

# A NARRATIVE

OF THE

## DISCOVERY

OF THE

# WEST COAST GOLD-FIELDS:

BY

REUBEN WAITE.

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EDITED BY W. H. L. LEECH

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### CHAPTER I.

#### DISCOVERY OF THE BULLER GOLD-FIELD—FIRST EXPEDITION TO THE BULLER.

As it may perhaps be interesting to the public to know something of the early history of the Nelson South-west Gold-fields, I have drawn up the following account of the events which led to their discovery and development.

As there have been many different stories in connection with the discovery, and also many claimants for the discovery of the various districts that in reality are not correct, I therefore in the following narrative shall endeavour to give as far as possible the correct names of the principal pioneers, together with a detail of incidents exactly as they occurred.

On or about the month of May, 1860, I was on the Collingwood gold-fields, distant about seventy miles from Nelson, when a party of Maoris came overland from the River Buller by travelling up the sea coast, and thence by the Aorere to Collingwood (there being no other way for them to come in those days), bringing with them a parcel of gold, which they said they had obtained from a place some twenty miles up the River Buller.

When this gold, which was a splendid sample, was shewn to me, I immediately conceived the idea of going on a prospecting expedition to "that outlandish country," as it was termed by the Nelson people. Accordingly, I, together with some others who were favourable to the project, called a meeting of the diggers to lay my plan before them. I received a great many promises, and made sure that we should get a good meeting, but when the day came I was surprised to find that only one, Mr. Saunders Rogers, attended. My plan was that there should be a party of not less

than twelve, who should each pay £20 towards chartering a small vessel and purchasing provisions sufficient to last for three months, and longer, if necessary. Finding, however, that Rogers only attended the meeting, and having great confidence in the undertaking, I resolved to take the whole upon myself, and with this view Rogers went across to Nelson, and chartered the ketch *Jane*, Jacobsen, master, for the sum of £50 (the *Jane* had not long been turned off the stocks.) She was to call at Collingwood on her way down.

The people of Nelson laughed at our undertaking, saying that I and my companion were madmen from Victoria. The consequence was we only got one passenger from Nelson, and I believe he was in some way connected with the Government, but we got fourteen from Collingwood.

You may be well assured that the business people of Collingwood were not very thankful to us for taking the diggers away from their locality; but it mattered little to us, we had taken the field for adventure, and cared not a jot for the thoughts of any.

We started from Collingwood with a light breeze, which soon brought us well up to the Sandspit, in nearing which we unfortunately got ashore, but without sustaining any damage, or suffering any great loss of time, as the sea was perfectly smooth.

Various were the suggestions made by those on board as to the best method of getting the ketch off. One, who was evidently not suffering from hunger, proposed throwing all the provisions overboard to lighten her; another rather waggishly observed, that he thought it was nearly time for all hands to get out and walk; but, nevertheless, while these jokes were being passed round, we, after a little trouble, having plenty of help at hand, soon got our craft afloat again.

Besides the human cargo, we also had ten four-footed passengers on board, in the shape of cats. I have a slight notion that some Collingwood housewives made their silvery voices echo in vain with the cry of "puss" over the dancing waters of the bay, the day following our departure.

We arrived off the Buller in two days. When we entered at high water; we found three and a-half fathoms on the bar. We had not long been there before I sold all my goods for gold to the Maoris. It appeared that a lot of the Collingwood natives, knowing that I was going to take round provisions, started overland with two white men, and were at the Buller when we arrived with the vessel. They were catching fish and gathering pipis, on the first river north of the Buller, named by them at the time Orawaiti, meaning, "Come on, Waite," because they could see the vessel approaching, and were in want of provisions.

Before starting back to Nelson, I and Mr. Frederick Berry, of Collingwood, with the mate of the *Jane*, John Duncan, tried to get up the river with the *Jane's* boat, but the fresh was too heavy to get very far on the first day. I shall always remember that first

day's journey. It came on to rain hard, and the river, already swollen, began to rise considerably so that we had to keep on until we got to what we thought was a place of safety. By this time it was quite dark, and the bushes being wet and very thick with supplejacks and lawyers, we could not get very far into the thicket, and so we had to make the best of a bad bargain. We stood upright, all this cold June night, with our blankets wringing wet over our shoulders, our clothes in the same condition. We had no fire—the rain was pouring down incessantly—and the water was up to our ancles; we had to keep dabbling our feet about all night to keep the blood in circulation. Then, as back to back we leant against the forest pine, we took to singing. Oh, the long hours of that dreary winter's night still make me shiver at the recollection! I remember obliging them with a song named the "Gipsy Tent," when from my tall friend, under whose lee I had got for shelter, came forth a dismal sound in mournful cadence, the trembling accents of which seemed to be wrung from the bottom of his very boots: "O-oh-what a pret-ty-so-song that would be-e-e under dif-if-erent—cir-cir-cum-st-tances." Then next we talked of something nice, such as sucking-pig, or the savoury duck; then again my long companion, in sepulchral tones that floated away on the night breeze, muttered a long, imploring "O-oh—do-don't!" that seemed as if the very thoughts of comfort struck with a chill to his heart. Doubtless he was chilled enough, and prepared to live the misery down, rather than speculate on bright and happier moments; but still it added mirth to our miserable plight, and enabled us to while away the chilly hours of the night. But daylight at last appeared, and a welcome sight it was; we again commenced our journey with cheerful hearts, for the labour put warmth into our bodies.

For four days we struggled against the elements, striving to gain the place where the gold had been found by the Maoris, but in vain; we made but poor headway, for the Buller of 1860 was very different to the Buller of to-day. Being in the water all day, and having wet blankets at night, we were at length compelled to give up, after having camped on the banks of the river two or three days to await its falling.

To show the strength of the current, I will mention that on the return journey we were only two hours accomplishing that which in the ascent, occupied four days. Shooting the falls astonished our nerves a bit, and almost made our hair stand upright. Neither I nor my companions had ever been over any like them before, but I have taken them scores of times since without any fear.

When we arrived at the port Mr. Rogers told me that some Maoris had been up the River Waimangaroa, where they had found gold, and that they had brought down a small nugget. We could not at that time stop to get any further intelligence, as our provisions were nearly out, and I was anxious to get back to

Nelson for a fresh supply. We made an arrangement, however, with Mr. Rogers to show us a white cloth if the Maoris brought any good news while our vessel was still in sight, which he did. To our misfortune, we were sixteen days going up to Nelson; the little vessel stood the buffeting of the waves first-rate, though never since I have travelled to the West Coast have I been to sea in such weather as we had that trip up to Nelson. For several days we were hove-to, and our craft drifted down to nearly off the Grey River. One night we were so close on rocks that we could almost touch them. If we had gone on them at that time nothing could have saved us, and there would have been, I am thinking, no more gold hunting for some time on the River Buller. By the cool management, however, of the two men, Jacobsen and Duncan, we succeeded in steering clear of the rocks. There was no one on the coast then; and, even though we had been saved, the men left at the Buller must have starved, as there was no overland road as there is now.

At length, however, we arrived in Nelson, and it was not long before the Buller gold-field became the leading topic of conversation; and when the gold I had brought up was put in the window of Mr. Drew, the jeweller, there were plenty of people who thought it worth their attention. Nothing was then said of the "madman from Victoria;" they were all very anxious to have some conversation with "the madman," as they chose to call me. Many who were the first to stamp the expedition as a costly hair-brained enterprise, were now the first to ply their avocations, and hurry to the new found "El Dorado." But such is the world, more especially the Nelson world, where in striving to pick up a penny, they invariably drop a sovereign. Greedy to a fault, but unwilling to expend that which is necessary for the advancement of the place, they lose the golden opportunity, which for years may not again come within their reach, and then for ever pine over that which might have been accomplished but for the niggardly save-all propensities of their ruling powers. I do not by this mean to brand all the community, but only some, who if they would look to higher ends might attain a loftier position in the opinion of their fellow men than that which they now hold.

But to return to my theme. This first expedition was the commencement of the now world-renowned West Coast gold-fields, though in consequence of the recent discovery of the Otago gold-fields a considerable time elapsed before any great movement was made in the matter.

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## CHAPTER II.

## FIRST STEAMER TO THE GREY—THE GREENSTONE—AND CONSEQUENCES.

A considerable time had now elapsed, nearly two years, in fact, since the first expedition arrived at the Buller, and commenced the work of gradually opening up a densely wooded and difficult country, fraught with countless obstacles, and presenting to the pioneer vicissitudes of the direst nature, and as yet no great progress had been made; but still, through the indomitable perseverance of the different parties in bravely overcoming all difficulties, things were beginning to assume a more forward state when the first large influx of diggers soon tended to hasten the development of the gold-field, and bring it under the notice of the more distant colonies.

In the month of January, 1862, the steamer *Tasmanian Maid*, Captain Whitwell, came from Otago with a great number of diggers from that province. The *Tasmanian Maid* was the first steamer on the coast, but she did not continue running. Then gold was obtained more abundantly from the Waimangaroa, and from the first diggings up the Buller river. Very often there were scarcely any provisions to be had on the diggings, as only one vessel, the *Gipsy*, was at this time trading there, and she would sometimes be six weeks away, and we could get no other vessel to trade, such a dread had they of the dangerous coast. On one trip, indeed, the *Gipsy* was actually away thirteen weeks! I happened to be on board of her on that occasion; and we were six weeks at sea on the return voyage to Nelson. We entered every harbour in Blind Bay—Port Hardy three times, and West Wanganui twice. While we were at the last-named place, William Hunter, and some Maoris, who had travelled overland by the coast, came on board just as we were putting to sea again, and right glad they were to see us. They were the bearers of the news to the Superintendent that we were supposed to be "lost," and of a request that he would send some provisions down, as all the "people at the Buller were starving." How we wished for a fair wind then; I slept neither night nor day; and when we came off Rocks Point a sou'-wester met us again, and when off the Karamea, or between that river and the Mokihinui, we were becalmed two days. These were trying times when the vessel, full of provisions, was in sight of the two or three hundred diggers almost starving, and yet could not reach them. At length a light breeze brought us off the Buller, and we could plainly hear their shouts of "Welcome," on shore. A south-east wind is a head wind to go into the Buller, but our captain (Captain M'Cann)

launched his little dingy on the bar, to carry out a kedge. After we had got as close as we could, we hove manfully on the windlass, and worked her over the bar amidst the clamour and cheers of the hungry diggers who were watching us. While we were still in the roll of the sea canoes came alongside; off went the hatches, and out went the flour and other provisions. A line was taken ashore, and lots of eager hands were ready to pull. There had been a whaleboat there, belonging to the Maoris, but she had been started off to Nelson by sea, and a letter forwarded by Mrs. Waite to the Superintendent, praying him to send a steamer at once. The whaleboat reached Nelson without seeing us, which caused some excitement in the town. The Superintendent, Mr. Robinson, promptly replied to the letter, by sending the steamer Storm Bird, with Mr. Burnett in charge, but we had succeeded in getting in before she arrived; nevertheless our small community were truly grateful for the prompt measures taken to render succour in the hour of distress, and it also shewed how different is the course of action pursued by different heads of power, in giving their attention to the welfare of the subject. When I got ashore, I found the baker already making dampers in his oven, for when he saw the vessel so close, he lit his fire for baking. Mrs. Waite had offered a pound to the first man who brought the news that the vessel was in sight. There were eight claimants for the pound, so they got a pound of potatoes each, which was as good to them as a pound note. For a long time there had been nothing but potatoes left, and of these there was a scarcity; money or no money, one man got no more than another, and that was only about a pound a day. Imagine then the luxury it must have been to the half-famished beings to see within their reach the long-looked for objects of their hopes, worth more at the time than all the gold in the district. Imagine the watery mouths, and countless visions of hot dampers and baked potatoes; then at night the peaceful slumbers and dreams of brighter days, after the boundless pleasure of having one good feed in three months. Oh! none can really appreciate the luxury of a good meal, unless they have sorely suffered from the want of it; not merely for a day or so as some of our easy gentlemen may chance to do while sporting—that merely sharpens the appetite—but for weeks and weeks, as often fell to our lot in the early days of the coast. The diggers had scattered themselves along the coast with the Maoris, getting mussels and other native food. The Maoris deserve great praise for the help they gave by bringing in lots of eels, nikau, pipis, &c., which they gave away freely to the pakehas. As soon as the natives along the coast saw the vessel, they all made their way to the port. All my poultry had been killed, and the pigs, goats, and some cows. Some three cows were spared, because there were white women and children on the Buller, and these three cows were left on account of the milk they were giving. There was a lot of damaged flour, which



had turned quite yellow and musty, that was intended for pigs, but it all went for bread. Such was the state of the Buller in October and November, 1862.

Soon after the above events, a Maori, named Simon, discovered the Lyell Creek, which, while it lasted, was a very rich diggings, and turned out some of the finest nuggets found in New Zealand. There is a large manuka flat on the right bank of the Lyell, and I believe that if this was properly tried—which it never has been up to this time—it would turn out a good gold-field. I have had many opportunities of seeing it, having been across it several times, and I am of opinion that the gold found in the Lyell has come from this flat. It is a made terrace, with gravel a little below the top soil, similar to Waite's, and is of considerable extent.

I may mention that just about this time a great many men came overland from Canterbury, by way of the Grey. These poor fellows were in such an emaciated state that they were scarcely able to crawl, and it was pitiable to see them. Several were left behind to starve, as they could not walk any farther, while their mates just managed to get through to the Buller and report it. I sent several parties out to fetch in those who had been left behind. Amongst them was Hammett, the survivor of Howitt's party, which was lost on the Lakes whilst exploring. The poor fellow had gone into the bush, as he said, to lie down and die, for he could not walk. He had a dog with him, which would bring him a wood-hen now and then, and he had to eat it raw. He stated that he had been living on the raw glutinous stuff he called *beche-de-mer* for several days. The first party I sent out did not find him, after being away four days, but they no sooner came back than I despatched another party of four men, with instructions how to act if they found him alive. These last four men took with them a gun, powder and shot, and provisions for a week, with oatmeal, brandy, &c., and they followed my instructions to fire the gun at intervals of a quarter of an hour. By this means they found the poor fellow, who, hearing the report of a gun, crawled out of the bush within sight of the party. After resting for a time, and giving him some refreshment, they managed to bring him on to the Buller. I then paid his passage to Nelson, and gave him a letter to the Superintendent, who forwarded him on to Canterbury. For this the munificent Canterbury Government, thinking, I suppose, that I was hard up, sent £5 to the Superintendent of Nelson for me. One poor fellow I sent for, was found contentedly sitting on a mussel-bed eating raw mussels, and playing at ducks and drakes with the shells; he considered he was in clover, for he had not had anything to eat for several days. Another, who was travelling the same road, when all his provisions were gone, consoled himself by reading a cookery-book which he had with him. He must have been a martyr! a true philoso-

pher! sitting down in the wilderness to study the art of starvation from the leaves of a cookery-book. What a splendid example for some who roll in luxury, knowing little and caring less what others endure who are in reality making fortunes for them to their own loss, and who afterwards are the first to spurn and trample on the hands that held them up. I almost despaired of one man, who was so weak when they brought him in to the Buller that I did not think he would recover, but by a little care we brought him round, and to this day he is grateful to me for the attention shown to him, which I value more than the above £5.

Early in the year 1863, a lot of Maoris came to the Buller overland from the Grey. I say "overland," although their style of travelling from the one river to the other was by going up the Grey or Mawhera in a canoe as far as the Little Grey or Mawhera-iti, and up that river to its head. There they would haul up the canoe out of the way of the freshets, and walk over the saddle; on the other side they had another canoe, which they always kept there, and thence they went down the Inangahua into the Buller, and down the Buller to its mouth. These Maoris had with them some very nice pieces of gold, which they said they had got in the Grey district. After I had sent parties out to prospect, by supplying them with provisions, about the Buller district, I wrote a letter to the Superintendent of the Canterbury province, asking what bonus he would give for the discovery of a payable gold-field on the western, or Grey district of that province. Four months afterwards, or thereabout, I received an answer that the Government was not prepared to give any bonus for that district, as it would be of no benefit to Christchurch! However, before I had received the answer from Christchurch, I had made arrangements with the captain of the cutter Thames to go down from Nelson to the Grey, but while he was getting his vessel ready for the trip, the Havelock diggings opened; and as he got plenty of work for the vessel there without so much risk, he kept her in that trade. We were also left without a vessel for the Buller, as our old trader, the Gipsy, had been wrecked on the coast, and her crew compelled to follow up the beach until they arrived at the mouth of the Buller river; consequently, I had to walk overland to Nelson, carrying with me a heavy parcel of gold, a distance of 150 miles, in the month of June—the very depth of winter, over a fearful road that is beyond description. It may help to form an idea of what it was like, when I state that it was a perfect treat, on coming to a river, to wade through and wash the mud off our legs.

While I was in Nelson, preparing for the voyage to the Grey, a letter was brought to me by a Maori chief, named Tamati Pirimona, from the Grey, stating that they were anxiously looking for my vessel. I also received one from Mr. John Rochfort, to the same effect, but giving me poor encouragement about the gold.

As, however, the Maoris were sanguine, I determined to try my luck. Two men started from the Buller to the Grey when they found I was likely to send a vessel down there, and these men pretended they had discovered the gold; another man, named Hunt, pretended he was the discoverer. When I arrived at the Grey, I found these fellows loafing amongst the Maoris. It was not these men who found the gold at all, but the Maoris; yet the former had the impudence to ask the Government of Canterbury for a bonus; in fact, I believe Hunt did get a bonus. As I have before stated, the Maoris had gold in their possession, which they had found at Teremakau long before Hunt was at the Grey. But I am going out of the straight track, so I will return to the chartering of the Thames.

Captain Garnes was in Nelson when I arrived there from the Buller, and I was about to charter him for the trip, but speaking to two or three about going down with me, the news soon got spread, and there being a great many diggers in Nelson at the time they wanted to go with me. The steamer Nelson had just then arrived from England, and the croakers were about to wind up the Nelson and Marlborough Steam Navigation Company, and would have done so had it not been that I offered to engage the steamer. Well, the company took her on, but would not charter her unless I would guarantee forty passengers at £3 per head. When I went with the money for more than forty, I was told that all over forty must pay £4 each; but with perseverance I managed to get them for £3. Perhaps it will be said, this has nothing to do with the opening of the gold-field; but I have written it to show through what penny-wise and pound-foolish ways Nelson has been brought to what it is, instead of being, what it ought to be, the grand emporium for the West Coast. But I suppose in the course of time the people of Nelson will become awake to the fact, that they must do something for the country, and not expect (as has hitherto been the case) that the country will do everything for them. Many other places have suffered severely through neglecting to take advantage of the golden opportunity when it offered itself, and doubtless Nelson will pass through the same fiery ordeal, to suddenly awake a fresh and different place.

Well, we started in the good steamship Nelson, from Nelson, in the middle of July, 1864, with a cargo of provisions, and every requisite for the diggings. From my long experience on gold-fields I knew exactly what was wanted; the diggers took no tools (as it was only a prospecting trip) or provisions from Nelson, and were satisfied with my prices for all that was wanted. I may state, by-the-way, that things are higher in price at the present day on the coast than when I first went there. The Government of Nelson, finding I was going to the Grey, gave me a contract to procure for them forty tons of coal as a sample from the Grey coal mine, so I called into the Buller, and got two canoes, and

five Maoris for that purpose. We had a very good run down, which was fortunate, as there was no sleeping room for all hands, about seventy being on board, some of whom were compelled to lie on the cargo, to my loss, for they "walked" into my bottled ale rather heavily. Great was the fun, and many were the practical jokes played on those unfortunate individuals who did happen to retire to the arms of Morpheus; some had the inside of their hands blackened, when, by tickling their faces with a feather, they immediately commenced a series of pantomimic gestures, tattooing themselves in the most grotesque fashion, to the great merriment of all the non-sleepers; then as they awoke one by one, and noticed the ludicrous sight of each other's faces, those in the joke beckoned them to keep the fun up, which they answered with knowing looks and half-smothered laughter, little dreaming, poor dupes, that their own faces were in the same ridiculous plight; thus we had the whole of the tattooed fraternity looking and grinning at each other, everyone imagining that he was enjoying a capital joke at his neighbour's expense. One at length, breaking into a genuine laugh, with difficulty exclaimed, "Poo—oop—oop—Jack! wash your face!" "You'd better do that!" from Jack, in the same strain, with general chorus from all hands. A dispute arose, in which the coloured gentlemen compared each other to various and sundry pretty things unmentionable, which was brought to a summary conclusion by the introduction of a looking glass, whereupon the mine exploded, and they unanimously decided upon taking revenge out of the balance of "Waite's bottled ale!" Thus we merrily passed the time until arriving at our destination; but a good beginning is often the precursor of a fatal end, and so it very nearly proved in this case, as will shortly be seen.

On arriving at the Grey, we entered it in first-rate style, and steamed up to the landing opposite to what is now called Ma-whera-quay. Here we landed the goods, which were of course left exposed on the river beach, and all hands started off prospecting. My Maoris set cheerfully to work, and, with plenty of help, I soon managed to get up a temporary store. In the meantime, the goods were going out as fast as I could possibly sell them; ay, before I could get them out of the vessel the diggers were jumping down the hold for them. At the Maori pah there were none but women, and when they saw the steamer they could not tell what to make of it; it was the first steamer that was ever on the Grey. The Maori men had all gone to get gold, which made the white men all the more anxious to go, and before long I was left almost alone, all the diggers having gone to the Teremakau River, where the Maoris were digging, and with the exception of my storeman, and Mr. Batty, who came down with me to get the coal, there was no other white man left at the Grey.

About a week after I had been at the Grey, some Maoris came down from the diggings and brought with them a sample of about

fifty ounces of the finest gold I had ever seen. I was pleased to see it, and purchased it of them. These natives told me that the whole of the men that went up were coming down with the intention of killing me, and soon afterwards two white men came down and advised me to get out of the way, as the whole party were close at hand, and were coming down to ransack my store, and hang me. It appears that they had not been up to the Greenstone Creek, but merely to the Teremakau. From what I could understand, the white men were led astray, owing to the Maoris having heard from some of their own people that a great number of pakehas had arrived by a steamer at the Grey. They accordingly came down from the Greenstone and commenced working in the Teremakau, where they could not earn their salt, for the purpose of leading the diggers to suppose that the gold had been got in that quarter. Here let me add, that shortly after the Greenstone had been discovered, I was informed that the Maoris had completely stopped up the track thus it was that the new arrivals went wrong. I cannot vouch for the truth of this, but it was told me by a half-caste, and it is exceedingly probable. I stood my ground, however, and the Maoris promised to help me if I was interfered with. Next day the whole crowd came down, and camped near the store, so that I could hear some, as they passed the store, cursing and swearing at me, while others said nothing. There was a Dutchman who had most to say, and who stole a case of gin from my store that night. This same Dutchman came into the store, and said I was wanted outside. He had been round to the diggers' tents trying to incite them against me, and although the case had assumed a serious aspect, I could hardly refrain from laughing at the horrible attempt on the English language displayed by this man, more especially owing to the state of excitement into which he had worked himself, from imagining that he was a deeply-injured individual. I had neither arms nor ammunition of any kind, for up to that time they were not wanted on the West Coast. I went to the fire, a large one, which, by-the-by, was being fed by coals that had been brought down the river for the Nelson Government.

It was rather an exciting moment as, stepping outside the store, the thought struck me that my life hung as it were upon a thread—that the weight of a feather would probably turn the scale either way. I was there standing accused, though wrongfully, of having wilfully brought a number of my fellow-countrymen to an outlandish district, probably to suffer want and ruin. I knew that nothing but self-possession would avail me, so I made the most of my position, and put my trust in Providence. I shall never forget the impression of that scene as it first met my gaze; the bright glare of the huge coal-fire, the motley group of roughly-attired figures around it—some silent and thoughtful, others fierce and clamorous, with every species of anger and revenge visible on

their countenances—the solemn and monotonous roar of the distant breakers, together with the surrounding mountain scenery in all its pristine grandeur, formed a romantic picture, rude and wild in the extreme. There were a great many men round the fire waiting for me, and when I made my appearance they began to ask questions of me. I may as well state here, that all the Maoris, men and women, were then close by, and ready to give me any assistance. There is no need to tell what they were armed with, but there would have been some blood shed that night had the diggers interfered with me; some of the men had taken the potatoes out of the Maori pits at Teremakau. The first question put to me, was by the aforesaid Dutchman. “Vell, what did you corse dis rush vor?” I answered I did not cause the rush, and that I was in Nelson to get a small vessel to bring me to the Grey; that I had called them all together in Nelson, and told them that I was only going prospecting; that I did not lead them to believe they were going to a gold-field; but that, according to the letters I had received, I thought there was gold in the country, which I still believed, and that a proper trial would prove it. The next question put to me was by a Cockney—I am sure he was, for he so murdered the letter h. “Vell, Mr. Vaite, ow wud you like to cum ere without money, an ave to starve as ve ave to do?” My answer was, that I did not ask him to come; he had pleased himself. “Vell, Mr. Vaite, you seems to treat this ere matter werry lightly, but hi thinks hits no joke to come down ere and spend hall vun’s munny, and not to git eny gold.” The aforesaid Dutchman then spoke up again, and said, “Vell, poys, ve vill tak vat ve vants vrom Vate’s store, and ve vill hang him afterwards.” Just at that moment, an Irishman whispered in my ear the words, “Cheer up, my boy, don’t be frightened; you have more friends than enemies in this crowd.” With that, I felt I was safe, but just at that moment a man who had come down to hear what was going on, one of Mr. John Rochfort’s men, fell down in a fit close to my feet, and that put an end to the meeting. But I was still annoyed by the discontented, and the most of them brought back what provisions they had, with their picks and shovels, tin dishes, &c., and I gave their full value for them. One man, an Irishman, assaulted me one night and tore my coat, and had it not been for two of his countrymen who were friendly to me, I have no doubt I should have had everything smashed in the store. The two men referred to took him away, and gave him a good drubbing. I shall ever feel thankful to a person named Peter Hawkins (now in Nelson) who happened to be in the store at the time. A fellow had a bottle in his hand about half full of old tom, ready to strike me a blow on the back of the head; Peter stayed his hand by grasping the bottle, or perhaps I should not have been here to write this account.

The men who came down and were engaged in this business,

were now only waiting for a steamer to take them away, but while they were waiting, two parties, with more patience than the rest, had penetrated a little farther up the country, and had found out a track which led them to the Greenstone Creek. Having by chance during their researches discovered the fresh prints of men's feet, they followed them up until they came to the desired spot. I will now give an account of what followed. They came into the store, and one of them (Michael Spillan) asked me when I was going to get my bullocks and dray down. I told him I was sorry to say they would be down by next steamer. "You ought to be glad," he said; "look here, my boy, I have got this in a day with a dish off the bottom of a paddock six feet deep and seven feet square." They had 7 ozs. 12 dwts. The other party had 3 ozs. of the same kind of gold, and the same as that which I had purchased of the Maoris. The parties who were waiting for the steamer came in, and seeing the gold, could scarcely believe their eyes; but when I showed them the 50 ozs. I had bought of the Maoris, they wanted to know why I had not shown them that before. My answer was, that they would not have believed me had I shown it to them. Then came a general rush for stores again, and those who had been among the grumblers I charged an extra price, as they had compelled me to take back their stores and tools. From that time commenced the great rush, which up to the present date has brought out of the earth forty tons of gold, and for which I was to be hanged, because those first arrivals chose to call the expedition a duffer rush.

After this the gold began to come down pretty freely, and all were satisfied; in fact, I believe that the Greenstone was as good as any diggings afterwards found on the coast. I have seen many of the crowd since who were in that circle to hang me, but I have not seen the Dutchman. Perhaps he did not forget the case of gin, and so kept out of the way. But the worst had to come, for, in consequence of the disappointment I have narrated about the rush, I had ordered no more goods to be sent down. By the second arrival of the steamer she brought more passengers but no provisions, so that we ran short of them, and I had to curtail a great many, and especially those who had been so hard on me. These I put upon half rations, until the steamer came in again. When she came she brought my bullocks and dray, and with two horses and a mule I had purchased of Mr. Dobson, C.E., who had just completed the survey of the coast, I sent goods to the mouth of the Teremakau, and up that stream to its junction with the Hohona, by canoe, about nine miles, where it was carried by the diggers (until some more pack-horses came) to the Greenstone Creek. I started a store at the Hohona's mouth.

After this, I returned to Nelson by the first opportunity for the purpose of obtaining more goods, and also to make arrangements for transport. I was greatly astonished on my landing to find myself an object of notoriety. It appears that a report

had reached Nelson, that I had been hanged at the Grey, during the little adventure before described, and so great was the excitement of many people, who were glad to see me return safe and sound with a good parcel of gold, that it was with difficulty I was enabled to get away from them at the wharf; after succeeding in this, I found that it was not the last I was destined to hear of the affair. Merchants, storekeepers, and in fact nearly all interested parties, seemed suddenly to be struck with the idea that I was a martyr, that I had undergone numerous trials, difficulties, and hairbreadth escapes, in furthering their interest and the interest of the province at large by aiding the development of hidden resources in what, until lately, had always been deemed a worthless territory. Conscience seemed to prick them, and their generous hearts bled with good intent; thanks, praise, and condolencé for my losses, poured in from every side; I had been unnoticed, forgotten, and now they felt in honour bound to take me by the hand. I had done the place some service, so they thought, and thus would they exalt me among their fellow-men by presentation of a handsome testimonial—with all their spotless names attached—to show the world how nobly they acknowledged, that one from out of the mass had opened out a thoroughfare to trade, and made them what they were. What open-hearted candour! what glorious resolves, if only carried out. Surely such estimable men, who place such value on their given word, could never break it, and let their generous resolves sink into oblivion? No; it were heresy to think so; they never could. But mark the sequel. In the *Nelson Examiner*, about the month of August, 1864, there appeared an advertisement, calling together certain gentlemen for the purpose of forming a committee to get up a testimonial to be presented to Mr. Waite, in acknowledgment of the manner in which he had benefitted the province, of the hardships he had undergone, and various other things to the same effect, in connection with the development of the South-west gold-fields. So far, so good; but what followed? For several days the excitement kept the thing alive; then, it vanished like the upward curling smoke, doomed to melt into thinner air. The noble acknowledgment, the generous resolves, had come to an untimely end; thus, after living but a few short days, the handsome testimonial was dead and buried. So much for the brittle promises of man—promises unsought, unasked for. It is not with the idea of shewing my own deeds up that I have related this circumstance, for what I did was for my own interest. I never asked for anything, it never struck me that I particularly deserved it; I merely did what many others had done before me, and it was not my wish that any fuss should be made about it. The people of Nelson brought the thing forward of their own accord, and seemed determined to reward me unasked. They wished to do it, they thought it would be right and proper



—how well they carried out their good intentions it is my desire to shew. I simply relate it as another instance of Nelson treatment, so commonly practised by those who people would naturally suppose had more respect for their good names, if not for themselves.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### HOKITIKA—THE GREAT RUSH!—FINAL DEVELOPMENT.

After I had settled my business in Nelson I again returned to the coast, the name of which was now beginning to spread far and wide, and the population was increasing accordingly. The next diggings were again found by the Maoris—ever restless, they seemed to be proud of being the first to find the gold. This was the Totara Creek, about twelve miles south of Hokitika, and was very rich. My bullocks, dray, and horses crossed to Hokitika, long before there was a house in Hokitika, to take goods to the Totara. The only shelter that was there was a small tent or store belonging to Messrs. Price and Hudson, who got their supplies from me at the Grey, and the ferry-house, which consisted of brushwood and beach timber. The ferry-boat was formed from a large tree, dug out all in one piece. I had also a whale-boat, which I purchased from Mr. Dobson, who had it built to cross these rivers with. For crossing in this primitive affair at Hokitika, the modest sum of 2s. 6d. a head was demanded, and 4s. each horse; at Teremakau, 2s. 6d. each person, and 5s. each horse.

The next diggings discovered were those called the Three-mile, the spot being about that distance from Teremakau; and the next were the Six-mile, so named for the same reason. This has been one of the best and most lasting diggings on the West Coast, and is now known as the Waimea. There was a lull for some time, and things began to look slack, but I think it was owing to the sudden influx of diggers. I started a party up the Teremakau to try the *Taiipo*, or Devil's River, and I really believe, had they persevered there, they would have found some good gold, as the gold they did get was coarse and rough. The Hokitika River had been tried and given up by the Maoris, and some men that had been in the employ of Mr. Dobson. But the Maoris had no idea of fine gold working. They did not understand working with quicksilver, or plush, as a proof of which I recollect one time on the Buller I gave some provisions to a party of Maoris to go south, towards what is now called Charleston, to prospect. After being away some time they came back saying there was fine gold everywhere, but no heavy gold. They have learned better since.

About the month of November, 1864, Captain Leach, of the

steamer Nelson, went from the Grey overland to look at the Hokitika bar, and he pronounced it a fit bar to take. On reporting this to the owners in Nelson, they agreed to let the Nelson go to Hokitika on her next trip. I was, up to this time, the only person who had goods coming in the Nelson in any quantity, and from my having been the first to start her, the owners were pleased to grant me a free passage. But they were on their feet again now, and I got notice that my free passage was to be discontinued this trip, consequently I took the Wallaby on her first trip to Hokitika, and although the whole, or nearly the whole of the cargo in her belonged to me, the generous firm she belonged to would not give me a free passage. I write this merely to show the generosity of some of the Nelson people who had been benefited by the West Coast. Arrived at Hokitika, the goods were landed as at the Grey. I had to put up a temporary store for my goods, which were placed on the beach anyhow, on a point close to the sea. The consequence was that, a storm coming on, a heavy fresh being in the river, and the wind from the N.W. beating against it, the point of land on which were all my goods was carried away, by which I sustained damage to the extent of £1,000. Messrs. Langford and Fraser shared a like fate. This is another of the evils of a storekeeper's life on the gold-fields.

I had the wreck of my store boated over to the other, or north side, where the town of Hokitika now stands; and again the place I put up my store on, although two chains from the water's edge, was washed away. Disheartened with the losses I had sustained, I sent what was remaining away, and went back to the Grey. A billiard-room I had put up at Hokitika had to be shifted on account of the bank washing away, and it was fixed where now stands the fine hotel called the Criterion, belonging to Edwards and Mather. This table was the first on the coast. Where the town of Hokitika now is was then one vast pile of driftwood, so thick that it was impossible to thread your way through it. Messrs. Price and Hudson had to cut a track through it to get to their store.

I remember one night, coming from the Totara, Mr. Walmsley, Mr. Revel, and myself came up to the above-named store, and finding we could get nothing to eat for ourselves or horses, we started, about eleven o'clock at night, for the Grey, a distance of about twenty-five miles. There were no ferries or bridges as now, and, crossing every river on our horses, we arrived at the Grey about four in the morning. We had three dangerous rivers to cross, the Teremakau being the worst. I write this to shew what risks the pioneers of a gold-field have to go through, and I may state that I have frequently been detained on the bank of a river for a day or two, without food or blankets, on account of a fresh. But these are common vicissitudes in the adventurous life of the gold-fields, and things that every man expects when starting for a journey across the country, or going on a prospect-

ing expedition. In the month of January, 1865, I supplied a party with provisions to prospect up the Grey River. The party consisted of white men and Maoris. Amongst them was one well known on the Collingwood gold-fields, named George Cundy. After an absence of about two months, they came down with a very fair prospect of heavy gold, consisting of several good-sized pieces of gold got from a creek which they named Maori Creek, and one nugget weighing 22 ozs. 12 dwts. Now several parties had been up the Grey previously, but had not succeeded in getting anything like a payable prospect. These men who brought down this heavy gold I had confidence in; they were men whom I had known for years, and I felt satisfied that if there was any gold to be found, they would not leave a stone unturned but they would find it. The Grey district was then very quiet, there being only my store at the landing, and Blake's store near the lagoon. But the news of the nugget soon got spread, and the people began to come in fast from the other diggings. There was no conveyance up the Grey, except by the Maori canoes and Batty's coal boats. Gradually, however, we got quite a small fleet of boats, which were kept flying to and fro between the Nelson and Canterbury sides of the river; and a good deal of money they made, charging 1s. 6d. each passenger, and sometimes taking a dozen in about a quarter of an hour.

The Maoris who had hitherto been averse to persons building on their land, began to see the value of letting it. When I first went to the Grey, they let me an acre of ground on condition that I would let no one else build on it, as they would not allow another store to be put up there, although repeated offers were made to them. But when the great rush came, they asked me if they should let it. I told them to do so by all means, as it would bring them in money; then of course I had the chance of letting mine. One day there was a perfect rush for Maori ground, and any amount of speculation in it. Some people made a very good thing with it.

From this time we may say that the Grey district, formerly pronounced useless, has proved to be a first-class gold-field. This is an example of a good diggings being left for a long time unworked, through the inexperience of men who pretend to go prospecting. Several parties, as I before observed, had been up this river for what they chose to call prospecting, and this is a proof of how much faith is to be placed in the opinions and experience of those sort of people, many of whom call themselves practical diggers. There are others, again, who, as soon as they hear of gold being found, are off to the spot directly, and if the gold-field should not turn out any good, are the first to create a disturbance for the sole purpose of robbery. The towns on the West Coast are crowded with these ruffians, though luckily they are getting to be pretty well known now in spite of their shipping about from place to place. They generally assume various garbs,

according to the course of action they intend to pursue, and will do anything that presents itself to get money, from jumping a claim to picking a pocket.

In the early part of the rush up the Grey, there was no town on the Nelson side of the river, nor any police. I recollect one day a constable belonging to the Canterbury force coming up the coast from Hokitika after a man who it appeared had been duping all the storekeepers between Hokitika and the Grey, by giving them cheques and receiving the balance in cash. He represented himself as being a wholesale storekeeper, having two places of business in Hokitika, and pretended to be soliciting orders. By these means he would get his food and lodgings, and give a cheque. He tried to impose upon me, but I was too well acquainted with Hokitika: I could not tell where his firm's place of business was situated, so that I had him cut and dried. This fellow had crossed the river on to the Nelson side, and when the constable was told by me that he had crossed over the river, he said, "Oh, I must not go out of my province!" so the fellow got away, otherwise he might easily have been caught. I saw by this it would be an easy matter for a man to rob me, and go over to the Nelson side of the river and grin at me, so I made it my business to inform the Superintendent of Nelson of the circumstance. The Superintendent promptly sent down constables, with Mr. Blackett as Commissioner; this, I believe was the cause of the town of Cobden being laid out. What the gold diggings in the Grey district have been, almost everyone in the province knows. The town of Greymouth sprang up as if by magic—faster even than Hokitika. A short time ago I was at the Grey, walking along one of the back streets, when a man accosted me thus, "Can you tell me which is such a street? mentioning the name of a street, which I do not now remember. I told him I did not know. "Ah," said he, "I see you are a stranger here like myself." Guess his surprise when I told him I was the first white resident there. It is needless to add anything more about the scores of different creeks, rivers, and terraces that have been discovered since the opening of these gold-fields, they are of course leading one to the other. I always had a great liking for the Buller, and I always felt satisfied that it would be the finest port and the healthiest place on the coast. So strongly did I cling to this opinion, that I once offered my right to the acre which the Maoris had let me, and the store on the Grey, to Mr. Batty, for £100. This was just before the great rush; a month afterwards, it was worth a thousand pounds; so that it will readily be believed I did not deeply regret that Mr. Batty declined my offer. Still I had a hankering for the Buller, and hearing that a mob of men were there, and that they were killing my cattle, I paid £20 for the Wallaby to land me in there. At that time no steamers went into the Buller unless they were paid in this way. I have repeatedly written about the Buller, and Cape Foulwind as a shelter from S.W.

winds, but no notice was taken of it. I have known several vessels go to Nelson, or into Blind Bay, for shelter, from Hokitika, when they might have got quite as good under Cape Foulwind, or in the Buller.

That the Buller will eventually become the finest district on the coast, I feel satisfied. It will take time to develop it, it is true, but this is rather an advantage, as no good ever came of a sudden rush; and it is not always those who go first into a place, especially when the rush is for gold, that do the best. Business gets in a confused state, and, with sending goods here, there, and everywhere, the storekeeper finds at last that they have given him the slip, and he may look in vain for his money.

There are a certain class of men on the diggings who call themselves merchants, who put on as many airs as though they were the greatest merchants possible; in fact they need to do this to make themselves somebody, and to keep the ball rolling. These are the men who have done more injury to the diggings than any other class. They start with nothing but a good suit of clothes on their backs, which, by-the-bye, is usually obtained at the expense of some tailor in the place they last left. They make a start on credit, and if they succeed, well and good; but, if not, why when their hat is on, their castle is roofed; nothing from nothing, nothing remains. When a place is quietly settled, it steadily improves itself, and such I think the Buller will now be. It has great natural resources, such as no other part of the province possesses. It has a good harbour, and close at hand stands a vast mountain of the finest coal in the world. There are thousands of acres of country yet unexplored for gold and other minerals. There is a large tract of good land along the coast, running either towards Cape Foulwind, or north towards Mokihinui; and both sides of the Buller River, as far as the gorge, are capable of growing anything. I have seen lots of wheat that was grown by Maoris when I first came to the coast, who adopted a very primitive style of cultivation. There was no ploughing or digging; the seed was merely thrown down, and a large bush harrow, drawn by four or five Maoris, with two women riding on the brush to keep it down, was all the cultivation thought of. This was at the Grey. At some of the old camping-grounds up the Buller I have seen oats, and wheat, and vetches, that have been shaken from a potatoe-bag or something else, self sown, growing as finely as if they had been on cultivated soil. When the diggers on the old diggings up the river had settled themselves down, they dug a piece of ground and planted cabbage and other vegetables, and brought down some to the Buller; indeed I have seen some fine large cabbages at the Buller free from blight when there was scarcely a cabbage to be got in Nelson. Again, at the junction of the Inangahua with the Buller, about thirty miles up on both sides of the river, there are fine fern flats, and what will be some day in that locality a payable gold-field, when provisions are

procurable there at reasonable rates. I have often wondered that men having families have not been up there, for there is gold close by that would keep the pot boiling, and some of the finest soil in the Province of Nelson, with nothing but fern and flax to clear, which could be done with a lighted match, and there is plenty of feed for cattle and pigs. In the immediate neighbourhood is plenty of white pine, rimu, and birch. The Maoris who used to carry up goods to the Lyell had a patch of potatoes just here, and, instead of carrying any up in their canoes, used to stay and get some as they wanted them. Again also, above the Lyell, some few miles, there is a very extensive reach of fine flats, containing some of the finest timber in the country, besides numberless beautifully sheltered valleys and terraces. During my recent travels in that locality, I met with many parties that have been working there who complained bitterly of not being able to purchase land to settle on in the vicinity; some mentioned that they had been to Nelson to buy, and the Government refused to sell, I suppose on account of the much talked of railway scheme. Many of these people have therefore gone away in disgust, to seek some other and more congenial spot; having made their money in the district, their wish was to settle in it, so that they would be enabled to grow their own provisions, start prospecting in the more difficult country where it is impossible to go without some rendezvous near at hand, and then in unpropitious weather they would always have their own homes to return to, with something at their backs to help them through their difficulties. Thus has the province lost numbers of really good settlers, and men who would be the cause of developing the present rough and unavailable districts in a comparatively short space of time; whereas in the present state of things it will take years to accomplish the same purpose. Whatever the object of the Government may be in so far locking up large tracts of fertile land, and thereby preventing them from becoming settled upon, is hard to say, though it may possibly in the end prove to have been the best course. But still it seems to be a great pity that people who have the capital to invest, and the will to work, to make comfortable homesteads for their own good and that of the public, should be driven away to other places, while the land is lying idle and unproductive.

As before stated, I came to the Buller in the Wallaby for the purpose of putting a stop to the slaughter of my cattle. I took up my residence at Westport, and had not been long there when the rush to Mokihinui started; and a vessel of mine went in there with a cargo of goods, which she delivered, but in coming out was wrecked on the North shore. I went there to see to it, and the weather being bad, I was compelled to stay there three or four days. I caught what is called the swamp fever, and was so bad that I had to be carried on board the steamer, and taken to Nelson. More than once my life was despaired of, and

I was ill or eight or nine months, so that I cannot tell much about the opening of Charleston, or the diggings known as Waite's Pakihis. I was surprised, on my return to the Buller, to see a large town sprung up, though it was nothing more than I had predicted long before. When I stood on the Point looking at the steamers, the shipping, and about thirty ferry boats plying for hire, and the hundreds of people walking to and fro, and the number of horses and drays, I thought on the change in the scene from the time I landed on this point when I pitched my first tent to put my stores in. We had then to clear the bush to pitch a tent. The first night the rats were constantly running over us, and we had to cover our heads over with the blankets to keep them off our face. Afterwards I rented a Maori *whare* to start a store in, and the little craft I had chartered was the only vessel in the lagoon; so, thought I, that little ketch was the forerunner of all the commerce on the West Coast.

How wondrous are the changes wrought in this world in the course of a few brief years by the all-powerful influence of the precious metal that sways the universe! All bow to the shrine of wealth; gold rules alike the subject and the king—it rules the world! Gold governs society in all its many grades, and leads the hand of civilization to the distant corners of the earth. Gold is the talisman that transforms with magic power the bleak and sterile wilderness to a region of luxury and wealth. Places where but a few years ago the foot of man had never trod, are now teeming with busy working multitudes, aided by all the new improvements that modern science gives to machinery for turning out the hidden treasures of the soil. Roads are formed where the venturesome prospector could with difficulty only force a passage by undergoing the greatest privations, and often took days to perform a distance that he can now accomplish in as many hours. All these things, and many others that I shall mention at the conclusion of this narrative, struck me as I stood upon the Point, once so barren and desolate, now so full of bustling life.

I will here just mention that the diggings known as Waite's Pakihis are named after me—being upon my runs of 6,000 acres and 3,000 acres, upon which I am entitled to a pre-emptive right. I have been seeking to obtain a recognition of this right, which, had it been granted at the time I first applied for it, would have done me some good. But I could not succeed. There was any amount of putting off from time to time, and thousands of diggers traversed the Pakihis everywhere. My cattle, by which I lost considerably, were shot down and scattered in all directions, and driven so wild that I had to sell them at a nominal price. Mr. Kynnersley, Gold-fields Commissioner, wrote to the Government in this strain:—

To the PROVINCIAL SECRETARY, Nelson.

SIR—I am informed by Mr. Reuben Waite that he has applied to the Commissioner of Crown Lands to purchase eighty acres for a homestead on

each of his runs on the Pakihis, south of the Buller. I therefore think it advisable to inform you that, upon the run nearest to the River Buller, Mr. Waite has erected a house and fenced in some twenty or thirty acres of land, and that upon this run, although it has never been stocked, I consider that he is fairly entitled to the pre-emptive right of the homestead; but upon the other run to the southward no improvements whatever have been made, and it has never been stocked. If Mr. Waite is permitted to purchase his homestead, he will probably select the prospecting and adjoining claims on Addison's Flat, where the present rush is situated.

Westport, June 1, 1867.

I have proved to the satisfaction of the Waste Lands Board that these runs were stocked, and that I have held them since 1863, and my statement was never contradicted. The Government has always received the rent up to this day. It would seem strange that I should keep two men on these runs, besides employing others at various times, if the runs were never stocked. As to my choosing to exercise my pre-emptive right where the diggers are, I have been long enough on gold-fields to know better than that. If Mr. Kynnersley had looked on the left hand side of the road by the Bald Hill, going towards Addison's Flat, he would have seen a house and stockyard: that is where I had intended my second pre-emptive right should be exercised. It would seem that every obstacle was thrown in my way to prevent me from getting what I consider to be my just right. Although this is by no means all that might be said on this matter, I will not give further particulars, as it could have no interest for the general reader, and I must apologize for having taken up so much space with a private grievance; this account, however, shows what treatment may be expected at the hands of the Nelson Government. In once more referring to the first discovery of the gold, I would mention that the Maoris were, without the shadow of a doubt, the first to find and bring in gold in any quantity, and that they were the pioneers for a long time is, as I have before shown, quite certain. I believe, however, that some years ago, when Mr. John Rochfort, surveyor, was exploring the Buller district, he found some little gold up the Buller river, and I believe it was in consequence of this discovery that the Maoris went to look for gold. It is evident they knew but little about gold, as, when they came to the Aorere, they did not know the value of it. I may as well state here, that the Buller Maoris first brought gold from the Karamea. They used to take provisions from the Buller to the Karamea on their backs, and bring back as much as fifteen or twenty ounces of gold as fine as flour. How they saved it I cannot tell. All that a Maori wanted was flour, tea and sugar, and tobacco. He could get everything else, and live where a white man would starve. My opinion is that the whole coast, from Wanganui Inlet to the Buller, is more or less auriferous, and will eventually be worked. Had the Collingwood district had the trial the West Coast has had, and with the same appliances that are now being used for getting the



precious metal, thousands of ounces more would have come from there than has come. I have had a great deal of travelling about in that district, and I am of opinion that there is just as rich ground there as on any part of the West Coast.

Some portions of this narrative were published in the *Nelson Examiner*, at the latter end of 1867; and a great deal of what I then predicted concerning the River Buller has since come true, and I am still of the same opinion, that the day is not far distant when it will become the most flourishing district in the Province of Nelson.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### CONCLUSION.

Before concluding this brief description of the discovery and subsequent development of the West Coast, I will endeavour to give the uninformed reader some idea of the present state of that part of the country, to show how rapid is the progress of any place where gold is discovered. I will also make a few remarks that may be beneficial in some degree to those who, never having yet ventured to seek their fortunes in new and unexplored regions, may at some time determine to cast their lot amid the energetic pioneers of some of the new gold-bearing districts.

The subjects to which I shall first allude are two prevalent diseases, namely, scurvy and diarrhoea, which on all new diggings, and even on those of long-standing, are generally of great annoyance to the inhabitants. The first-named of these is frequently caused, in my opinion, from what at one time, and even now in some places, cannot be avoided, that is the consumption of too much salt provisions, without making use of vegetables of any kind to relieve the system. Now on the sea coast and in the bush, especially at old camping grounds, there is to be found a quantity of sowthistle, which if properly cooked makes a good article of vegetable food, and will be found highly beneficial in the prevention of the above-mentioned disease. If sowthistle cannot be obtained, young fern tops, plucked and cooked in the same manner, will also answer the purpose. But as there are now plenty of gardens on the West Coast diggers cannot want vegetables, which they should use freely. The next disease, diarrhoea, is often brought on by a sudden change from coarse, hard diet, to rich and abundant living, together with the use of liquor, that the person for months, very likely, has been unaccustomed to. This is easily cured, in the first stage, if only taken in time. There is a plant or shrub growing in various parts of this colony, and commonly to be met with nearly all over the West Coast, named "coarimika;" if the leaves of this are plucked and eaten, or made into tea in a similar manner to mint tea, it will be found an ad-

mirable cure. Many people, of course, who are well acquainted with the vicissitudes of bush life, may very likely be aware of these simple remedies, and laugh at the idea of their being mentioned here; but it is for the benefit of young beginners who know little or nothing of the bush that I write; those who, being far away from any place where better remedies could be procured, and who, being attacked with the symptoms of either of these diseases are not possessed of the knowledge that these simple cures, almost always within their reach, would allay the progress of what in some cases might prove fatal. As, however, I have made rather a long digression, I must now return to the subject of my narrative once more.

The past, present, and future of the West Coast has always been a subject of interest to those who have watched it in all its different stages, from the time when it was almost considered a place in another world to the present day, when with its numerous vessels trading daily to all parts of the colonies, it holds a conspicuous place among the commercial marts of the country.

The Hokitika River, as I have before described it, with nothing but the one solitary tent, and beach-wood ferry house, surrounded by a mass of impenetrable driftwood, cold, bleak, and miserable, is now the site of a fine town, composed of spacious and substantial buildings, handsome hotels, concert-rooms, theatres, and places of amusement of every description, is surrounded by gardens and ornamental villas, and in fact, what was recently a desert is now a thriving, busy town.

Greymouth and Westport have also sprung up in a similar manner, and various other townships, though not so large, still of considerable importance—places where men in the early days have been lost while endeavouring to penetrate, and almost died from starvation; places where, in fact, the Maoris had never set a foot, are now the bustling centres of valuable mining districts, where some of the finest machinery in the world may be seen, and where mining appliances have been carried to a state of perfection hitherto unapproached in any of the neighbouring colonies. There are regular lines of coaches constantly running between the principal townships, and several good tramways for the transport of goods; there are also several race-courses, and Jockey Clubs, with their regular annual meetings. Thus there is no lack of sport.

There is little doubt as to the Buller and Grey being eventually the most wealthy and important places on the coast, owing to their valuable coal mines—the coal of which is infinitely superior to that produced by any of the New South Wales mines. That important fact tends to show that there will be little difficulty in obtaining a market for the coal when the quantity produced exceeds the local demand; for even supposing that the proposed line of railway between Nelson and the West Coast should not be carried out, there is plenty of water on the bar of the River

Buller for the passage of "colliers" at all times, with sufficient room inside for a considerable number to remain in safety.

That Nelson will, in the course of time, reap the benefit of these mines, is also a fact which cannot be disputed, it being the nearest port of consequence to those places. It also possesses the double advantages of a central position as a port in the colony, and of having the opportunity of opening a direct line of communication and traffic with the mines, and is therefore certain to become the great depôt of all the West Coast coal mines. Nelson will be the Newcastle of New Zealand, and New Zealand will be to the southern hemisphere of the future, that which England is to the northern of the present day.

Had Nelson by any chance during the last few years happened to awake from her Rip Van Winkle dose amongst the hills, she would have derived far greater benefits from the West Coast gold-fields than she has at present obtained. Had any of the energy put forth by the neighbouring colonies been exerted by her, she would have drawn trade to her shores, instead of driving a great portion of it elsewhere. Some people, individually, did a great deal to benefit Nelson, and deserve credit for what they did; but the fault lies not with individuals. There are plenty of people who are both willing and able to exert themselves to the utmost in forwarding the interests of the place—people of capital, too; but of what avail, if steps are not taken to aid and advance the furtherance of their schemes? What use is energy in the individual, if a dilatory Government sleep for six months over an idea that another would grasp in a few days, and execute in as many weeks? No; the secret of Nelson's failing is thus explained in a few words:—The shafters are staunch and willing, but the leaders are used up, and are only fit for the knacker's yard. An infusion of new blood is required. There are a few who are good and willing, but their efforts are futile when coupled with and marred by the sleepy and dogged action of others; and the sooner certain stalls of the Government stables are swept out, and cleared of the stagnating influence of accumulated rubbish, the sooner will the working of the whole machine assume a healthy and beneficial aspect.

But to return once more to the present advanced position of the West Coast. I would call the reader's attention again to the districts in the neighbourhood of the River Buller, commonly known as Addison's Flat and Waite's Pakihis. The whole of this country has now become more or less a flourishing gold-field, traversed by thousands of people of various avocations. The progress of Addison's Flat has certainly been greatly impeded by the number of heavy floods that have taken place at various times; and hundreds of miners have lost their all while endeavouring to fight against the damage sustained from long and almost ceaseless heavy rains, which for a time threatened to suspend the mining operations of the locality entirely. While Addi-

son's Flat was sorely suffering from a superabundance of water, Charleston, on the other hand, was at times frequently suffering from the want of it, and was, previous to the discovery of the prolific red cement, decidedly on the wane; but no sooner was the immense richness of this cement found out, than works of considerable magnitude arrived at completion with magic speed, and, besides crushing machines and engines, flumes and races of great length soon intersected each other in every direction.

But with all this wondrous improvement, that proved such a benefit to the public, and from which the Government derived no small amount of revenue, how fared it with individuals whose property was damaged and overrun by the countless numbers of people that were continually traversing the country in all directions, and who, unless compensated in some way, were bound to suffer the loss of any improvements they had made? Before concluding my narrative, I will endeavour to show this.

As I have before mentioned, in the year 1863 I obtained my depasturage licenses, and right of run for Waite's Pakihis; I stocked the same, and made various improvements; and subsequently applied to the Government for the pre-emptive right to which I was entitled, but which, as I have already shewn, I failed to obtain. Thus was I left without protection, and compelled to make the best of a bad bargain. Some people may contend that my property is merely leasehold, and that I am not so much entitled to compensation as if it were freehold; but they must bear in mind that the rent has to be paid, and paid it always has been regularly; and for that rent a person would naturally suppose he was entitled to some protection; but with the Nelson Government it is indeed a supposition. It is, in point of fact, paying for a right that is useless, and which, instead of being a private right, is in every sense of the word a public one. Another person having a licensed run on the coast has received compensation. Why? Principally, I suppose, because he happens to belong to the chosen few; therefore for him they have slain the fatted calf. Money that I have invested in stock is for ever lost. My fencing and timber were taken to make the Government road with that crosses my run. For this certainly I did receive compensation; it being such a barefaced transaction that even the grasping dog-in-the-manger officials could not for shame sake vote against it. But that compensation had nothing to do with the right of run; I still had to retain my licenses, and pay the Government a rent, for kindly allowing the public to make what use they liked of my property. After this I applied to the Provincial Executive to have my licenses cancelled, and the runs thrown open, but was refused. At a later date a petition was forwarded to the Provincial Government from the cattle dealers, butchers, packers, and others, of Westport and Charleston, praying that the depasturage licenses held by Mr. R. Waite, for Waite's Pakihis, might be cancelled, and compensation granted him for the same, so that the

runs might be thrown open for the benefit of the general public; when the following generous reply was forwarded by the Provincial Secretary to the petitioners at Westport:—

To Messrs. DICK and SEATON, Westport.

GENTLEMEN—I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 26th April, requesting a reply to a petition from certain cattle-dealers and butchers resident at Westport and Charleston, praying that the depasturage licenses held by Mr. R. Waite, for Waite's Pakihis, may be cancelled; and I have to inform you that the Government are not prepared to cancel the licenses, as they do not consider it advisable to pay any compensation for such purpose.

I have the honour to be, &c.,

ALFRED GREENFIELD,

Provincial Secretary.

Superintendent's Office, Nelson,  
8th May, 1869.

What noble principle is displayed by this exemplary Government in their decision—"they do not consider it advisable to pay any compensation for such purpose;" but at the same time they consider it advisable to accept the rent for the runs, and also the money accruing from licenses, miners' rights, and other things; thus they are mean enough to receive pay from both parties, without having the honour to bestow on either the rights to which they are justly entitled. It is next to impossible for the petitioners to prevent their horses and cattle from trespassing on my runs; it is also perfectly out of the question for me to attempt impounding them when they are there, for the labour and expense of the proceeding would far exceed any sum that I should be able to recover. The last step I took in the matter was to petition the Council, during its last session, in May, 1869, to the same effect; when, on being brought before the House, it was lost by a majority of two. Some of the country members who voted against it knew nothing of the real merits of the case, and, I fancy, formed their decisions from certain of the Executive, through whom it was undoubtedly lost. But I can proudly say, that every member in the House whose word or opinion is worthy of notice—who are looked up to by the people as men that would do good if they could—voted in my favour; thus showing plainly that although lost, there was justice in my claim. I believe there would have been an equal division had one or two of the other members been better acquainted with the case; as for the rest, fortunately they are of very little consequence, being people whose names are *not* passwords with the public, and whose opinions trouble no one very greatly; they constantly dabble about in the mud, and paddle the Government canoe, being generally known as those—

Who strive to pick up all the pence,  
No matter how they come, or whence!

Reader, forgive me for thrusting upon your notice a private grievance, though still a public one, for hundreds of those men who

by their exertions have helped to keep Nelson out of the mire are interested parties. My object has been to expose another instance of the paltry policy of the Government. While greedily grasping the revenue derived from the labour of a large population, they fail to extend to them the just privilege of a public right to the land from which they partially derive that revenue.

Nelson, thank heaven! has still some men who, if once seated in office, will handle the reins of power with benefit to the people and credit to themselves; who will, by carefully guarding the welfare of the subject, materially advance the interest of the state; whose first and greatest task will be to uproot and cast away all paltry pettifogging; and who will hold the public interest at heart, and have sufficient foresight to see that in advancing the prospects of the province they also advance their own; men who will encourage speculating capitalists in developing the resources of the country, and not by a narrow jealousy thwart them at every turn. Many may fancy that I have dealt harshly in speaking as I have of the existing authorities, but if they only knew them as hundreds have had cause to, I think they would coincide with my remarks.

I have endeavoured, though briefly, to narrate the leading incidents of the first discovery and subsequent advancement of those districts from which so many tons of gold have been unearthed. And if there are any slight omissions in the detail of those early days, I must claim the reader's forbearance, and ask him not to criticise too minutely that which is only the offspring of memory, not the contents of a regularly kept diary. I trust the matter contained in these few pages may prove both useful and interesting to those, under whose notice it may chance to fall.