

## WESTLAND.

## THE TWO NORTH WESTLAND CURES.

As we saw last month, Westland is a long, narrow strip of country between the Southern Alps and the Tasman Sea. The road length of the district from Arthur's Pass to Awarua Bay is about 360 miles—nearly as far as from Christchurch to Invercargill. The population is about 8000 to 9000, of which about 6000 live in North Westland; that is to say, north of Lake Mahinapua, in the Hokitika Valley, or north of that. The remaining 3000 live in South Westland.

The settlements along the Midland Railway between Springfield and Arthur's Pass in respect of Church life are in even worse case than the most isolated places of Westland. Kowhai Bush is part of the Malvern Cure and receives regular ministrations. Beyond Kowhai Bush the railway runs up the Waimakariri Gorge at the precipitous foot of Mt Torlesse. Then comes the growing coal mining settlement of Avoca; beyond that several sheep stations, and, finally, the township of Arthur's Pass at the south end of the tunnel. I want Canterbury people to realise that in all this stretch the Church has done nothing for the people since December, 1915. Think of this, and reflect that this is in Canterbury within sixty to ninety miles of Christchurch. Here for four years past the Church has ignored the claims of several hundreds of God's people.

Over the Arthur's Pass, on the Westland side, lies another township of about 500 people, Otira. This is the northernmost centre in the Kumara Cure. There is here a Mission Hall called "A! Souls' Mission," where the Vicar spends a week-end once a month. In Otira Church life has never reached a really high level, and during 1918-1919 particularly it suffered severely through the shortage of clergy. Otira is a place of very beautiful and grand scenery and a healthy bracing climate, and the men engaged in the tunnel work short hours for good wages. Whatever else may be said must be on the other side of the account. Working conditions are wet, unpleasant and unhealthy. The houses are squalid kennels, poky, inconvenient, insanitary, over-crowded, totally lacking in those requirements of privacy and pleasant homeliness as dear to the wage-earner as to his boss. No private employer would venture to kennel his employees in such sordid surroundings. To a soul-less Government Department no iniquity is impossible.

From Otira the main road for forty miles runs through pleasant farm lands

or picturesque bush, down the Taramakau Riverbed, to Kumara. On either hand rise mountains 4000 feet to 6500 feet in height, very precipitous, densely bush clad, with beautiful waterfalls and running streams, and, above all, snowy tops against the bright blue Westland sky. Westland as a whole is a picnickers' and tourists' paradise.

The road emerges from the mountain gorges at some eight miles from the sea. A stretch of rolling downs, heavily timbered, smoothes cut into a plain some 360 feet above the sea. Kumara stands on this plateau at the foot of the first hills. The town now contains about 600 people, where formerly lived several thousands. The Parish Church of the Holy Trinity is quite the best in Westland, and one of the largest. At least one service a Sunday is still maintained there, and sundry week-day offices as well. In proportion to their numerical strength and means, the Kumara people are unsurpassed in the Diocese in their support of the Church and its work, and I think I am right in saying that few places have such an active spiritual life as this. I speak from several years' experience of Kumara.

Ten miles south-west of Kumara, and on the main road to Hokitika, is Stafford, another old worked-out mining town, together with an adjacent place called Waimea, formerly known as Celdsborough. Stafford was the headquarters of this Cure, until the rapid rise of Kumara about 1876-1878 caused the Vicar to take up his residence in Kumara. Hence it comes that this Cure has two substantial Vicarages, one at Kumara and the other at Stafford. The Church of St. John the Evangelist at Stafford is a quaint tiny place close to the Vicarage. The congregation is now very small and still dwindling. There used to be the Church of St. Luke at Waimea, but it was some three years ago removed for use at Whataroa, some ninety miles away, in South Westland.

The future of this Kumara and Stafford Cure depends largely upon the development of dairying and timber milling. Of a revival of gold mining there is very little possibility. To clear the shattered bush and drain and grass the land will be the best thing possible for the Cure. Then once more it will be able to take its place among the Cures having resident Priests in charge.

Among those who have been Vicars of Kumara are the Rev. John Holland, now of Kaiapoi, the Rev. Canon Bean of Addington, the Rev. Arthur Hore of St. Albans, and myself. The present Vicar is the Rev. A. C. T. Purchas, now resident in Hokitika, where he is also Assistant-Priest to Hokitika Cure.

Hokitika is a beautiful little town of some 2300 people. It "touched bottom" long ago and is now well on its way to a new prosperity, based no longer upon gold mining, but upon agriculture and dairying. The Church dates from the sixties, and is about to be re-built in stone.

All Saints' Church, Hokitika, is the mother Church to a numerous group of smaller country Churches at Arapura Maori Pa, Kanieri, Rimu, Kokatahi and Koiterangi, outlying from three to sixteen miles from Hokitika. The Cure comprises the wide plains of the Hokitika Valley and of the Arapura to the north. Dairy farming, sheep and cattle raising and timber milling are the principal industries. Here, as in Kumara and Stafford, gold mining is almost a dead industry. Probably Hokitika will always be the principal town of Westland, and we may expect that it will remain the centre of Church life. Here St. Agnes' Hostel is established, a branch house of the Deaconess Community. Sister Dora is in charge, with two assistants. Some day St. Agnes' will develop into a big girls' school, as well as a community house for women who devote themselves to the religious life.

Here also, as in Kumara, some of the best-known clergy of this Diocese have ministered—the Rev. Canon Thos. Hamilton, Canon Staples Hamilton, the Rev. H. S. Leach, the Rev. Arthur Hore (after being at Kumara), the Rev. Percy Revell (in the out-lying districts). The Rev. J. E. Holloway, D.Sc., is at present Vicar, with, as his assistant Priest, the Rev. A. C. T. Purchas, who is also titular Vicar of Kumara. It should be understood that Mr Purchas is not wilfully a pluralist, but that the exigencies of the time compel him.

Next month I hope to describe in more detail the South Westland Cure.

C. L. WILSON.

*2nd of July 1919  
7<sup>th</sup> of July 1919. The dedication  
to the C.S. de Keri Ch. Ch.  
where C.D. Rice was  
Cura. before he came to the Coast*

## WESTLAND.

## THE SOUTH WESTLAND CURE.

In the January issue of this Journal I gave a brief description of the two Cures in North Westland, Kumara and Hokitika.

This month I will try to describe the Ross and South Westland Cure, of which I have had charge since January 1918. Unfortunately, over-work has now compelled me to resign and I am not likely to return.

When I term South Westland a wilderness, you must not conclude that it is a place uninhabitable or untamable. Indeed it is a place of romantic beauty, of giant snow-capped mountains, wonderful glaciers, beautiful lakes, flowing hot springs, and great rivers—a land of luxuriant sub-tropical bush, rich in minerals of almost every kind. Its gold-mines at one time seemed inexhaustible, and are still very far from exhaustion. It has deposits of silver, antimony, copper and other metals still untouched. At Paringa there is coal never yet worked, except for a specimen exhibited years ago at the Melbourne Exhibition where it won second prize for Australasian coals. Moreover, this is now already a land of rich farms and stock unsurpassed anywhere in this Dominion. Along the railway, too, are huge sawmills. Butler Bros.' mill at Ruatapu produces about 45,000 super feet a day, and could double that output if fully staffed. Stuart and Chapman, at Ross, are building a mill of even greater capacity. South of this, saw-milling is unpracticable on a large scale, because Government lacks the enterprise to provide railways or even bridges and suitable roads for heavy transport. Hence it is that the settlers year after year burn hundreds of acres of valuable timber to make space for grass. This needless destruction of nature's lavish gift is the tragedy of South Westland.

The South Westland Cure begins at Lake Mahinapua, about 8 miles south of Hokitika; it stretches to Awarua Bay (Big Bay), some 260 miles away, not very far from Milford Sound. The railway runs to Ross, about a dozen miles from Mahinapua. Beyond Ross is a fine coach road for 74 miles to Waiho Gorge and the Franz Joseph Glacier. Traffic on this road is still impeded by several rivers and numerous creeks unbridged. Beyond Waiho there are no bridges, and the road in places is still a mere pack track for many miles out of a total stretch of about 170 miles.

The northernmost settlement is Ruatapu, round Butler Bros.' big mill. This place contains perhaps 300 people. Church Services are held in the State

School—Holy Communion one Sunday a month, and Evensong at 2.30 p.m. a fortnight later. At celebrations there are commonly about a dozen communicants, a few adult non-communicants, and a dozen to twenty children; at Evensong a dozen to twenty adults and twenty children.

Ruatapu contributes £20 a year to Parish funds. This severely taxes the resources of a very deserving, hard-working, hard-living handful of people. Who, among the readers of this Journal will help Ruatapu to build a modest Church to the glory of God and the use of His people there? We have already a small sum in hand, but quite £100 is still needed. You Canterbury people worshipping in Churches beautiful and well appointed, will you help? I know well that you would give far more than our bare needs if only I could take you with me to see the place and the people.

The next settlement is the borough of Ross. Here we have a population of about 500, with a lively expectation of doubling the number within two years or so, when saw-milling and gold-mining and lime-burning draw the 200 workers for whom they are calling. Ross is another place in dire need of assistance, but I am thankful to Christchurch people, mostly of Merivale, who recently gave me £80 to provide for our most pressing needs.

St. Paul's Parish Church stands on a steep hill, 100 to 150 feet above the town, and such a climb, far too much for aged and infirm people. At one time the town was round the Church on the hill; now the Church stands isolated, and the people are anything upwards of half-a-mile away. The Church is over 50 years old and too decayed to be moved, but it may well serve as a school for some years yet. The school or Parish hall is nearly new. We have bought three-quarters of an acre of ground in a central place on the flat, and that £80 will soon be spent on moving the hall to the new site, and adapting it for temporary use as a Church. Then the old Church will become a Sunday School, until we can build a new Church on the new site, and restore the other building to its former use. How much will this cost? Quite £800. How much will you give?

The Vicarage is 50 years old and is VERY rotten. Indeed the ground behind is caving into an old mining shaft, and the Vicar keeps his heavy furniture in the front rooms to prevent the house from capsizing backwards into the hole. It is a most romantic situation. You will understand that this place is quite unfit for habitation. A new dwelling on the new site with the other buildings must be provided.

The cost will be probably £1000. Ross at present provides £50 a year to Parish funds. Congregations are small, but will increase greatly when the buildings reach the new site. None of the people are in affluent circumstances.

No doubt somebody thinks me a shocking beggar. Well I am getting used to the feeling, but not at all ashamed of showing you plainly the need of God's people in this missionary work, and I know from experience that I have only to arouse your sympathy in order to get your help. Send your contributions direct to me, or else through your own Vicar, but whatever you do don't rest until you have sent all you can spare. Give until it hurts!

C. L. WILSON.