

Kanieri, Hokitika, Kumara, Stafford, Goldsborough, Greymouth, Reefton, Boatman's, Westport, Ahaura, and thence crossed over the Amuri Pass from Westland to Canterbury. I may here mention that this pass, in my opinion, offers no difficulties in the way of taking a railway from the West to the East Coast; and the road could be made to run through a large tract of excellent agricultural country, well fitted for settlement, with the advantage of a good climate, not nearly so cold as that of Otago. In visiting the West Coast goldfields I started from the head of Lake Wanaka and travelled northwards through the Haast Pass to Jackson's Bay, and thence to Ross, a distance of about two hundred miles; and, with the exception of the bridging of a few rivers, there are, I consider, no greater engineering difficulties in the way of forming a railroad along the entire route northwards from Wanaka to Hokitika than existed on the main road from the Bluff to Dunedin.

Honourable gentlemen, I hope, will excuse me if I briefly refer to a very large scope of country that came within my notice. I allude to the western portion of Otago, where very few roads and tracks exist, comprising an area of five million acres. Of this quantity there are upwards of five hundred thousand acres of valley and hill-country, mostly under forest, but capable of being used for agricultural and pastoral settlement; and of this latter quantity about sixty thousand acres have been sold.

That beautiful stretch of *terra incognita* south of Ross comprises an area of 1,720,000 acres. Of this quantity 272,000 acres are suitable for settlement, of which six thousand acres are already sold, and three thousand acres are held under agricultural leases. In other words, the total area of land from the ocean-beach at Orepuki, near the Waiau, in Southland, and following a line to the lower end of Lake Te Anau and to the heads of Lakes Wakatipu and Wanaka, thence to the boundary of Westland near the Haast Pass, and again along the same boundary to a line running westerly to the ocean-beach near to Ross, appears to be 6,720,000 acres. Of this quantity there are suitable for settlement 772,000 acres, of which 66,000 acres have been sold, and three thousand acres are held under agricultural leases.

I have acquired this information from the Surveyor-General and from Mr. Mueller, the Chief Surveyor of Westland, one of the ablest officers in the Survey Department, having had the privilege of his company for several days when recently journeying through that portion of the colony. It may not be uninteresting to record here the great satisfaction that was evinced by the few settlers on the occasion of my visit, who have been for more than twenty years struggling to build a home in those distant localities. These people rarely see a stranger, and had never before seen a member of the Government among them. As many of them expressed themselves to me, they were almost without the means of communication with the large centres of population and the settled districts; they were absolutely without the necessary convenience of tracks—to say nothing about roads—to facilitate them in forming homes for themselves and their families: but my visit seemed to place before them a vision of hope that they were now likely sooner or later to be annexed to civilization, and thus share with other portions of the colony the benefits of fair and good government.

CONCLUSION.

In concluding my remarks, Sir, I feel that I owe an apology to honourable gentlemen for the time I have taken up in placing the foregoing facts with my views before them in reference to our mining industry; but my excuse is that the subject is perhaps virtually the largest, if not the most important, of any that concerns the present and future interests of New Zealand. I humbly claim to have a little knowledge of the systems of mining in this colony and other countries. In Australia I was one of a small community who first tried their hands at practical mining on the Turon River, near Bathurst, in New South Wales, during the winter, spring, and summer of 1851; and I had previously ridden over the renowned Ballarat, in Victoria, when it was but a sheep-run, and prospectors were then there trying to discover gold. I was there afterwards in the midst of the earliest and greatest rush of pioneer miners. I saw Beechworth, Sandhurst, Castlemaine, Inglewood, Dunolly, Maryborough, Fiery Creek, Pleasant Creek, and Ararat in their most busy and brightest days of gold-producing. During the months I spent on Ararat in 1857 there were over sixty thousand miners on the field, sending from it weekly, for a time, to Melbourne and Ballarat twenty-five to thirty thousand ounces of gold; and, although I never followed the occupation of a miner, with the exception of the time I spent at Ophir, on the Turon, I was engaged in a profession that brought me daily into contact with the miner and his claim, and I always felt that his welfare concerned my welfare and the well-being of the business that led me among so many mining communities.