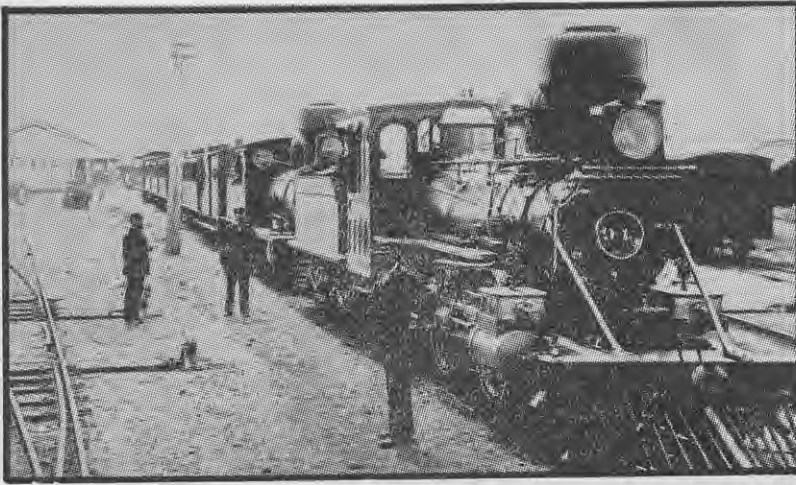


EXTENSION OF RAILWAYS



[New Zealand Railways photograph.]

The south express, pulled by two locomotives, at Timaru in 1885. The first through train from Christchurch to Dunedin ran in 1878.

northward to Kaiapoi, Rangiora, and Oxford and later to Akaroa and Hurunui.

The grandeur of the west coast route and the glamour of life on the "gold coast" excited the greatest interest. The west coast road was completed in record time and a coach was running to the coast a little more than a year after the discovery of the goldfield was first announced. Begun in March, 1865, and completed within a year by over 350 men, the road was 160 miles long and cost £150,000. Though Westland had a road to Canterbury very early in its existence, the reluctance of the Provincial Council to do much more to the roads in the area was one of the main reasons for the demand for Westland's separation.

Communications linking Canterbury with Marlborough and Nelson were much longer delayed. The Cheviot and Amuri districts were a long way from Nelson, but at the same time they were not Canterbury's responsibility, and as the land was taken up in large runs, very little was spent on public works. A through road from Blenheim and Nelson to Christchurch was eventually opened in 1891 and even then was not a particularly good one, especially the stretch from Waiatu to Kaikoura. The Government was reluctant to proceed with the opening up of this area by roads and railways until the large estates were acquired, as otherwise the value of these estates would have been enormously enhanced at the expense of the State.

Expansion of Railways

William Sefton Moorhouse has been described as the forerunner of Julius Vogel because of the bold and skilful way in which he stressed the need for public works; it is at least certain that the remarkable expansion of railways within the first 20 years of the province's history was due to his vigour and foresight. His own words in introducing the Canterbury Loans Bill of 1862 expressed his ideas most forcibly: "The geographical peculiarities of the settlement are conclusive

arguments why the railroad is at once the most convenient and inexpensive medium of communication. It is certainly impossible for settlers to effect a beneficial occupation of the rich arable tracts at a distance from the port if they are to remain dependent upon the slow and highly expensive transit of produce by the old-fashioned macadamized road".

The first railway in Canterbury and New Zealand, between Christchurch and Ferrymead, was opened in 1863, and 2 years earlier the construction of the Lyttelton tunnel had been started by Holmes and Co., of Melbourne, who had the benefit of the geological knowledge of Julius von Haast. The breach was first made in May, 1867; by December a train ran from Christchurch to Lyttelton.

Progress on the south line was much slower; the seemingly level plains presented more difficulties than was first apparent, and by 1864 the Council's finances were rather strained. William Rolleston, who followed Moorhouse as Superintendent, favoured a policy of retrenchment, and by 1867 the line had reached only Selwyn. Charges were also made that the Provincial Council railway administration was inefficient and that the contractors were making excessive profits.

The revival of prosperity after 1870 enabled the line to be pushed ahead more rapidly; the stretch between Rakaia and Ashburton was laid down in 1874. Timaru was reached in 1876, and by 1878 the first through train ran from Christchurch to Dunedin. Besides the main line, branch lines had been extended to the Methven, Springburn, Fairlie, Waimate, and Oxford areas. By 1880 the Canterbury railway system was much as it is today, with an "interior main line" from Oxford to Temuka projected. After 1880 steam power appeared more and more on the roads as well, with traction engines pulling long rakes of trucks piled with sacks of grain or bales of wool.

To complete their railway system the people of Canterbury demanded the

construction of the Midland Railway to bring the west coast's supply of coal and timber within their reach and at the same time to open up the coast as a market for agricultural produce. Despite the popular clamour, Parliament was not prepared to do anything, even refusing to adopt the arrangement that representatives of Canterbury, Westland, and Nelson had made with an overseas contractor in 1885. Undeterred, the Canterbury promoters concluded an agreement with a London syndicate to which Vogel as Colonial Treasurer agreed. The company was a land grant construction corporation established in London in 1886 with a capital of £500,000; 6,000,000 acres of Crown land in three provinces were set aside in sections for the company to take up as each section of the line was completed. On the Canterbury side the work advanced very slowly, and up to 1895 only 5 miles of line, from Springfield to Kowai, had been laid, though much better progress was made in Westland. In the following year the Government refused any further extension of the term of the contract and took possession of the line. Prolonged litigation followed the company's claim for £1,800,000, the Privy Council finally deciding in favour of the Crown.

RISE OF ARABLE FARMING

A complex set of factors produced the "bonanza" wheat farms of the late 1870's and 1880's, the most important probably being the construction of the railway and the need to plough up the tussock-covered plains before planting better-quality grasses. The first export of wheat to England was made in 1867, when a firm of merchants in Kaiapoi dispatched some parcels of wheat in the *Matanoka* and the *Mermaid*.

Up to 1875 the trade was of fairly modest proportions, but from then it



John Grigg of Longbeach, which was famous for both its crops and its stock. John Grigg was one of the first to realise the importance of the frozen-meat trade, and the reputation that Canterbury lamb acquired was largely due to his insistence on the highest quality.