

and each had to pay £40 as passage money out, and most of them were the sons of fairly prosperous farmers. 'What an intelligent lot of men they are!' was the remark concerning them made by almost every educated stranger who came in contact with them. But what was still better, they had brought their strong faith with them. The establishment of a Catholic school was found to be of immediate necessity; the people themselves asked for it, and they were quite prepared to undertake personal responsibility in regard to the teacher's salary, amounting to £200 per annum. There was already a building on the Church property which could be used, and within a month after the arrival of Father Binsfeld the school was started, the children attending well from the beginning.

On the Diggings.

People who knew not the Westland of those days cannot form any idea of the incessant hardships the miners, and all who lived inland, had to undergo. The whole country was a dense forest with small areas of open land here and there. Rain, and yet more rain, characterised the usual weather. Roads there were none. Communication with the various digging centres inland was carried on by saddle tracks, and partly by river boat. A newcomer had to get seasoned before he would get accustomed to travel into the interior. The congregation at Greymouth formed only a very small proportion of the souls entrusted to the care of Father Binsfeld. The boundaries of the mission were comprised in the following immense area: On the south the river Teremakau from its source in the Southern Alps to its outlet in the Tasman Sea (40 miles); on the west, from the sea to the Razorback, a distance of about 26 miles; on the north, the Southern range bordering the Buller river valley (50 miles); and on the east, the Main Midland mountain ranges, 40 miles. Digging townships were dotted all over this extensive territory. Neither were they in easily accessible situations. Nature had stowed her golden treasures far away up towards the head of long, narrow, and deep gullies or creeks, tributaries of the Grey or other main streams, and in wet ground covered with dense bush. Here the miners would put up their huts of wood slabs, with a corrugated iron roof, and chimney of similar material. The hut consisted of one apartment only, to accommodate from two to six mates, the bunks being placed one over the other as on board a ship. Butchers, bakers, liquor-sellers, and storekeepers established themselves in the same rough-and-ready manner, and in a very short while, as soon as there was any probability of the claims striking gold, these habitations sprang up like mushrooms, and disappeared as quickly should the diggings turn out to be a 'duffer.' There were about 15,000 gold diggers engaged in the mines of Westland at the period of which I write, the greater proportion of whom were within the boundaries of Father Binsfeld's mission. He was assured on his arrival that of this number of gold-seekers about 4000 were Catholics. They were scattered all over the country, forming in certain places a large population, and in others constituting only a small number. The principal mining places then were Greenstone, Marsden, Maori Gully, Notown, Redjacks, Nelson Creek, Halfounce, Napoleon, Moonlight Creek, Murray's Creek (the present Reefion), Boatman's (Buller), and Canoe Creek (the present Barry's Town), north of Point Elizabeth on the seashore. With such a formidable task confronting him, it is easy to understand that the exertions of one man among such a scattered multitude could not do justice neither to himself nor to his flock. This view was speedily taken by Father Binsfeld, who, preferring the outdoor and more strenuous life, communicated with his superiors, and expressed his willingness to take the position of assistant, if another Father could be found to act as missionary rector. In the meantime, he was anxious to begin 'roughing it,' which meant going to the diggings. As will be seen in the narrative which follows, 'roughing it' indeed came almost as his daily portion, accentuated, too, by the after-effects of events of historical interest, which occurred a year before and brought a certain number in conflict with both the civil and ecclesiastical authorities.

About the end of May Father Binsfeld started out alone on a first pastoral visit to the various digging localities. It was a solitary journey, all day long, into a rugged, mountainous wilderness, as were most of his subsequent similar excursions during the two and a half years that he labored in this mission. It was rare to meet a travelling companion, but he had a capital horse, which was quite accustomed to the task before him. He had to carry in front of his master a good-sized saddle-bag, which contained the vestments and every requisite for the celebration of Holy Mass. The good-natured animal went off cheerfully after his liberal breakfast, which was his only meal for the day. At the entrance to the Grey Gorge the river was crossed on a punt, and then began his experience on the saddle tracks, of which he had heard already a great deal. Here he learnt a new chapter in the art of riding. Although brought

up where horses were kept, and considering himself safe on an ordinary one's back, he had yet to learn to keep his seat, not because of the animal, but of Nature itself. Soon the track opened upon and ran along a mere ledge cut in the mountain side, with the river down below and a steep forest towering above, the passage being so narrow that a false step meant death to rider and horse. Some miles further, plunging knee deep in mud, sufficiently sticky to make a fixture of both horse and rider, we eventually came to what, if I remember aright, was known as Langdown's Crossing. Here the Grey River had to be crossed, not on a punt, but by fording. It was deep and the current swift. A man had been drowned here some time previous, and, forsooth, there was plenty of room for drowning, but, thanks to the good guardian angel, the opposite bank was reached in safety. It is surprising what a horse accustomed to this kind of travelling can do. Now there was relief and ease of mind; the country before him was level to the end of his destination, which was the group of adjacent diggings up Nelson Creek. Towards sunset he arrived at 'Try Again,' where he put up at a store for the night. Here he was received and treated with genuine kindness. The storekeeper, his brother, and the few miners of the locality soon made him feel that he was at least there, on friendly ground. 'Try Again' was a worked-out diggings. A few years previous hundreds of men had been working there. Now all that remained resembled a totally destroyed city. Long stretches of tail-racing, hillocks of boulders, huge uprooted trees in every direction were all that remained—a scene of desolation. A temporary chapel was found here, which had a weather-beaten appearance, like the rest of the deserted huts and shops surrounding. Evening service was held, consisting of rosary, sermon, and night prayers. Mass was celebrated next morning. This was his first day's work on the diggings, and he rejoiced at it, for all the men assisted and edified him by their truly Catholic spirit.

(To be continued.)

Presentation to Father O'Dwyer at Manaia

At a meeting of Catholics of Manaia in the convent schoolroom on December 8 a presentation was made to the Rev. Father O'Dwyer, who has been in charge of the district for the past nine months during the absence of the Very Rev. Father Power. We take the following report of the presentation from the *Waimate Witness*:—

Mr. J. J. Meldon (chairman of the committee) presided. After several vocal items had been contributed Mr. Meldon introduced the business of the evening. He referred to the fact that Father O'Dwyer, in taking charge of the parish in Father Power's absence, came to them as a young man from college, inexperienced in the ways of the world, but he had done so well, accomplished so much, that the committee, as representing the parishioners, decided not to allow him to resign control without some recognition of his work. His energy and earnestness in furthering the interests of the Church were shown in the fact that in nine months a debt of £600 had been completely wiped out. It was creditable to Father O'Dwyer and creditable to the parishioners. All round his work had been appreciated, and when it was decided to make the presentation there was a liberal response on the part of the parishioners. Mr. Meldon called on Mr. M. Franklin to make the presentation.

Mr. Franklin remarked that all would admit Father O'Dwyer had carried out the duties entrusted to him in a most satisfactory manner. Recognising Father O'Dwyer's worth, the parishioners decided that the proper course to adopt to show their respect and appreciation of his services was to make a suitable presentation before he gave up charge of the parish. He (the speaker) had been asked to make the presentation, and he could assure them it was the most pleasant duty he ever had to perform during his stay in Manaia for over a period of 28 years. He then read the following address:—

'We the parishioners of Manaia and district on the occasion of relinquishing temporary charge of our parish desire to tender you, not only our appreciation of your zealous and devoted labors for our spiritual welfare but also our regard for you personally. We recognise that single-handed the discharge of the duties of your holy office has entailed great personal sacrifices, but the obligations undertaken have been fulfilled in a befitting manner and with due regard to the requirements of the parish. You have freely and ungrudgingly given of your best, and we now rejoice with you that in the short space of nine months the result of your capable administration has freed the parish debt. In asking you to accept the accompanying gifts as a token of our esteem we earnestly pray that you may long be spared in health and vigor to labor in the Lord's vineyard, and that your lot may be cast in pleasant

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