-firmed by the peculiar grating sound of sand and shingle against the keel of the vessel. As she crossed the bar our hopes were high. "Hurrah, hurrah, we are over!" But, alas, the surf wave strikes us, and before we can turn up the narrow channel of the river we are aground. A rope is got on shore, and hundreds of strong and willing hands pull in the hope of getting us into deeper water. But all is vain, and the vessel is stuck fast; the tide is on ebb, and ere long she will be high on the beach. The restless miners are eager for their release, and throw out their tools and swags, and after sundry wettings gain the sandbank. A few chains away a steamer and several schooners are high and dry on the beach, while in the distance another steamer is sunken in the narrow channel of the river. As we are in no immediate danger we take matters calmly, and survey the scene before us. In front of us rises a wall of sand, with immense logs and trunks of trees piled thereon in endless confusion; stranded vessels lie about, or are in course of transit to the river; in the distance is the town, built of canvas, weatherboards, or corrugated iron, and squatted on a long narrow ridge of sand on the verge of the forest; and before us, and north and south, are vast forests and snow-clad mountains. "The end of the world, surely. A strange place, indeed an unlikely spot for gold verily," we mentally exclaim; "but it must be so, or why these stranded ships? this crowd of bearded men? yon distant streets?"

While thus engaged, news had reached the town that a young minister was aboard the stranded steamer, the "New Zealand." The Rev. J. Buller, whom I expected to meet in Hokitika, had left the district a week before. He had preached on the two Sabbaths of his stay, had secured a large church reserve in a central position, and had organised a Church Building committee. A most mournful event transpired during his sojourn, and took place while he and his host, Mr R. Alcorn, were walking on the beach. This was the upsetting of a boat in the surf, which contained a number of passengers from the S.S. "*Lady Darling*" in the offing. Six out of thirteen were drowned and cast up on the beach. As Mr Buller left before the inquest, and as there was no clergyman of any denomination in the town or elsewhere on the Coast, the burial service was read by a layman.



John Rochfort, whose survey party found Westland, 1859, but did not follow up the discovery.



Reuben Waite, first storekeeper on the gold in West Coast (at the mouth of the Buller River), who publicised the discovery of gold in 1860.

CHAPTER TWO

First Impressions

Lodgings had been procured for me against my arrival, but as I was supposed to sail in another steamer I was not expected in the "*New Zealand*." But on the receipt of the news of my arrival, my host was soon in search of the minister. He was fresh from sitting damaged flour, and gave me the impression that of all the trades in this out-of-the-way place, here is a miller! But no, my good friend, Mr Robert Alcorn, of the firm of Messrs Alcorn & Co., was not a miller, but the keeper of a general store, one requisite of which was Adelaide flour. A hearty greeting was given me, and my host then conducted me to a substantial dinner. After dinner the town and its surroundings were more closely inspected. It was built on the north bank of the river, and extended for a mile, mostly in one street — along a narrow strip of sandy beach, over which at very high tides the sea rushed at low places into a hollow behind. On the farther side of this hollow was the evergreen forest, or, as it was termed, "the bush." Here and there dwellings were encroaching on the forest. Some of the buildings were large and substantially built, indicating faith in the permanence of the goldfields around. Others had been hastily erected with a view to further improvement. Here and there a calico store did duty for a more permanent structure, while the white tents of sojourners were scattered about in the open spaces. The buildings in the main street were chiefly stores and hotels, the number of the latter being so great as to strike us with surprise and sadness. About every third building was an hotel. At a subsequent period nearly a hundred and twenty of these drink shops were counted by me in the principal thoroughfare, a number which rose to two hundred in the whole town. The temporary wharf was too small for the vessels in the river, several of which were moored to the stumps of trees. To the west of the town was the ocean on whose bosom rose and fell a number of small sailing vessels waiting for a favourable wind or a smoother bar. Several of the schooners had been in the offing for some weeks, unable or afraid to attempt the crossing of the bar.

At the time of our arrival flour and other necessities were getting scarce. Oats and chaff for pack-horses were all but exhausted. Many of these poor creatures had become totally unfit for work and had been turned out on the beach to fare as best they could. As no grass yet grew, these famished animals might be seen eating old sugar bags and cast-off clothing, and gnawing at post and rail fences. Flour a few days after our arrival sold at £35 per ton, and butter from 2/6 to 2/9 per lb., and other articles in proportion.

Our inspection of the town and its outskirts being over, we returned to spend the first night in our new quarters. Our hosts were plying a busy trade owing to the timely arrival of provisions and clothing. Left alone for a time we scrutinised more minutely our new habitation. The building was composed of a framework of timber, with walls

and roof of corrugated iron. It was unlined and unfloored, save in the front part where business was transacted. The hinder part was a receptacle for a most miscellaneous assortment of wares for the use of man and beast. At one side was a rude tire-place, beside which we sat till tea could be prepared. At one corner of the room was a small window; the floor was the seaside sand; the table for meals was of planks upon stout stakes driven into the ground; empty boxes did duty for seats; no beds were visible. As the darkness came on the contrast between the home of our youth and our new one came forcibly to the mind. For a moment, and for a moment only, a feeling of utter loneliness came over the spirit, but it quickly vanished at the remembrance of the greatness of the work before us. Home, friends and Fatherland had been left for the Gospel's sake, and there was to be no looking back, but upward to God in resignation and expected blessing.

At length, one of the male employees got tea ready, there being no domestic in the establishment, in fact very few females in the town. Our evening meal being over, there followed a friendly chat, reading of the Scriptures and prayer, and finally preparation for rest. My host slept on the floor behind the counter. Several employees spread their blankets on bags of chaff and oats, and were soon asleep. My sleeping quarters were prepared by Mr R. McFarland, one of the firm, with the greatest consideration and kindness. I closely watched the process. In the most secluded corner of the room stakes had been driven into the sand, an empty sack nailed thereon, and on this rested a bag of chaff. Then followed several blankets, a spotless linen sheet and pillow, and my bed was ready. But was not privacy necessary to ministerial dignity? Whether it was so regarded I never knew, but at least it was thought to be for my comfort.' So, a sluicing fork (a tool used in mining with several prongs) was stuck into the ground, boards were placed between the prongs, and then fastened to the side and end of the building. Over these pieces of carpet were thrown, and thus curtained off, my bedroom was complete. Worn out with several nights of broken rest, owing to the gambling on board the vessel, I was soon asleep. Early next morning the shout of busy men, packers of goods to distant diggings, aroused me to the realities of a new life. On putting out my hand to press down the blankets, what was my surprise to find the surface quite damp. My first thoughts were: They have put me into a damp bed; now for colds, consumption and an early death in such a land as this. On withdrawing my hand and trying the interior of the bed, I found all dry and warm. A heavy frost in the night had fro/en the surface of the blanket, and the warmth from my body had thawed it and was causing the vapour to ascend. So my fears were dismissed, climatic seasoning having begun so as to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Life in new forms, amid strange surroundings, but with high hopes, had now commenced, and was to be met only with singleness of purpose and unwavering trust in God.

Here in this new township was to be the centre of my labours for a season, on a spot which a few months before was so covered with driftwood as to be impassable on horseback. Less than nine months before had been erected its first building, which was a store built of saplings and covered with calico. Then its population consisted of two persons, but at the time of my landing from three to four thousand, mostly engaged in business pursuits.

The morning after my arrival in Hokitika I was visited by a gentleman who, though quite a stranger, expressed much pleasure at my advent, and also earnest wishes for the success of my mission. He informed me that the only building in the town available for religious services was a hall engaged by himself on weekdays, and used for public worship on Sabbath evenings by a layman who was then unconnected with any church. This layman was Mr D. W. Virtue already mentioned. My new friend offered to use his influence to procure me the use of the hall, and it was eventually arranged that I should conduct my services every Sabbath morning and on alternate Sabbath evenings. The rent was to be One Pound for every Sabbath. This gentleman who so kindly interested himself in my work was Mr Thatcher, the humorist, so well known to the miners of Victoria and New Zealand. Night after night, and week after week this gifted man catered for the amusement of the citizens with music and song at a shilling per head. Besides sentimental and comic songs, he sang to popular airs verses of original composition, applauding or satirising the events of the week. His calling was an unfortunate one, for he was susceptible to deep religious impressions and was most favourably disposed to evangelical preaching. He was of pious parentage, his father being a deacon of a church in the south of England. After a life of many vicissitudes and great popularity he died of fever in Shanghai a number of years ago.

The Corinthian Hall above alluded to was a large room behind an hotel bar, and was then without boarded floor or seats save a form or two. At the further end of the room was a high platform with tawdry scenery, while at the other end was a second bar where thirsty listeners on the week nights were served with drinks at a shilling per glass. In front of the counter stood empty beer barrels which served for seats, and behind were shelves filled with bottles of alcoholic liquors. On the Sabbath, when Divine worship was conducted, to save appearances a green baize curtain was suspended between the front door and the bar, thus giving secluded entrance to the hall. In this room the Rev. J. Buller had conducted his services, and Mr Thalcher had placed at his disposal his harmonium. He also offered to preside at the instrument and to lead the singing. The same offer was made to myself, though accepted with reluctance as seemingly out of place. It was difficult to refuse such kindness, and it was hoped that he and his associates would thus be brought under Gospel influences.

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Such were our surroundings as we opened our preaching commission in the principal port of the goldfields. An extract from my diary will show how the first Sabbath was spent:—

August 13th, 1865.—Preached at 11 a.m. to about 40 persons in the Corinthian Hall on the Lord's Prayer. My pulpit was on the platform, but I was not much at home. Mr T. played the harmonium and led the singing behind the screen. He had the Methodist Tune Book, and gave us the old tunes. At 2.30 p.m. visited the sick in the hospital, and at 3 o'clock buried a child in the cemetery which already has not a few graves. At 7 p.m. preached again in the Hall to a large congregation from Luke xiv. 22, "And yet there is room." Mr and Mrs T., and Mr S., the musician, were there. Mr S. played and the others sang. Several of our members from the Kanieri diggings, three miles away, were at the service. Most of them are from Victoria. Thousands of the people here are from Australia.



Revell Street, Hokitika, in 1867, showing the Corinthian Hall where the first Methodist services were held.

14th.—Wet, windy day—"Hokitika weather?" Morning and evening cold as on the East Coast. The "Hokitika Herald" says:

"The Rev. G. S. Harper preached in the Corinthian Hall yesterday morning and evening. We do not know whether his stay is permanent, but hope it is, and that

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he is the first of many of his line of profession that will take up his abode with us."

For a time after my arrival no regular system of Church work could be carried on except on the Lord's Day, no building being available on week nights. Business was most absorbing, and carried on until a late hour. Pastoral visits, however, were paid, the sick were read to and prayed with, and general Church business attended to. Organisation was necessarily difficult and slow of progress.



Hokitika, 1865. Administration Centre.

CHAPTER THREE

Laying Foundations

During the week my first visit to a gold diggings was made. This was to the Kanieri, then called the Five Mile, because when first discovered it was supposed to be that distance from Hokitika. Gold was found there late in 1864. At the time of my visit from four to five thousand men were hard at work. Substantial stores and hotels had been erected, and the sanguine expected the town to rival Hokitika. Some working parties of miners were making from £6 to £30 per week per man.

An extract from my diary will preserve the freshness of the record of my visit to Kanieri.

August 16th (1865). Weather became fine today so went to Kanieri, the nearest Gold diggings to Hokitika. My route lay along the banks and beach of the river, which I crossed in a boat to the better side for walking. For some distance a footpath led along the shingle of part of the forsaken river-bed. Ere long, it diverged through a dense wood, and finally emerged near to the Woodstock diggings nearly opposite to Kanieri. Crossed the river in a boat, for which in digger's parlance, I paid a bob, that is, a shilling. Found things rough and the roads miry. Shops, hotels, houses, and tents were strewn about in all directions over the once forest ground. Some were in regular streets and others isolated. Thousands of miners were busy digging down into the earth, or tunnelling terraces for the precious metal. The gold is not found in nuggets, but in very small particles. It is dug out along with stones, dirt etc., which is called "wash dirt," because the gold is washed out with water and various kinds of 'machinery. The simplest process is by a tin dish, which is partially filled with wash dirt and water. It is then twirled from side to side in a dexterous manner so as to permit the water to carry away the sand and small stones. The gold settles to the bottom of the dish, and is mostly mixed with iron sand. A skilful hand will never allow a grain of gold to be washed from the dish, or pan. All the diggings here are in immense woods, or as they say here, "in the bush," except those along the banks of rivers, which are covered with brushwood.

Dined with one of our Church members who keeps a store, and then climbed up the side of a hill covered with felled trees, roots, stones etc., to see more of our Church members. Took tea with Mr and Mrs Longman in their tent, overhung with trees on the side of a terrace. Enjoyed myself very much, had plenty of tea and sugar, toast and butter, with a roaring wood fire. We spent the evening in conversation, singing of hymns etc. Was particularly struck with the bed across one end of the tent, with its curtains and clean variegated quilt. Slept with two bachelors in an adjoining tent, called 'Bachelors' Hall.' Their berths were along each side, and mine across one end, while the fireplace was at the other. Sacks were nailed to short stout posts driven into the ground. These were covered with dry fern leaves, upon which our blankets were

spread. Upon this bed, wrapped in one blanket and covered by another and my overcoat, I slept well and warmly.

17th. Visited and conversed with several groups of miners at their work, whom I found to be most respectful and agreeable. After dinner made some arrangements for the purchase of an empty store as a temporary place of worship. Found one of my 'bachelor' friends to be a local preacher from Victoria.

On my return to Hokitika took tea with Mr D. W. Virtue, and enjoyed the evening very much. Mr V. told me that he had been converted in Otago about eighteen months ago through reading a tract. He is about forty, and is a salesman in a large business firm. Says he has just made up his mind to sell no more spirits or beer, and has sent in his resignation if still expected to do so. Was a merchant at one time in Melbourne, but failed. 'God,' he said, 'had to bring me down.' We arranged to conduct our preaching services so as not to clash.

20th. Sabbath. Preached in the Hall this morning to a nice company. Went through the forest to the Kanieri and preached at 3 p.m. to a good and attentive congregation. Stood on a terrace with the river behind me, and with the open shops and hotels in front. Gave out 'Rock of Ages,' which five or six of our members began to sing. This drew several miners and others to hear. After prayer and reading of the Scriptures I sang, "Will You go to the Eden above?" Everybody seemed to like it, and towards the close they began to join in the chorus. Preached about half an hour, and then sang, 'In evil long I took delight.' At 7 p.m. formed a Society Class of six members in a tent — the first on the West Coast.

On one of these visits to Kanieri, I came to a branch of the river which I was about to ford, minus my boots and socks, when my English pride was to receive a rude shock. Just as I was about to enter the water, a voice behind me called out, "Get on my back and I will carry you over." On turning round I saw a stalwart miner close at hand, whom I thanked for his proffered help, but said I would rather wade. This would not satisfy the kind-hearted fellow, who insisted that I should get on his back and be carried safely across; and so with all humility I submitted, and was duly landed on the other side. Then, without a word, he went on his way, and I never saw him again.

21st. Kanieri. After breakfast visited the owners of the shops, or stores, to see if they would agree to close on the Sabbath. One would 'if the others would'; another, 'It is no use.' It was evident they were indisposed. On asking the Warden if no law existed to oblige them to do so, he replied, "The best course is to take steps to get up a Church, and ere long they will close of their own accord." The miners take the Sabbath for washing and mending etc. The "diggers' Church bell" is the blacksmith's anvil, sharpening tools for next week's work.

Struck the bargain for the empty store, to be used as a temporary church.

At 8 p.m. held a meeting of the Hokitika Church Building Committee to decide on tenders for clearing the bush from the Church site. As Mr T. (Thatcher) is about to leave, a vote of thanks was passed to him for the use of the harmonium and for leading the singing. Was much encouraged on hearing that Mr T. had said that my "preaching had gone into him like a knife." It was said that he was tired of his way of life, and was determined to give it up.

22nd. A steamer brought three hundred and sixty passengers from the South. Married a couple this afternoon—the first marriage, I believe, performed here, at any rate by a minister. At 7 p.m. had an interview with the Goldfield's Commissioner, G. S. Sale, Esq., and other officials. They were very agreeable and obliging. Received permission to visit the prison, and also a promise of land for a Church site at Kanieri.

26th. While taking a walk this morning met Mr T. who wished me to walk with him to see over Church ground, when to my great joy he opened his mind to me about the state of his soul. We had a long conversation in which I exhorted him to give up his profession, along with every sin, and trust in Christ alone for Salvation. He informed me that Mrs T. was also under conviction of sin. Took tea with them, and had a long conversation with Mrs T. who seems determined to give up singing in public. "No one knows," she said, "the wretchedness I am in. I have to dress and sing as if I were one of the merriest beings in the world, and all the time I am on that stage I have a sad unhappy heart." Before I left they handed me the New Testament, and wished me to read and pray, and to visit them again.

September 27th (1865). Sabbath. Trudged through the forest this morning and preached at Kanieri, instead of Mr Virtue, from the words, "He came to Jesus." Dined in a store, and then crossed the river in a boat. Visited the stores and diggers' tents at Woodstock, and held the first religious service ever held there. Had a good congregation, to whom I preached, with a butcher's block for a pulpit, from the text, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Baptised a child after the service.

About 6 o'clock heard one of the "bellmen" or town criers in Revell Street, announcing that I should preach in the Corinthian Hall at 7 o'clock. This he was doing of his own accord. He says he will not do it for anybody but "that young man." Had a large congregation, to whom I preached with liberty from the words, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Voluntary contributions were received on a plate placed on a beer barrel near the door.

To show the free, unconventional life of a goldfield, I may say that "Daddy the bellman" referred to above was accustomed to parade the streets of Hokitika of his own accord on Sabbath evenings to announce my preaching services. At times he would take his stand in front of the Hall door a quarter of an hour before the service began, and swing his bell most vigorously. Passersby, ignorant of public worship, would be curious to know what this could mean on the Sabbath, till often quite a

crowd would gather. When they understood the object some would pass along, while others would enter the Hall and listen to the Gospel which they had not heard perhaps for years, and, in some cases, probably would never hear again. On one of these occasions, on going to my evening's work somewhat earlier than usual, I observed "Daddy" acting as ringer up, and, on reaching the outskirts of the crowd, that he was calling to passersby, "Roll up, roll up, and get some good to your souls. Come and hear the young man from over the snowy mountains. He is always very civil and obliging to me." Though I was then amused, if not somewhat mortified at his self-imposed task, I doubt not but that he induced many to listen to the Gospel which they would not otherwise have heard. "Daddy" was not of the most temperate habits, I found, and on my venturing to remonstrate with him on the inconsistency of his drinking and then ringing for the Sabbath services, he informed me that he was once a Methodist Sunday School scholar, and that he should still continue to ring — he "was a Wesleyan to the backbone." On another occasion during service in the Hall, I offered special prayer for the intemperate. While doing so, "Daddy" whispered to one of my hosts' employees, "He means me: I'm off." So he noiselessly stole away till the prayer was finished, and then as quietly as possible returned for the rest of the service. My final meeting with this quaint but good-natured character was on a Sabbath day on one of the southern gold diggings, when to my astonishment, I heard his bell accompanying an announcement of my services. On a subsequent visit to Westland, on making enquiries about him, I found that he had died in one of the hospitals.



Hokitika Wharves, 1865.

CHAPTER FOUR

Westland Life and Manners

The following extract from one of the newspapers about this lime will prove interesting, showing as it does, how the week-night and Sabbath gatherings in the Corinthian Hall impressed the public mind.

"A CONTRAST."—At eleven o'clock on Saturday night about four hundred persons, including a number of respectable females, left the Corinthian Hall, after witnessing the trapeze performances, listening to comic and sentimental songs, laughing at a ghost scene, and enjoying heartily other amusing performances. On Sunday morning at eleven o'clock the same number of persons decorously walked into the same building to hear the solemn adjurations of a Gospel minister, and to offer prayer and praises as their fathers did afore-time. Although service is held in a hall which, but a few hours before, resounded with laughter and joke by rough men smoking and drinking and applauding, the utmost attention is paid to the service. There is no clink of glasses at the bar, no offending smell of smoke, no attempt at levity; all is due reverence and respect. The contrast is not more striking than instructive. And yet the preacher would sometimes hear at the bar the ring of coin and the call for a drink, which were instantly followed by the barman's "hush!" and a whisper of what was going on in the room behind, when all was "due reverence and respect."

About this period the Rev. B. Drake, Congregational minister, from Invercargill, arrived in Hokitika. He was a man well advanced in years, and an able preacher. We united in Christian work, and our relations were most cordial. He secured a site for a church adjoining our own, but not finding many of his own denomination he was unable to erect any building. Hence he conducted his services in a billiard room at the rear of the Empire Hotel. After a short sojourn he was prostrated with fever, the church site sold to the Presbyterians, and he returned to his former home.

September 3rd. Sabbath. Very heavy rain all night and up to 8 o'clock. Was unable to fix my mind on a text for this morning's service, so went without. On arriving at the Hall, found that in consequence of its being flooded, everything was in confusion and unfit for worship, so sent several to hear Mr I Drake, and went myself to the wharf and held an open-air service. Had a good gathering and preached from I John 1:7, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin."

At 3 o'clock Mr Drake and I went through the principal streets and gave tracts at all open stores, hotels, and private houses, and also to all persons we met. At 4 o'clock joined the two lay preachers, Mr Virtue and the French-Canadian, in another open-air service at the wharf. At 7 o'clock stood on an empty soap box in Revell Street and preached from "Your heart shall live forever." Several Romanists at an hotel door

hooted, and an infidel was disposed to cavil: but I took no notice of the one party, and told the other that I did not wish to reply to him, or we might become bad friends, which I did not wish to be with any man. It was a lovely night, and I enjoyed the service very much. As I gazed at the blue sky tonight I thought that friends in England would little think that I was in such a place as this — so rough and without a church or a place in which to preach. Yet, I would not be elsewhere, for I believe it is the Lord's will, and I am happy in pointing sinners to Jesus. It is a great and interesting work.

I afterwards learned that at the close of the service the infidel above alluded to made some uncomplimentary remarks about myself. This was overheard by several miners from Kanieri who were unknown to me. They began to administer chastisement to the culprit in their own ready way. One struck off his hat, and another was about to trip him when the third called for 'fair play.' He then addressed the champion of unbelief thus: "Listen! when that minister comes to "the diggings" as you townspeople call them, we can listen to him quietly; he is never molested. But when he preaches here you cannot let him alone. If he preaches here again next Sunday night and you hinder him, you had better look out." He was then allowed to depart. He never again interfered with me.

This was a mild form of "lynch law," not uncommon in the early days of the goldfield. At Waimea, or the Twelve Mile, as it was called, one culprit had his hair cut off; and another for pocket-picking was suspended for a time by the arm from the branch of a tree. Among the miners, policemen as a class were most unpopular. An allusion to them in the above service was met with shouts of disapprobation. The prejudice arose not so much from dislike of the law as from the belief that the ranks of the force were a refuge for the indolent.

September 5th. This morning several small steamers and sailing vessels crossed the bar, and were watched by hundreds of spectators. It is especially exciting to see the schooners. One got on shore, and two others ran foul of each other. It is several months since the bar was so favourable for sailing vessels; hence seven took advantage of it. During the brief existence of this port about forty vessels have been wrecked or stranded at the mouth of the river; and though a steam tug has arrived from Melbourne, the days of disaster cannot be said to have passed away.

On Sunday a clerk belonging to one of the banks was returning from one of the northern diggings after his Sabbath purchases of gold, when he was robbed by five armed men of 821 ozs. of gold and £1000 in notes. "Thy own wickedness shall correct thee."

This robbery was preceded by one in February when the same agent had his valise of gold and notes taken from a tent. Considering the amount of the population and the

nature of the country, it was surprising that so few acts of robbery and violence took place. Compared with the bush-ranging in the early days of Victorian gold-fields the West Coast contrasted favourably.



Hokitika Wharf. Loading and unloading 1867.

September 6th. We held our first class meeting in Hokitika at 8 p.m. in a private dwelling nearly opposite to the church site. Six attended; expected more, but they were so busy as to be unable to attend. Everyone seems to be in a hurry to establish himself in business. Money, money, is the great desire. "We want to make our pile quickly" is the language of most. Goldfields seem detrimental to piety. It is hard work to keep up spiritual warmth. Worldliness of spirit is almost universal.

Two days after the above date Bishop Harper of the Anglican Church in Christchurch arrived in Hokitika on a tour of inspection. On the overland journey he and his son had missed their way. They were overtaken on the road by Mr R. Alcorn who conducted them to the town. He brought them to his store, and at once introduced them to me. The Bishop was most cordial and without any pomp of office, and I soon found myself in kindly chat with him as if we had been old friends. We did not find the most distant relationship between ourselves. As there was no other building suitable for Divine Worship I offered to give up my own Services and to place the Corinthian Hall at his disposal on the ensuing Sabbath, which he gladly accepted. I also undertook to

procure additional seats and the aid of a choir so as to make everything as comfortable as possible, for it was a real pleasure to do everything for the fatherly prelate.



Hokitika River. Sketch of the river and shipping by J. D. Schmidt, 1860's.

September 9th. A man came to me to sign a Total Abstinence pledge, saying he would give five shillings for the pledge and five more for the church. So I wrote out a form which he signed. Talked faithfully to him and urged him to be steadfast.

This was in all probability the first pledge of the kind taken on the Gold Coast. Having been a total abstainer for several years my warmest sympathies were with the movement, but the pressure of pioneer work prevented me from taking any steps towards any organisation. That there was need of such an organisation, if only as a public protest, may be judged when the town had such a large number of hotels, and when I mention that at one period I culled at random from its newspapers one week's customs dues at the port of Hokitika amounting on spirits alone to the sum of £1200. On the bosom of this stream of alcoholic liquor flowed all kinds of physical, social and moral evil. Several cases of drowning and of manslaughter were directly traceable to its influence. Four men in the course of a few months were known to have been killed in drunken fights.

September 10th. Sabbath. Heard the Bishop of Christchurch at 11 a.m. in the Hall. He preached extempore, a plain faithful sermon. He "delivered his soul" by "declaring the whole counsel of God." At 3 p.m. I preached at Kanieri to a large and attentive congregation in the open air, my pulpit being a heap of dirt and stones. In the evening

heard the Bishop again, and was highly pleased. He spoke very appropriately and very faithfully to a crowded audience.



Hokitika Post Office Hotel 1866

September 13th. Bishop Harper called to see me this morning and to thank me for placing the hall at his disposal etc.

It is with peculiar pleasure that I record the above fraternal intercourse with the good prelate. Canterbury was originally an Episcopal, as Otago was a Presbyterian Province. At the time of my arrival in the Colony the Wesleyan Church had made such progress as to excite the jealousy of some. However, wherever the bigotry and intolerance of such were, they were not with the Ecclesiastical head. The gratitude of the Bishop did not find expression to me alone, but on his return to his diocese in an address to his clergy and others he made use of the following words: "It is with heartfelt gratitude that I record the great kindness of the Wesleyan minister there, who showed me every courtesy, and gave up the Hall to me, and went to no little trouble in getting seats etc." This unlocked for acknowledgement greatly delighted our people on both sides of the island, and had a happy influence on both churches.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Work Extended



Sluicing for gold in early days of Westland.

September 15th. Left Hokitika at 7 a.m. on a visit to the Grey, which is about thirty miles distant. The route lay along the sea beach. Crossed several creeks and three rivers. Here and there were lagoons fringed with trees. Indeed the forest for the whole distance was close to the sea. Arrived at 4 p.m. and took up my abode at the store of Messrs R. Alcorn and Co.

September 17. Sabbath. Wet and stormy. No suitable building for worship. At first was afraid that the weather would prevent open air services; but in the afternoon managed to sing up a congregation between the showers. Stood on a heap of planks on the edge of the river and preached from Luke xiv 22, "And yet there is room." Was told this was the first sermon ever preached here. During the service a drunken man caused some interruption, when another man jumped up and taking him firmly by the coat collar, he held his clenched fist to his face and told him unless he "shut up" he would knock him down. I begged my champion to be merciful, and was thankful no blow was struck.

As the weather continued unsettled I preached at night in the unfinished Bank of New Zealand, a small building, but quite large enough for those present. The text was Is. iv. 3, "Incline your ear and come unto me etc." During the service a drunken man came and seated himself in the doorway and quietly lay down and fell asleep. On going out several stepped over him, and at last he was dragged away.

September 18th. Met a Maori minister with whom I was soon at home, and went with him to his pa, or Native Village, a short distance above the town. Found a Maori Wesleyan there from Canterbury East. Most of the natives present were women, the males being up the river digging.

September 24th. Sabbath. Preached at Hokitika at 11 a.m. in the Hall, and at 3 o'clock to a large miscellaneous crowd at the end of Revell Street close to the river. Some Romanists gave me some annoyance, and tipsy men some interruption; but I went on unheeding their shouts, feeling that I would be knocked down rather than yield to them. At the close of the service I singled out the ringleader, and to show him that I had no ill will I extended my hand, which lie readily grasped and shook heartily.

At 7 p.m. preached in the temporary church at Kanieri. Had plenty of "Amens" and a happy time. Never enjoyed a service so much on this coast.

September 26th. Went with the Warden, Mr Schaw, and a Surveyor to the Kanieri to select a site for a permanent church.

Selected a site for the church on a terrace in a pretty central position and commanding a fine view of the township, diggings, river and mountains.

September 30th. Married a couple this afternoon and got ten pounds which I handed to the Church Building Committee having promised to devote the first half dozen fees to that purpose.

October 6th. A letter of the above date reached me from the Rev. I. Harding of Wellington, then unknown to me, from which I at the time transcribed the following pertinent remarks, "Your work on a new 'rush' will be difficult, arduous and onerous, and will make heavy demands upon your wisdom, piety, and endurance . . . You lay the foundation where many thousands may in years to come worship the God of your fathers."

The force of these kindly words was much valued at the time. In a strange land and among strangers, without convenience for retirement and study; mingling with all kinds and classes of persons; preaching to intelligent, shrewd and practical men; travelling to and fro, and sleeping in all kinds of rooms; surrounded by indifference and evil in numerous forms; visiting the sick and burying the dead; these indeed made heavy demands, not only upon time, but upon "faith and endurance." Yet I was most graciously sustained from above and was never happier in the Lord's work. A sense of

duty to God, and the hope of benefiting my fellow men were the poles of the spiritual sphere in which I lived and laboured.

October 10th. Called away about 3 p.m. to bury a digger who had been killed at Kanieri. He was interred by the side of a sailor who was recently killed by a fall from the rigging of a vessel at the wharf. As we were proceeding along the beach to the cemetery we were startled by a woman who rushed from the bush exclaiming "There's a man dead! dead in his tent!" On returning from the funeral I entered the forest, and was directed to the tent in which the dead man lay. It was only long enough to lie down in, and only high enough to sit upright; and there was the poor fellow stiff and cold in his bed. He had died unknown, unattended, unwept! Death is busy.

While standing by the grave this afternoon while it was being made deeper, a young man came up to me and rejoiced my heart by telling me that he had been brought to Christ by a sermon I had preached in the street one Sunday evening, and that he had given up his situation in an hotel in order to get to the means of grace This is the first conversion I have heard of on the West Coast. Very much encouraged by this account.

Doubtless other similar cases had occurred prior to this.

October 12th. Requested to visit a young man in one of the hotels ill with fever. He had been brought down from the Waimea diggings. Found him in a small back bedroom filled with bunks like a ship's cabin. He was unconscious and without friends to attend him. Could only pray for him and bathe his forehead and moisten his lips with water.

October 14th. Buried the young man above referred to. He was a son of one of our Class leaders in the north of Ireland. After the usual burial service I was much impressed with the act of one of the mourners whom I know to be a bigoted Catholic. He seized a spade, heaped more earth upon the grave, and smoothed it in the usual way. He then made the sign of the Cross on the grave with the spade, fell on his knees at the foot of the mound, and remained for a short time in silent prayer. This act carried a conviction of sincerity and consistency to his principles to all our hearts.

October 15th. Preached in the Hall, which was crowded from end to end, from "Gallio cared for none of these things." As I entered the building the proprietor met me and said, "I am glad to see you: if you had not been here soon I should have closed the Hall." "Why, what is the matter?" I asked. He replied, "Last Sunday Mr Virtue attacked the opinions of the Roman Catholics, and if he preached tonight they were going to mob him." A great number came, but listened so attentively that very few knew anything of the affair.

The course adopted by these persons was intended as an act of intimidation, and was a menace to Protestant liberty of speech! Mr Virtue was a sturdy champion of right, and was not a man easily intimidated, but he afterwards maintained a discreet silence, lest

his use of the Hall should be denied him. The priests of Rome were quite at liberty to attack Protestant opinion, and doubtless did so, but they had liberty of speech. A few years after the above incident a most determined breach of law and order in connection with the Fenian movement was headed by Father I., when the Protestant element rose en masse to sustain the authorities in maintaining peace and order. The Fenians were awed, and the excitable priest deservedly punished.

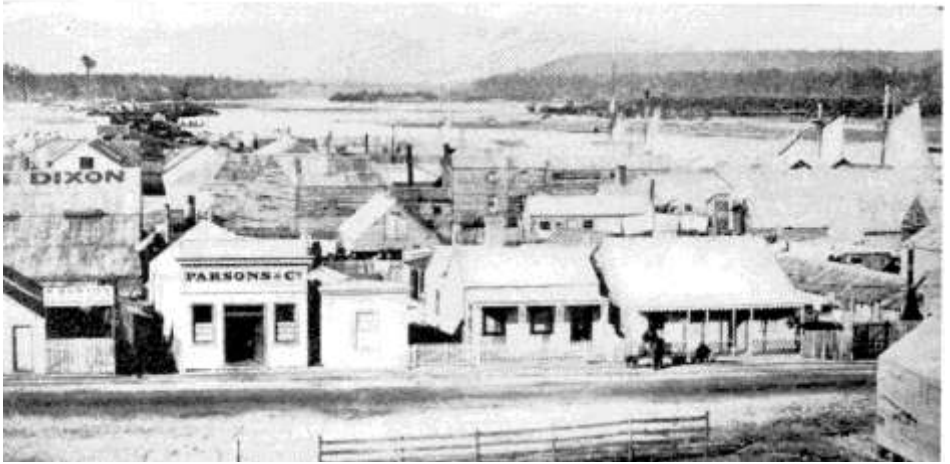
October 21st. After dinner a man came to ask me to bury his brother who had died of disease of the lungs. After the burial was over, I went to see the new diggings in the forest at the foot of the Cemetery Reserve, which is within the town boundary. The Commissioner has prohibited digging for gold within the boundary, but the miners heed not as he has no adequate force of police to prevent them. Where the gold is the digger will go, even if he has to fight for it. I found a number of parties at work in the dense forest; and, after chatting with several of them I started as I thought in a direct line for the beach, but ere long I found I was lost in the bush. As night was coming on I felt somewhat anxious; but remembering school-day teaching that the ground was a good conductor of sound, I placed my ear close to the earth in the hope of hearing the surf. After patiently listening for a time I heard the welcome sound and ere long regained the beach, learning the lesson not to trust myself again without caution in the New Zealand bush.

October 22nd. Sabbath. At three o'clock preached at Woodstock to a good congregation which I had to sing up. In the last prayer I was led to pray particularly for the conversion of one whose father was still living, but whose mother was dead. In crossing the river to Kanieri a man in the boat said that it was for him I had been praying. At 7 p.m. preached to a crowded audience, about 40 of whom remained to the prayer meeting.

October 23rd. Received £20 from friends in Christchurch towards cost of our new church in Hokitika.

CHAPTER SIX

Around the Churches



Hokitika, looking up river in the late 1860's.

October 24th. A man drowned, and two others nearly so. Had just arrived from Sydney. A gale drove their cutter into the breakers.

The surf here at times is dreadful, and extends seawards a couple of miles. The ocean waves seem to roll for thousands of miles without interruption and then to break upon this coast.

Several hundreds of fresh arrivals today by large steamers. These vessels remained in the offing opposite the mouth of the river about half a mile distant. Passengers and cargo were transhipped into powerful steam tugs able to contend with the surf and the river current. Steamers of light draft were also employed. One of these, the "Bruce," at one time landed 900 passengers in the course of the day at a charge of £1 each. The charge for loading cargo was £3 10s per ton.

October 30th. Visited the day school which is conducted by a teacher from Otago. A short time ago I accompanied him from house to house and from tent to tent to induce parents to send their children to school.

October 31st. Being a fine day I accepted a pressing invitation to the Totara diggings about 20 miles to the south. There was a great rush to it at the time of my landing. My guide was a Welsh-man and a Congregationalist, who had become acquainted with some of our people who had begun to hold public services in the new township called Ross. These brethren were chiefly from Victoria, and as Methodists seem to have

more enterprise than our New Zealand members. My guide was anxious that I should know how difficult a journey was before me, and curiously watched me to see if I had any misgivings. I assured him I was only too anxious to go, as I had wished to do for some time, the wretched state of the weather alone having prevented me. We walked along the beach for about 12 miles, and then had tea with bread and eggs for which we each paid half a crown. For the next 4 miles we took a boat from the beautiful lagoon close to the beach. On the one hand was a high sandbank which separated us from the sea; on the other was the dense forest with foliage of various shades of green. Towards dusk we made the end of the lagoon close to the mouth of the river Totara, and distant about 4 miles from Ross. No light task was now before us, as our route lay through forest and river. The moon was our lamp, however, and away we went along the narrow track up to our knees at times in water and mud. Tiring of this, we determined to cross the river and seek an easier path along the shingle. After wading some distance we found the current too strong, so returned to the old track through the gloomy solemn forest. We plodded on till we came to a creek which came down from the township, and crossed and recrossed it seven or eight times. Near the township we left the road and entered the dense forest again, and finally came to a clearing where my guide and a member of our church were cultivating a market garden. Wet and weary we entered a crude hut at a late hour, and at once went to bed, where I was soon asleep.

November 1st. After dinner went up to the township, and to the diggings. The town stands on a fine terrace while the mining is mostly carried on below. Found out one of our local preachers, a digger whom I had met in Hokitika. Took tea with him and his mates in their tent. At 7 o'clock selected a spot for an open air service at the corner of the terrace where the singing could be heard by the greatest number. In order to ensure peace, if possible, I entered the hotel just opposite and asked the owner if he had any objections to my standing on a stump of a tree near at hand to hold a religious service. His reply was favourable, so I took my stand on the stump, and gave out a hymn which our friends sang. I then preached in the fading light to about 100 persons from my old text, "And yet there is room," and had a blessed time. Several who appeared to have come to drink were astonished to see a preacher. No opposition was offered, though my guide heard several talking about rotten eggs with which to pelt us. After the service we proceeded to a large tent and organised, first a Church Building Committee, and then a Society class of 7 or 8 members. Surprised to find so many Christian people. Found they had already held several indoor services, and were about to call a public meeting to take steps to erect a church. Slept with my digger-brethren, and enjoyed the luxury of a Victorian opossum rug.

November 2nd. Up early and waited upon the Warden to secure a site for a church. As he had not risen I wrote a request and left it for him; and though it was raining and threatening bad weather, I set off for Hokitika as I was too busy to remain over the

Sabbath which the friends very much wished. Soon after leaving it began to rain heavily, but my waterproof coat given me by Mr C. W. Turner of Christchurch, and son of one of our first missionaries, was of great service. Had to wade creek and river to my knees. At the junction of the river with the lagoon got a boat for the whole length. Had it not rained so heavily it would have been a most delightful trip. In several places there were islands covered with trees and shrubs to the water's edge. There is splendid scenery on this coast.

November 8th. A fearfully rainy and stormy night. On awakening found to my surprise I was none the worse for yesterday's wetting and travel.

About 9.30 a.m., as the sea was very boisterous, and a vessel coming on shore near my lodgings, I went out to gaze, and while doing so with hundreds of others; a tremendous wave-broke over the sandbank on which we were standing. It swept away a stout spar on which I stood, threw me to the ground, and washed me right under the spar and logs of timber. I felt the roots of a dead tree scratching my chest, and for a moment thought my end was come. But I escaped unhurt while a man close by me had a leg broken and sustained other injuries. My pockets were filled with water and sand, and of course I was drenched to the skin. The vessel came on shore almost immediately after, but no lives were lost. A flood in the river had swept her from her moorings into the breakers where she was soon at their mercy. Thanks be to God for his great mercy to me this day.

November 4th. My work here is peculiar and makes me anxious there will be openings soon that I cannot enter; indeed I have now more work than I can well do. Not only do I study under difficulties, but all kinds of pioneer and pastoral work demand attention.

November 5th. Sabbath. Preached in the Hall at 11 a m to a large audience from "O Lord revive thy work"; at 3 o'clock preached at Woodstock, and at 7 p.m. at Kanieri to a crowded congregation Many were unable to get into the building. About 30 stayed to the prayer meeting. Hope soon to hear of conversions there. Surely the set time to favour this place has come.

November 8th. Had a blessed class meeting at Hokitika tonight. There were two or three new members and one soul seeking mercy.

It will interest the reader when I state that more than 20 years after the above record I heard of the person referred to as a 'seeker' as one of the most earnest Christian workers in the suburbs of one of our largest cities Thus "The bread cast upon the waters" was found after many days."

November 9th. Soliciting subscriptions towards erection of a new church at Kanieri. Was told that there was a saying among miners that as soon as a church is built the yield of gold begins to decrease! Why? Because as a rule such buildings are so long

being erected that nearly all the gold is unearthed. A sad reflection this upon the apathy of Christian bodies.

A Prussian Jew whom I met at the Grey, left Hokitika today for Europe. He has become a Christian. He is a fine, intelligent and eloquent man, but seems to quail before the difficulties that will beset his future path among his friends.

The streets tonight are crowded with people passing to and fro Gin palaces and all kinds of places of amusement are crowded. It is painful to see so much ungodliness, to hear oaths and curses on every hand, and to witness so many fallen women pacing the streets. If any Christian desired to be sickened with sin one night here would suffice. Yet, 'God reigns!'

November 12th. Sabbath. Preached twice in the Hall today and in the afternoon visited the Sabbath School which is conducted by the French Canadian and others. Also, paid visits to the hospital and prison. Cases of sickness mostly fever, dysentery, wounds and delirium tremens. The Hall was crowded tonight, and Mr Virtue had a large congregation at the same hour on the wharf.

November 13th. From what is said above in reference to the moral condition of the people it would be a grievous mistake to suppose there are no good and intelligent people here. There are a few very good, and many truly intelligent. People in England have no idea of the amount of intelligence and of progress there is in New Zealand. We have more intelligence in this town with more than its 3000 inhabitants than in any town of the same size in England.

November 28th. Buried a man at 1p.m. Died suddenly, and had no relatives. Not a few die thus on this coast, the names of some are not even known.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Growing Church



Ross Church, opened December 31st, 1865.

December 3rd. Sabbath. Fine day; called up early to bury a digger, killed yesterday by the sand caving in upon him while at work. When we reached the cemetery the grave had to be dug, so put off the burial service until the afternoon. Did not reach home till nearly 10 o'clock, and then had breakfast to get and prepare for opening the church at eleven. The bell of the steamer on which I came is to do duty as the church bell, and is suspended from the branch of a tree near the building. The church was full at the service, and I had a good time in preaching from the text, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." The people seemed to enjoy the service, and there was a first rate collection. The Rev. B. Drake preached in the afternoon. By 7 o'clock I managed to get a sermon ready on "The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation unto everyone that believeth." The church was crowded to excess. We had a good prayer meeting after the service, though it was dull compared with our Christchurch meetings. We had a good day, and did well in money matters.

Gold Diggings and the Gospel ed. by J.H.Hasham

December 5th. Rained heavily, but cleared up in the middle of the afternoon. The public tea and meeting were a great success. Admission to the tea was a five shilling ticket. The provisions were far superior to my expectations, in fact I never saw anything of the kind to equal the spread. After the tea came oranges and almonds and raisins. The Commissioner, G. S. Sale, Esq., who is an Anglican came to the tea, and occupied the Chair at the public meeting which was most animated and delightful. The collection at the close was £20. The expenditure on the building was £420, and the receipts £380. The balance we expect to raise in a week or two

December 10th. Sabbath. Went to Woodstock, but fearing a headache I postponed the service till the afternoon.

At night preached at Hokitika to a crowded church though services were conducted in other places, by Rev. B. Drake at the Empire Billiard Room, by Mr Virtue at the Hall, and by an Anglican clergyman from East Canterbury in the Court House. The service in the church was followed by a prayer meeting which lasted till nearly 11 o'clock. Four penitents were seeking the Saviour: one was a well known contractor and another an influential shipping agent. To God be all the glory.

December 18th. Preached at Kanieri at 7 p.m. Had a blessed time. Renewed tickets of membership to nine members and one on trial.

The Episcopal clergyman who is visiting the Coast just now called to see me. He brought Bishop Harper's kind regards and elicited information about religious matters. He seemed to be a very kind and earnest man.

December 20th. Started for Totara, found the lagoon full again.

December 21st. Rainy and unsettled weather. Visited the church which is in course of erection, and which will be finished soon. It is being built of wood and canvas, and will be neat and comfortable. It is near the spot where I preached on my first visit, on a clear and central site granted by the Government. It is expected to be nearly free from debt when opened for worship. Preached at 8 p.m. in the open air near the church site to a large and attentive congregation. Took my stand in front of an hotel on a log at the angle of the township where the singing could be heard by hundreds. An old Presbyterian gave notice of the service by singing a hymn or two by himself. It was amusing to watch the effect of his solemn stentorian voice on the diggers encamped on the flat below. Some jeered, while others hastily washed and prepared for the service.

After the service met the class and found six members with six on trial. In this out of the way place the Spirit of God has been at work, and several have found the Saviour, mostly through the efforts of the members.

One of these young church members was later President of the South Australian Methodist Conference. How little did we think of such a thing at the time.

December 22nd. My birthday. Set off early for Hokitika. Came through the bush. The road part of the way was in a fearful state. The old Presbyterian, Father Henderson, accompanied me. Told me he was a school mate of Archbishop Tait whom I heard in London last year. He meets in class, and has worked hard to get up "the Kirk" as he calls it. He is a fine courageous Christian.

December 25th. Christmas Day. Busy until 2 o'clock in drawing up a Quarterly Church Report. Our church members, i.e. those meeting in class, number 34, with 15 on trial. Preached to a good congregation in the church at 8 o'clock.

December 31st. Sabbath. Preached a Sabbath School Sermon at 11 a.m. At three and seven o'clock preached the opening sermons of the new church at Kanieri. After the evening service held a prayer meeting where three men were seeking mercy, one having been brought up a Roman Catholic.

As it was the last night of the year, we arranged for services in the following order to usher in the New Year: the usual Watch-night Service, the usual Sabbath evening sermon and prayer meeting, a fellowship hour, another sermon and prayer meeting: in all five bourse. A glorious time we had; many present; and several apparently under conviction of sin.

The Ross Church was to be opened today by Mr R. Clark, late of Bendigo, Victoria, and now digging at Ross.

Thus ends another year: three months spent at sea, tour in East Canterbury, and five here. It has been an eventful year to me, and an exciting period to the whole of the Australian Colonies on account of these gold discoveries. Already hundreds of sermons have been preached here, and tens of thousands of religious tracts distributed, with what result we know not. To me it is a great honour to be thus at the spring of a young district's life.

The spiritual progress could not be tabulated. Our own statistics as a church were: three church buildings; other preaching places, two. Sabbath Schools two, members meeting in class thirty with nine on probation. Doubtless there were many other church members who could not be distinguished from mere hearers, and who for various reasons did not report themselves. Those about the Grey and in the outlying districts were as sheep without a shepherd. Yet, the Lord knew them that were His, and the leaven of their influence must have been felt in many far-off places.

January 1, 1866. Too weary to go to opening lea and public meeting at Ross, so held a Sabbath School meeting at Kanieri and elected officers for the ensuing year. Meeting of Church Building Committee afterwards when we found that with subscriptions and

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collections of yesterday we were wanting but £7 towards an expenditure of £125. Well done! I like these diggers, because when they undertake a work they do it and soon too. We have some fine men on this Kanieri, they would be a credit to any church.

January 2nd. At this period the work was beginning to assume more of a settled character. The work was merging from that of a pioneer into that of a pastor; hence there was less romance and variety in the discharge of duty.

January 11th. A few days ago I took my desk under my arm and opened my study in a more comfortable and quiet locality in the house of one of my new converts.

January 23rd. Mosquito bites almost disfigured me. These insects are plentiful in the bush and are very trying. This is the first time I have met with them, or they with me! The diggers' remedy for bites is to rub hands and face with bacon.

Mr Alcorn's brother and wife and his sister arrived from Dunedin today. He has sold his place to them and goes to the Grey, so I am going to stay with W. S. Y. Brent in whose house I study.

Messrs Alcorn and Co. would not receive anything for my board and lodging, though I have spent more than five months with them.

February 1st. The Rev. W. Cannell who has been appointed by the Conference to succeed me in April, came today to help me in the work. Very glad to have him as I begin to feel the effects of overwork. His steamer called at the Grey where he preached in the open air. Thus the Gospel seed is being sown.

February 4th. Sabbath. Mr Cannell preached in Hokitika today. I went to Kanieri and preached in the open air on "The Love of Christ." Had a good company and a hallowed time. At 3 o'clock preached across the river at Woodstock on "God be merciful to me a Sinner," and had another blessed session. At 6.30 preached in the church at Kanieri. Most of those present remained to the prayer meeting. Five men were seeking mercy, four of whom professed to find peace in believing. There was such an evident spiritual awakening that I announced a week's special services.

February 5th. Preached at Kanieri tonight when one found peace and two were seeking.

Two men came down from the three mile diggings today for tracts, hymn books and Bibles, and to tell me the glorious news of an awakening having taken place there. I was there two months ago performing a marriage. Several had been awakened by reading the tracts which I left at the time. I gave them to the wife of a storekeeper to use in wrapping up small articles if she could not get rid of them in any other way. This was done and received the Divine blessing. Then two of our young men went to work there and distributed tracts on the Lord's day. God has so blessed their efforts that several are anxious to know the way of Salvation more perfectly. They want me

to go and preach to them, the miners having agreed to leave off work at four o'clock if I will do so. This I should be only too glad to do if I could get away. But I must "Stand still and see the Salvation of God."

W. Cannell has gone to undertake the work at the Grey for the next two months, so I am alone again.

February 19th. Met the Rev. Lorenzo Moore, Anglican Minister from Christchurch. He was sketching on the banks of the river. He preached in the Court House last evening. We conversed together on religious topics and the Lord's work. He is "full of Christ, and longs his glorious matter to declare." The next Sabbath he comes here he is to have the use of our church. If I could have made arrangements he would have preached last night instead of me. He was formerly an officer in the army in India.

February 25th. Sabbath. Rained very heavily yesterday and this morning, which caused a flood in the river, and which inundated the lower part of the town cutting us off from the church this morning. So I went into the street and commenced a service and then adjourned to a billiard room where I preached from "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

March 5th. The longer I am in the Colony the better I like it. Life is more romantic, tree, and independent, and the people are more social. Providence has thrown open this coast to us as a church. As yet we are the only Protestant body which has sent ministers to reside on these shores. If we had ministers enough we might have the first church in every place. Think of it! Only two ministers in this great field of 50,000 souls. I wrote some time ago to twenty different persons in England asking each to send me a packet of tracts for distribution among the gold diggers.

March 21st. As my successor here is married, we have to get a residence built for him. So now begins once more "the tug of war." A gentleman who is not a member of our church has made a generous offer towards the erection of the 'manse' as our Scotch friends term it. We have a splendid site of about two acres in the centre of the town, which affords room for church, parsonage, and schools. The grant of this site is an illustration of the wisdom of being early on a new field, so as to secure good positions before land becomes scarce and valuable.

March 25th. Sabbath. Rosstown. Arrived here last night just after dark. Had to wade the river several times. Passed the place in the bush where the mailman was stuck up and robbed a few days ago. Preached in the church at 11 a.m. to a good company. At 3 o'clock preached in the open air on the main road near the entrance to the town. To gather a congregation I took off my hat and walked along the road singing "Will you go to the Eden above?" We had a goodly number at the service, not a few being Roman Catholics. At 6.30 p.m. preached to a crowded church "With power sent down from heaven." Two-thirds of the hearers remained to the prayer meeting in which four

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persons professed to find peace with God. One was a barmaid, and another the brother of a lady with whom I lodged on the East Coast of the Province. Praise God it was a blessed day.

March 30th. Good Friday. Second in New Zealand, the first in Christchurch where I preached to diggers en route to this coast, several of whom I believe were afterwards drowned in the snow rivers on their way hither. Conducted a prayer meeting at 11 o'clock. At three buried a man who was drowned a fortnight ago in one of the rivers twelve miles inland. The body was brought down by the current and washed ashore. At 7.30 preached to a goodly number from "The Place Calvary." Great numbers in town for the Easter holidays.



Kanieri Church, opened December 31st, 1865.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Closing Labours



Barnicoat, John Wallis. Sketch Hokitika, August 22, 1865

April 4th. Gave a lecture at Kanieri tonight towards clearing off the church debt of twelve guineas. The building was full and all seemed to enjoy themselves. The collecting more than met the deficiency, so now all the churches erected on this coast are without debt.

April 5th. The Rev. W. Cannell arrived from the Grey to succeed me here so that I can return to the East Coast. I am not sorry in some respects to leave, for I have had pretty hard work and need a change. Not that I am anxious to get away, for I would like to go to the Grey. But much of the same kind of work would have to be done, and where would my studies be? My most private places of retirement have been the bush and the sea shore when the tide was out. Yet, I love this work: it is new, romantic, earnest, and above all God gives His blessing and gives me great peace.

April 7th. Left in Cobb and Go's coach at seven this morning for the Grey. In crossing the first river the water was up to the top of the wheels and we were all but afloat. However we got through safely. About eleven o'clock arrived at the largest and most dangerous river, but crossed safely in a boat. Here we waited for another coach, but as it did not come we set off to walk the last ten miles. Rowed two miles along a

beautiful lagoon. This reminds me that along this coast the lagoon scenery is extensive and most enchanting. Since I was here in September last, the town has increased very much.



Barnicoat, John Wallis. Sketch, Hokitika, August 21, 1865

April 12th. Received a letter from the Rev. J. Buller saying that by a majority of the Christchurch circuit meeting it was decided that I should return to the East Coast, but that I should have a month's leave of absence. So the Grey must be left without a minister.

April 15th. As the Rev. W. Cannell is fully installed as pastor here, and I have a month's holiday, I propose to spend it visiting the most neglected parts of the gold fields.

April 19th. This morning the Rev. R. White of the United Methodist Free Church called upon me. He had come overland from Christchurch to enter any opening that might present itself. I advised him to go to the Grey. Took him through the town and to Kanieri. He was both surprised and delighted with what he saw, and says, "The English people have no adequate conception of things out here." Yes, the progress must be seen to be believed.

May 5th. Since the above date I have been away at Okarito about fifty miles to the South. Left on the afternoon of the 21st ult. in the steamer "Bruce." Crossed the bar at two o'clock next day with schooner in tow. Found Messrs R. Alcorn and Co. at dinner, and was glad to join them and to take up my quarters with them. The town is prettily

situated fronting an immense lagoon, with a small island in the foreground, and bluffs behind.

On Sabbath, the 22nd I preached twice to fair audiences in a large empty store near the wharf. The 29th being the Sabbath I held two services with good congregations. The next day went up the lagoon with the harbour master and enjoyed the sail very much.

During my stay I rode down the beach to see the country. Found diggings among the sand banks, the principal being the Five Mile which contains 1500 people, mostly Irish Catholics who rule the place. I thought of going on Sabbath afternoon to preach there but was urged not to attempt to do so as I was sure to be ill-treated.

My bed during my stay of a fortnight was on a counter in the store with blankets folded in the form of a mattress, a bale of calico for a pillow, and blankets for covering. On the 2nd instant, we crossed the bar in the "*Bruce*" at noon for Hokitika.

May 3rd. Anchored off Hokitika bar at 6.30 last night. We were too late to cross and had to remain outside all night and to endure the swell of the ocean and the sickness. Slept on the floor of the cabin which was crowded to excess.

May 8th. Preached at Kanieri last evening, also visited the day school which is taught by a young lady of our church. Rose early to visit the busiest parts of these growing diggings.

May 9th. This afternoon a letter was handed to me giving an account of the sudden accidental death of one of our church members at Ross. He was a fine, promising young man, and had not long been converted. He was digging at the bottom of a shaft, when the bucket, full of water, earth and stones, slipped from its hook and fell on the back of his head, killing him on the spot. His mates want me to bury him and improve the event by a funeral sermon.

May 10th. Left for Ross hoping to be in time for the funeral though not knowing the hour. On arrival, however, I found the burial had taken place at an earlier hour than I had anticipated. Thinking I was unable to get, the brethren had a service at the grave side which was very affecting. After tea we rang the church bell, when a goodly number responded to whom I preached from the text, "I am He that liveth and was dead," Rev. 1: 18. A very gracious influence accompanied the word, and in the prayer meeting five or six were seeking salvation. The meeting lasted until 10 o'clock.

May 13th. Sabbath. A high day. At 11 a.m. improved the death of Bro. T. when a blessed influence rested upon us and several wept. At 3 o'clock gave an address to the Sabbath School and at 3.30 preached in the open air on "Death on the Pale Horse." My stand was on a stump of a tree about five feet high from the ground, with several hundred men around me.

May 14th. Preached again this evening to a full church on "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." In the prayer meeting-eight or nine were seeking mercy and under conviction of sin. The interest was so great that I could scarcely get the people away from the church.

May 15th. Left Ross with regret as such a good work was in progress, and where I have received most hospitable treatment on the part of the miners who lodged me. But my holiday was approaching its close, and I intended to leave for Nelson in a few days. On arriving in Hokitika Mr Cannell pressed me to remain a week longer to permit him to fetch his wife and child from Taranaki. The Church Committee also sent a deputation to ask me to do so, and to request me to allow of a tea and an address on my departure. Some weeks ago I had said that if any demonstration was made I would not promise to attend, both because I dislike farewell sermons and teas, and because I wished to be free to be anywhere I thought I could do most good. Now they wish me to consent to a more select demonstration, but I have objected on the ground that it would exclude the humblest members of the church. I expressed my willingness to meet the members and a few friends.

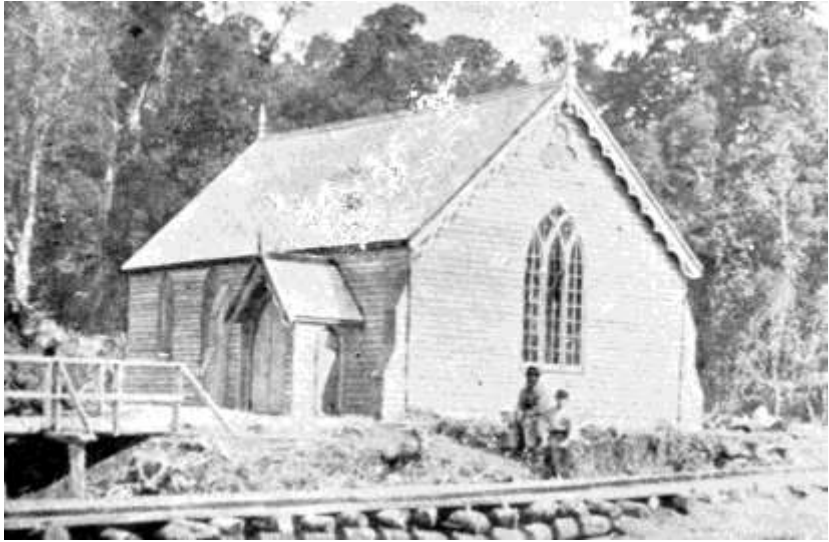
May 20th. Preached at Hokitika to large congregations. In the prayer meeting tonight three souls were seeking mercy, one being a Jewess. Mr S., the Superintendent of the Nelson Province, was at both services, and remained to the after meeting. I did not know who he was until I spoke to him about his soul, when he said, "I am a stranger; my name is — I stay with you to express my sympathy with you in your great work, and can rejoice as one whose sins are forgiven." Would that more Methodists would remain thus to show sympathy with their ministers.

May 24th. Preached at Kanieri to a good congregation last night when a backslider professed to be again forgiven. Spent this morning in visiting members and friends at Kanieri, Woodstock and Hokitika to say 'Good-bye.' Everywhere I was met with expressions of regret at my leaving and with well wishes for my future. Several made me small presents in remembrance of Hokitika and themselves.

Many persons are not aware of my departure and will still expect me to preach, but in the Providence of God they must listen to the voice of another.

I leave Westland with mingled feelings. I have seen nature in new aspects, and life in new phases. I have never enjoyed better health. I have met with large generosity on the part of those who lodged me, and much kindness from the people generally. And, above all, I am thankful to have seen so much spiritual work accomplished for the Master. I am sorry to leave when there are growing signs of the harvest, and when (here are such great fields of human souls without the ordinances of the Gospel. But on the other hand I need rest and change, not forgetting that my people on the other side of the mountains have a claim upon me. First, I was released until November or

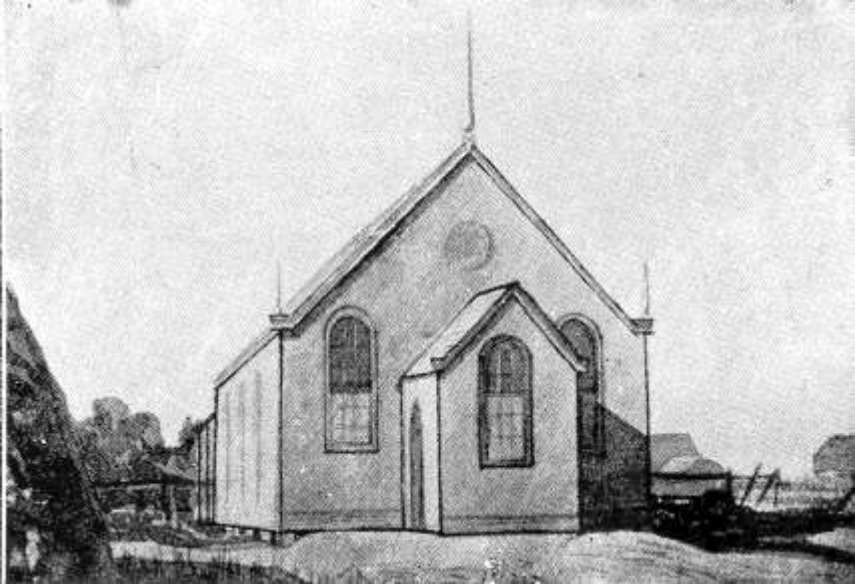
Christmas, then until April, and now it is the last week in May. Providence makes it plain that I should return. Never shall I forget the West Coast and its friends.



Greymouth Church 1870

May 26th. Arrived in Christchurch this evening by the over-land route, after an absence of ten months. Left Hokitika in Cobb & Co's Coach at 4 a.m. yesterday. Did not go to bed the night before to make sure of my seat after paying £10 for my ticket. The weather was fine, the rivers low, and the road good. The Superintendent of the Nelson Province was a fellow passenger, and was very kind.

Thus ends the record of my life and labours as a pioneer preacher of the Gospel on the Westland gold fields.



Hokitika Church opened 1865