

# **George Johnston's Evangelistic Journey on the West Coast of the South Island 1884-6 (Part II)**

## **ABSTRACT**

This collection completes the reports of George Johnston on his mission to Westland. Johnston's first reports (see *NZJBR*, 6, 2001, 88-104) display an excited sense of discovery and are full of vivid descriptions of his journeys. In these later installments the mood changes. There are important descriptions of Westland communities and insights into relations between the Christian denominations. However, the oppressive wet weather and the general lack of response are increasing preoccupations, as is Johnston's effort to justify the continuation of the mission. His concern was justified. The Baptist Union Conference of 1886 decided to conclude the mission. In the March 1887 *NZB* Johnston was reported as still living in Greymouth.

**June 11th, 1885** (*NZB* July 1885, 97)

## **Our West Coast Mission**

Since my last report [11 March 1885] my efforts have been more localised, and have been confined to within 25 miles of Greymouth. Immediately after my return from the South, I undertook some work in Greymouth, principally open-air services (these were very well attended), tract distribution, and visitation of the Hospital. Services were held at Cobden and Maori Creek soon after; and then a series of Gospel Temperance meetings were held in the Volunteer Hall and the Wesleyan church, at which I was assisted by the Revs. W. B. Westbrooke and J. Law. These were not so successful in regard

to attendance as I could have wished, on account of wet weather and counter attractions, but I intend to continue them when I can get a little spare time. Altogether over 100 pledges have been taken since my meetings in Brunnerton, reported on a previous occasion. The principal reason why I have engaged in these services is because the drink traffic is by far the greatest hindrance to my work. If I tell you that sometimes two-thirds of my congregation go direct from the service to the public-house, and not a few of them to play cards, drink, and swear, and that several left their homes with the intention of coming to church, but got no further than the public-house, you will not wonder why I should wage war with this traffic. The *bona-fide* digger has two all-absorbing ideas, which are gold and drink; he is generally an intelligent, well-read specimen of humanity, very political in his proclivities; but religion is an element so foreign to him, that he seems quite at a loss to know what to do with it. Early training may here and there have left some respect for it, but it would be valued more as a relic of the past than a necessity of the present; and as regards the future, I cannot learn that it is in his vocabulary at all. He is a large-hearted being, who will make anyone welcome; in fact, he often becomes the victim of this open-heartedness, and friend and foe alike share in his liberality. He reminds one very much of the Red Indian, whom the missionary was very anxious to pacify regarding an enemy of another tribe, and told him that 'he should love his enemies.' 'So I do,' said the Indian, 'I love rum and cider.' This is doubtless the digger's weakness, and the facilities given by the number of public-houses, and the laxity of our laws to deal with Sunday trading, expose him to this temptation. In fact, the latter is a dead letter as far as the Coast is concerned, and drinking is carried on before one's eyes without any apparent compunction.

I have commenced a weekly service at Brunnerton in the morning, which I work with other four stations, the latter being

monthly. At Brunnerton I have a different class of people to deal with; they lack the frankness and liberal unselfishness which characterise the gold miner. Of course, I would remind the reader that I am now speaking of the two classes which represent the districts I am labouring in, and not the exceptions which I happily come into contact with, and who cheer me on in this discouraging work. Baptists, as I have noticed before, are few and far between, and consequently my work lies amongst others; and as I reflect on the way in which my path has been opened up, and the access I have had to the people, I think there is ample reason to thank God and take courage. Visitation has been carried out in a very thorough manner at Mosquito, Coker Buller, Eight Mile, and Maori Creeks, also at Brunnerton, Paroa, and Rutherglen. Some very profitable conversations have taken place. I have seen an old digger in tears, who has spent about 40 years on the Californian, Australian, and New Zealand diggings; and not a few have taken to their Bibles, which have been long neglected, and others I have had at my services who have not darkened a church door for nearly twenty years. I believe God is using me, but I do ask fervently for the prayers of God's people in this work.

The rainfall here is very great, and I get frequent drenchings. Pray that my health may not suffer; the wear and tear is very great, and the monetary support is small; the distances are also great. I hope, therefore, the readers of this report will not allow the Committee much anxiety regarding finances. After the first year, I believe substantial assistance will be given, as the value of my work is realised on the Coast. I know that by Christians it is being recognized already, and not a few who are connected with Churches here have spoken approvingly of my work. Maori Creek, Paroa, Cobden, and Nelson Creek are the four stations I have taken up on Sundays, and the distances I have to travel are respectively 22, 24, 16, and 24 miles, and at Maori Creek and Nelson Creek I have to stay till the Monday. I am

anxious to preach to the Chinese; there are several hundreds in my district. I have been trying to get an interpreter, but I have not yet succeeded in getting one. I am in hopes that I shall before long. Would the readers of this earnestly pray that such a door may be opened to me, for they are truly without any man caring for their souls? Chinese Tracts I am out of, and where to get more I know not. Can no friend supply me with some; they will be judiciously circulated? But please see that they are religious tracts, for a lot of rubbish has been circulated, which has been doing a lot of mischief. I should like to have at least the titles written or printed in English. In conclusion, may I solicit a continuation of the prayers that have already been offered on my behalf, that I may have wisdom and grace to direct me in this much-needed work, and above all that the Spirit's power may rest upon my labours, and that souls may be brought from darkness to light? 'The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few.'

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### **3 September 1885** (*NZB* October 1885, 145-146)

Notwithstanding that the weather of late has been very much against my work, and people have long distances to come (travelling through tracks in the bush is no joke when a proper West Coast rain has set in), I have ample proof that God is working, and an interest has been awakened at all the stations. The services held at Cobden at various periods since I last wrote have been very encouraging, the attendance, in proportion to the population, has been very large, and the interest has been deep. At the prayer meetings after services numbers have remained to be spoken to and prayed for. I have not met with any cases of decision for Christ, but quite a number are anxious and hopeful. Several Gospel Temperance services have been held at this place, which were largely attended, and at the close

of each meeting the people have been reluctant to leave. Pledges to the number of thirteen have been taken, one or two were remarkable cases. At Maori Creek, I have had excellent services, good attendance and interest. One man who had not been at a service for several years remained to be spoken to, asked to sign the pledge. He has been at each service since. At another service at this place, several remained or came back to be spoken to. At the invitation of the schoolmaster, I paid a visit to Barrytown, some twenty miles up the Coast northwards, on the 2nd of August. The attendance was unusually large for the place, and at both services a number were in tears. In the evening the candles were burnt down to the desks before the people left. The Spirit of the Lord was manifestly present. One young woman stood up and confessed Christ as her Saviour, and her father asked to be prayed for. I have seldom been in a more solemn meeting. I trust the Lord will follow with much blessing the efforts of that day. Two men whom I conversed with had come all the way from Razorback, a distance of nine miles. The Catholics largely predominate at this place. The Nelson Creek station is doing fairly well, notwithstanding the apparent apathy caused through drink and Free-thought, two very powerful opponents of the Gospel here. God's providence has come to the rescue. 'When the judgements of the Lords are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.' Some very solemn warnings in the shape of sudden deaths have taken place here, and have called a halt, if not broken the spell. May these incidents have a salutary effect, and prepare the soil for the seed-sowing, and may many become wise unto salvation. Ahaura and Totara Flat have been visited. At Ahaura I had a very hopeful service; I intend to make this a permanent station. After the New Year I hope to take in the three stations, Totara Flat, Ahaura, and Nelson Creek respectively, on the same day. I have been obliged to give up the Brunnerton station in the meantime, because it was too expensive and awkward to

work; the attendance has been small; besides, it has been fairly well supplied of late. The Church of England have redoubled their efforts at this place lately. They also go once a month, on Sundays, to most of my stations, formerly, some of them were only visited on a week night by the curate, but now they are taken on Sundays, and some of them twice a month; this has upset many of my arrangements, yet, I believe it will work out for good eventually; it will not lessen my work, but direct it, perhaps, into wider channels. I have had several Gospel Temperance meetings in Greymouth; these have been held in the Presbyterian Church. I was Assisted by the Revs. W. B. Westbrooke and J. Law, and also by Mrs. Smith and her juvenile choir. The attendance was fair, and increased each evening. Twelve pledges were taken, several of them were notable cases. Christianity and temperance are at rather a low ebb here. I had also Sunday evening service in the Volunteer Hall, Greymouth. The attendance was not equal to my expectations. I have since been frequently asked when I was going to have another. I purpose establishing a weekly prayer meeting here shortly. I intend to visit Greenstone, Dilmaston, Larrikins, and other centres, in the hope of making them permanent stations. I expect also to visit Kumara, Goldsborough, Stafford, and Hokitika districts. A good work has been going on at the latter, and I have been requested to pay a visit there soon. I get repeated evidence wherever I go that prayer on behalf of my work on the Coast is being answered. Brethren, do not cease to pray for this mission; daily bear up before the Throne of Grace the weak instrument you have honoured by sending to carry on this important work.

As annual meetings of the Union take place in October, it may not be out of place to summarise my work in a few statements. Since November 20th, at which date the Mission was practically commenced I have visited every place from Totara Flat to Jackson's Bay, with the exception of Kokatahi

and Humphrey's Gully, and one or two minor places. Between sixty and seventy services have been held; over 800 visits have been made, and over 2,000 tracts have been distributed; about 1,600 miles have been traversed on horseback, and about 150 teetotal pledges have been taken by myself and others whom I have enlisted in this work. A kindly reception has been accorded me everywhere, and from expressions I receive, it appears that my work has been much appreciated. As a rule, the people amongst whom I have laboured are poor in some cases as the result of waste, in others, as the diggers would say, 'for the want of better luck.' Those who have been fortunate and wise enough, have emigrated to 'Pastures new.' The remnant on the goldfields are in a position to do but little comparatively for the support of the Mission. The goldminer's life, to a great extent, is nomadic. He dwells in tents, or at best a mere apology for a house. Building cities, centralisation, and consolidation have little place in his calculations, hence the difficulty of making the Mission a recognised institution in any one place. He will give to a passing collection, but will resent the idea of anything more permanent. It has been the lot of many on the Coast to have had thousands of pounds pass through their hands at one time or another; but now, like the prodigal, 'they have wasted their substance in riotous living,' and barely 'get their tucker,' as they say. One storeman told me he had '£3,000 on his books that was not worth the paper it was on.' There are no houses, goods, or chattels worth mortgaging with the goldminer, only a 'splice of luck' will keep head above water. Success on the diggings is the exception, not the rule, and that exception is unhappily diverted into the wrong direction. However, we have got to deal with things as we find them, and not as we wish them. Men's souls are precious wherever they may be found; and as we believe that this Mission is the best means within our reach to procure their salvation, we trust that

it may therefore receive hearty and sustained countenance and support.

The great amount of rainfall, the distances, and very scattered and often isolated way in which the people are strewn about, and the difficulty of access to the creeks, terraces, &c., where many of the people reside, make it hard to gather them in congregations of any size, and secure a sufficiency of monetary support for the Mission without considerable aid from outside. For the same reasons, the work cannot be carried on without heavy expenses. Horse feed is specially dear, and boarding at hotels is necessary, for the miners' houses seldom have more accommodation than the regular inmates require. The charges are exceedingly high. The wear and tear on account of bad weather and rough roads likewise add to the expenses. It is hoped that the Lord's stewards will take all these things into consideration, and supply the Committee with sufficient funds to carry out the work efficiently. Much more might be accomplished if I had not to plan so continually to keep down expenses as I do at present. Economy of this kind is not always an advantage. However, I have good reason to believe that as the work of the Mission continues to be prosecuted, a considerably larger proportion of its support will be derived from its operations. The Mission is in its infancy, and requires a start in life. I hope, therefore, that every lover of the Lord will do his or her utmost at the annual meetings of the Union to awaken a widespread interest in the Mission, and whilst other subjects will engage their attention and be brought forward, claiming their interest and support, do not forget this much-needed and important Mission.

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**14 November 1885** (NZB December 1885, 187-188)



Although the West Coast is a hard soil for the Gospel plough to work in, and the moral atmosphere adverse to the germination of 'the incorruptible seed of the Word,' it is far from being hopeless ground. That there are many who, without us, would never hear the Gospel is a fact, I think, we cannot make too much of; and the consideration that the pecuniary support of the Mission derived from the district is no more than clearing horse expenses (these are exceptionally large) is not sufficient to outweigh the importance of prosecuting the work. When we are in a position to estimate the true value of souls, we shall probably be beyond the opportunity now afforded us of using the means for their redemption. For present purposes, however, let us just consider at what valuation we should like our own soul to be valued, and since the Lord has said, 'All souls are mine,' may we not safely reckon that every one of those, though denied through circumstances the means of grace, are yet as precious in His sight as we are? Supposing the majority of those whom we seek to reach *have* grown grey in sin, and by reason of their past thriftlessness and thoughtlessness are powerless to aid in their recovery, are they to be denied our sympathy, and left to sink into an undone eternity, and not hear the 'glad good news,' which with a little self-denial on our part can be conveyed to them through this Mission? This is precisely how I find matters on the Coast. Frequently, I find men the mere effigies of their former selves, men who were in their prime twenty years ago, when the West Coast diggings were in their palmy days; but now, money gone, friends gone, health gone, character gone, manliness gone - in short, all gone that was worth possessing - spent in the service of the world, the flesh and the devil, who now are enquiring, 'Is there any hope for me? I have been a bad man; these diggings have ruined me; what am I to do?' Nothing reminds me more of the man who went down to Jericho and fell among thieves, than some of these old diggers; they are just as helpless as that man,

and just as needy. Now, the question is, Are we going to act the Good Samaritan to these sin-cursed sons of humanity? are we going to break our journey, and turn aside for a little, to attend their wants? Are we going to give of our oil and our wine to soothe their pains and heal their wounds? Are we going to give our pence to enable them to enjoy the respite of God's pardoning love? or, shall we pass by on the other side, leaving them to perish in their sins? Such are a few of the thoughts running through my mind as I sit down to write my report, which will be a bare outline of my work for the last two months. I trust that the sentiments expressed will be shared in by not a few of our brethren whose hearts 'the Lord has touched,' and that the Holy Ghost will quicken prayerfulness for the prosperity of this Mission, as well as call forth a response of help for those who require to bestow all their energies on the work, without the added strain of pecuniary anxiety.

In accordance with the purpose expressed in my last report, I went southward on the 10th September. However, I got no further than Kumara on that occasion. On the Saturday afternoon I visited Larrikins, and in the evening I commenced operations in earnest in this the largest digging town on the Coast. I do not know what the population of this place is; there are probably 2,000, at least they maintain 25 public-houses, which all seem to live, if not to fatten. I knew no one here that could be of any service to me, so I started all alone about eight o'clock right in the middle of the town to 'hold forth the word of life.' Some 200 or 300 gathered around me and listened most attentively. I was much encouraged with testimonies of appreciation received afterwards from unlikely sources. A number of my hearers had not heard an address upon such subjects for many years. On the Sunday I preached morning and evening in the Presbyterian Church (at present without a minister); the morning congregation was small, but there was a very good attendance at night. I also preached at Dilmanstown

in the afternoon, in the open-air, to a large congregation, which was very attentive and orderly. At this meeting I had several Wesleyan friends to stand by me. On September 20th, I held service at Marsden in the afternoon. I have been twice here, and on both occasions the attendance has been small. It is a very scattered district, and difficult to get a congregation together. The services at Maori Creek (which are held on the same day as Marsden) have been poorly attended lately on account of the weather. It seems always to be rain here on Sundays, only two Sundays have been quite fair during the last three months. According to the rain-gauge 82 inches of water have fallen in ten months; from this some idea may be gathered respecting the difficulties I have to encounter in order to prosecute the work of the Mission. I get at least two or three drenchings every month, which are very trying to health, and besides it militates much against the attendance, as also the collections. Services have been held at the Ohaura and Nelson Creek stations with varying success. Last Sunday evening, before the evening service, I found some 50 or more congregated in the centre of Nelson Creek township, engaged in jumping, racing, &c. I went into the midst of them, and reprimanded them for such desecration of the Lord's Day, and invited them to the service; they took the rebuke without resentment, but did not come to church. After the service in the church (at which there were very few) I went down into the township and preached to the people. They gathered round me in large numbers, and listened very attentively. Let me now supply you with a few extracts from my diary :-

Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup> - Had open-air services at Kumara in the evening, with large attendance. People attentive and orderly.

Oct. 4<sup>th</sup> - Preached in the Wesleyan Church, Kumara, for Rev. Mr. Hosking, in the morning; the attendance was good. Preached in the Presbyterian Church in the evening to a rather small congregation.

Oct. 5<sup>th</sup> - Delivered a lecture in the Kumara Masonic Hall; the attendance was fair.

Oct. 6<sup>th</sup> - Went to Stafford, and lectured in the Public Hall to a small but appreciative audience.

Oct. 7<sup>th</sup> - Went to Hokitika, and conducted an evangelistic service in the Presbyterian Church; there was a fair attendance.

Oct. 8<sup>th</sup> - Gave an address at an evangelistic service held at Woodstock, and conducted by Rev. W. Douglas; the attendance was large. Woodstock is four miles from Hokitika.

Oct. 9<sup>th</sup> - Went to Ross. Ross is sixty miles from Greymouth.

Oct. 10<sup>th</sup> - Visited Hospital. Had open-air meeting on the street in the evening; a goodly number of people were present.

Oct. 11<sup>th</sup> - Rained nearly all day, poured in the evening. Conducted morning and evening services in the Presbyterian Church; the attendances on both occasions small. There is no minister resident in Ross. The Wesleyans have services once a month.

Oct. 12<sup>th</sup> - Returned to Hokitika. Took part in a very enjoyable prayer-meeting, in the evening, in the Wesleyan Church; the Rev. C. Abernethy conducted.

Oct. 13<sup>th</sup> - Conducted an evangelistic service at Woodstock; the place was nearly full, notwithstanding the wet night. The interest here is great, a large number having recently decided for Christ.

Oct. 14<sup>th</sup> - Took part in an evangelistic service held in the Rechabite Hall, Hokitika; the attendance was fair; the Rev. C. Abernethy was the other speaker.

Oct. 15<sup>th</sup> - Gave a short address at the close of an evangelistic service in the Rechabite Hall. The Principal speakers were Mr D.W. Virtue (who has been most forward in the late season of blessing enjoyed in this district) and a converted Jew. The Rev.

W. Douglas conducted; the attendance was larger than the previous evening.

These evangelistic meetings were conducted for another evening after I left.

Oct. 16<sup>th</sup> - Returned to Greymouth.

The Cobden Station continues the best for attendance and interest. I have had as many as fifty here on a drenching wet night. The Spirit of God is very evidently at work here. There seems a yearning desire for the truth.

In conclusion, let me state that a fair amount of house-to-house visitation and tract distribution has been done besides the Sunday and other services.

I have no doubt that if the weather were more propitious I should get a much larger attendance at the services, but this is one of the most serious drawbacks on the Coast, together with the long distance and the lack of personal interest in the work on the part of the people themselves. Apparently the moral atmosphere has been too much for really decided Christians, and they have either gone off, without remaining to be 'the salt of the earth,' or else they have lost their savour, and allowed interest to subside into callous indifference. I am persuaded that the Holy Spirit can alone infuse life and interest into these sin-hardened denizens of the bush; let us therefore work and pray for their salvation. With the majority of them 'the day is far spent, and the night is at hand.' The harvest is truly plenteous, but the labourers are few. Oh, for more faith and power to snatch these brands from the burning! Though little service for the Master in this world will be left in them, yet they may be trophies of the superabounding long suffering and love of God, and a glorious witness to the efficacy of the precious blood of Christ. Brethren, pray for them and us, and, no doubt, you will partake of the joy of the harvest home.

**11 February 1886** (*NZB* March 1886, 35)

A marked improvement has taken place in the weather since my last report, affording facilities for travelling such as are rarely enjoyed on the West Coast. The long spell of dry weather is unparalleled in the history of the oldest residents of the Coast. We have not been without some genial showers, which have amply protected vegetation from excessive drought, but not enough to keep all the water-races running, consequently many of the gold miners have had 'poor' but 'easy' times. This state, however, has not increased the spiritual thirst, but what with the customary holidays and their abandonment to pleasure, with the unsettled condition following, superinduced by the want of employment through the drought, a state of *ennui* has been produced, militating somewhat against the operations of the Mission. Notwithstanding this languor we have not slackened our efforts, but endeavoured to improve the time by taking advantage of the lessons the revolving seasons provide.

The various stations have been kept in full swing, with the exception of Marsden, which I have most reluctantly been obliged to abandon, because of the indifference of the people, having twice gone there in succession without a single attendant at the services, although they had been notified beforehand, and the bell twice rung. On the first of these occasions a foot race for a wager was the attraction, and the whole of the inhabitants of the township were absorbed in the event. A fine way of spending the Sabbath, forsooth; nevertheless, it is not an uncommon one on the Coast. I also went into their midst, and invited them to the service, but I only got abuse; many of them were much the worse of drink. The second was similar to the above, only cricket was the attraction. I again repeated the process as before, but still no one came. The attendance at Totara Flat has been very good. It is the only

agricultural district I have; my congregations are farmers and their families, and resemble more a Canterbury up-country congregation than the others. Ahaura and Nelson Creek, which I take on the same day, fluctuate very much in attendance. Cobden station has been well sustained; the congregations are large in proportion to the population. I have formed a very promising Band of Hope at this place, with upwards of 40 members; it has been taken up very heartily, and the children manifest a good degree of singing and reciting power. Being near Greymouth, and the bridge completed I shall be able to render much assistance to the young hopefuls. Maori Creek had for some time declined very considerably in attendance, but the last time I was there it regained its former credit; there was a good congregation. At Kumara and Stafford there have been very good congregations, and very enjoyable seasons have been experienced; but I am sorry to say that these, too, will have to be discontinued, because the Church of England and Presbyterians have each sent a man to occupy these two places, and there is not room for all. However, other fields are ripe to harvest, and if the Lord of the harvest send us into thorn, we shall gladly occupy them. This I can see: that, probably, just as a district is capable of doing much in the way of support, one or other of the denominations most strongly represented will plant a man there. Our denominational representation is small, but I take it that one of our great objects in the West Coast Mission is to bring the Gospel to those who would otherwise be destitute of it. This has been my aim, and my united monthly congregations have been averaging about 300; none of whom would have had the Gospel preached to them, except by the Church of England minister, who preaches once a month at most of my stations. Kumara and Stafford are exceptions to this; they have not had for many months either a Church of England or Presbyterian minister. Thus you will see that, at best, the people where my stations are only get two services a

month; on the other two or three Sundays there is nothing whatever to check the lawless dissipation which, alas! only too sadly characterises the Sabbath of most of the digging townships. From this will be gathered the value of the Mission work and the importance of prosecuting it with unflagging zeal. Filling the gap is good, for it checks the dominant influences of evil; but that is not sufficient, only the Spirit's Divine power can awaken and save, and produce the godly life, which, I am sorry to say, is extremely rare in my district. I therefore repeat my former request for the fervent and united prayers of the Lord's people, both in private and in the Church prayer-meetings, on behalf of myself and the Mission.

Beside the above, I have had some very excellent open-air meetings in Greymouth, with a large attendance and good interest. I expect to visit Reefton this month, a district some 50 miles off, but which has a fair population, composed of gold miners.

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#### **6 May 1886 (NZB June 1886, 81)**

In my last report I stated my intention of paying a visit to Reefton and district. This I have been enabled to do. I took the pulpit of the Presbyterian minister there for three consecutive Sabbaths, whilst at the same time I was enabled to keep up my own engagements by the help of a local schoolmaster, who very willingly as well as efficiently and acceptably preached at my stations. I had thereby the advantage of visiting the district of Reefton during the week. It was a kind of a holiday to me, whilst it also enabled me to extend my mission efforts to those who are beyond my immediate district, and will probably be of much service at a future date. I also preached and visited at Boatman's, which lies some 12 miles from Reefton. A most



kindly reception has been accorded me everywhere, and as far as I could learn, the visit was very much appreciated. This is, almost exclusively, a gold quartz-mining district. There is a little alluvial mining, but not much. The country is very mountainous, the population is small, but more compacted together than in most of my own district. The mines have much improved since my return; they were nearly at a stand-still then, but now, after a somewhat prolonged time of depression, they are yielding fair returns, and shares are rising. Oh! that spiritual matters would likewise revive.

'Tis ours to labour and to wait; 'tis His to save and bless. In due reason we shall reap if we faint not. I am more and more confirmed that this mission to the Coast has been a blessing to many who could not help themselves, and would otherwise be destitute of the means of grace. I could mention individual cases, which would amply justify all the trouble and money that have been expended on this mission. I believe many have been stirred up to labour more fervently than ever, by a healthy emulation due to my efforts, and so the work goes on, acting and reacting, until no earthly power can estimate the worth of even the feeble rushlight you have sent to these less favoured parts of our beautiful New Zealand. My work has been much retarded by wet weather. I have lost five clear Sundays during the last three months, and very few of the remaining Sundays have been without rain less or more. This has told considerably upon the congregations, and pecuniarily as well.

Totara Flat and Cobden have been my best stations. In connection with the former I have visited a number of the back gullies, including Granville, Duffer's Creek, and Half-ounce. Ahaura and Nelson Creek stations are keeping up, but not increasing as I could wish. Maori Creek is doing fairly, but all have suffered by the inclement weather. The Cobden station and Band of Hope (numbering 50 members) are doing very well, and most interesting meetings have been held there. I have

made several attempts to commence services in Greymouth, but on account of the weather and other causes I have not yet succeeded.

We have just been favoured with a visit from that distinguished social reformer, Mr. Mathew Burnett. I have been working with Mr. Burnett at his meetings, having given eight or ten addresses during his mission to the district. These have done much to open up my way, and I now intend to embrace the favourable opportunity presented, in the tidal wave of public feeling on this point that has happily set in, and to this end I intend to have Gospel Temperance meetings, wherever practicable, all along the line from Ross northwards. The fact that between 2,000 and 3,000 have signed the pledge within the bounds of my district, is the signal to me to go in and possess the land. The Gospel alone can save. The stone of intemperance being now removed, I hope to carry to them the 'Beautiful Words of Life.' May the Holy Spirit accompany the effort with the life-giving power!

I have just had a letter from Mr A. F. Carey, who is living in Ross (but late of Christchurch, and well-known to many readers of the BAPTIST). A quotation from his letter regarding my work in that town may not be without its quota of interest. He says, 'I have met R—, a Methodist, who is a staunch and genuine fellow, and an exemplary Christian. I believe your last visit to Ross is fresh in his and many other kind friends' memory. I shall be glad when you are next able to visit our township.' This I expect to be very soon, and I hope in my next to be able to report some good done. I am told that mining matters are looking up again at Ross. I expect to preach at Brunnerton on Sunday first. I have not been preaching there for a long time. The Presbyterians have had a student supplying the Church there for several months, but he has returned to college, and they are awaiting the arrival of another man. Kumara has now got its full complement of ministers. I do not think I shall

be able to do much for the smaller country places during the winter months, on account of the weather. It is difficult at any time to get a good congregation at these places, but specially so at present. In closing, let me again ask the favour of your united prayers on behalf of this Mission, which I have no doubt is a sapling of a giant oak. As the West Coast Railway bids fair to become an accomplished fact, and the effect on this coast, I believe, cannot even be guessed at by the most sanguine, we may congratulate ourselves that we are thus early in the field.

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[Undated] (NZB October 1886, 150-151)

I shall have to give but a cursory glance at my work since my last report, principally on account of the space at my disposal. My report, therefore, will not descend to details, but present a mere outline of my operations. A good deal of extra work beyond supplying my regular stations has been undertaken, not to their neglect, for they have been ably supplied in my absence by the kindly assistance of an earnest brother, who is not only an acceptable preacher, but a baptised believer, whose sympathies are with the Mission.

The attendance at all the preaching stations, though variable, is still improving, and the work is becoming consolidated. A few notes from my journal, supplemented by a few remarks in passing, will sufficiently indicate my operations. On June 17th I went to Hokitika, and in the evening took part in an evangelistic meeting in the Presbyterian Church. On the following day I went on to Ross, and was very hospitably lodged with brother A. F. Carey, well known to many of the readers of the BAPTIST. On the Saturday evening I preached on the street to a fair and attentive audience. Sunday was a regular 'Wet Coaster.' I preached morning and evening to

rather small congregations. On the Monday evening I gave a Gospel Temperance Lecture in the Totara Hall, with a fair attendance, although the weather was still very disagreeable. My arrangements on the Tuesday evening fell through on account of the weather. The following day I returned to Hokitika, and spoke at an evangelistic meeting in the Presbyterian Church in the evening. On the Thursday evening I preached to a good congregation in Revell-street (sic), and afterwards gave an evangelistic address in the Presbyterian Church. One woman in this meeting professed to find the Saviour, and several were anxious enquirers. The next night found me at Kanieri, where I gave a Gospel Temperance lecture. There was a good attendance, and 11 pledges were taken. At the Temperance free-and-easy of the Salvation Army in Hokitika on the Saturday night I gave a short address. On Sunday, June 27th, I preached to a large congregation in the Presbyterian Church. In the afternoon I addressed the Sunday-school at Woodstock at 2 o'clock, and preached to a fair congregation at 3 o'clock, and preached in the Wesleyan Church, Hokitika, in the evening. Monday evening found me again at Woodstock by special request; had a splendid meeting and took 8 pledges. I had intended to follow up work at Staffordtown and Kumara, but was unable to arrange it, owing to counter-attractions at that time. Open-air meetings have been held on the wharf, Greymouth, when I could conveniently arrange it, principally on Saturday nights, and sometimes very good congregations have gathered, and always attentive and orderly ones. From reports I have heard I gather that many have been interested, and good results are apparent. Mr. Hicks has aided me very much in this work.

On Friday, August 27th, I started up north for Westport by coach, and a rougher ride I should never wish to take. It occupied two days. The first part was monotonous and uninteresting -viz., from Greymouth to Reefton, and 20 miles

beyond it; but at the Junction the scenery began, the magnificence of which I think will amply excuse a few comments by the way. Having left the high, cold lands surrounding Reefton and district, we gradually sunk into the vale of the Inangahua river. The higher ranges were clad in snow, dazzling in the rays of the meridian sun; the deep rents and fissures on the mountain sides, with dark, contrasting shades, gave striking relief, then opened into well-timbered, undulating slopes, suddenly stopped by bolder ridges of bush running athwart with picturesque breaks. In mid distance and the foreground were cliffs, sand banks, river beaches, sparkling stream and calm still pool. Such is a faint description of views which ravish the eye and create adoring thoughts in the mind of the traveller, as down the banks of the Buller river the jolting coach thunders along. Every few yards yields new enchantments. Having a camera with me, I was able to carry home with me about a dozen of the principal views, which I shall value. Arriving in Westport on the Saturday night about six o'clock, I soon found myself amongst warm Christian friends. I preached twice on three consecutive Sundays in the Presbyterian Church to increasing congregations. I also took part in Sunday-school work, and gave addresses in both the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. I also visited Denniston and Waimangaroa districts and held meetings at each of those places. At the former there was a very fair attendance, but at the latter only a few attended, the weather being very wet. I was also arranging for meetings at Charleston, some eighteen miles from Westport, but these miscarried, through some local circumstances. Denniston stands 2,000 feet above the level of the sea, with a population of some 400 or 500 people. This altitude is attained by a long circuitous winding track up the bushy sides of the hill, requiring several hours to reach the summit. On entering the town (or rather profusion of shanties), the first thing that strikes the visitor is the absence of design,

and secondly the absence of sanitary laws; the chief difficulty will be to decide which is the street and which is the gutter. How the people manage to live in such a place I wot not. Whether at such an altitude the people live above such mundane considerations as sanitary laws, and can violate the laws of health with impunity, or whether they consider themselves under some irreversible fate, excluding them from such advantages as cleanliness, I cannot tell; all blame is deftly shifted on to other shoulders. It is here that the famous Westport coal mine is situated, and sends down its blackened treasure to warm many a home. I found some very excellent people, principally Scotch, and a very promising field for evangelistic work. Waimangaroa lies at the bottom of the hill, but is a cleanly-looking place. It is here that the workmen reside connected with the Koranui mine, although the mine itself is even higher up the hill than the Westport mine. I met with some very warm Christians. Mr. Cato, late of the Nelson Baptist Church, is the Anglican clergyman located here. I am of opinion that between these two places an evangelical preacher would find ample support, and several of the leaders of Christian work in the district told me that they would gladly help any man coming in the name of the Lord, and labouring for His glory. They wished me to come again soon, but that is not very probable, unless the Union see their way to continue the West Coast Mission.

Before closing, let me say that my work on the Coast very much appreciated. I have visited almost the whole of the Coast. I am convinced that my selection of Greymouth as a centre to work from is the best. The need of the Mission is apparent in every direction. My own impression is, that we shall only do justice to the Coast when we have three men permanently labouring from as many centres. Particularly is the Mission required at this juncture of the history of the West Coast, when a large influx of people is almost certain, both on account of the

increased coal trade and the formation of the West Coast Railway. To give up my work at this stage I would regard as a calamity, and the policy of it, to use a local illustration, like the Grey-Hokitika Railway. This railway was commenced many years ago, and bridges, &c., were constructed for several miles, and then it remained between hope and despair until recently, when it was decided to complete it; but what is the result? just this: that the former expenditure was next to wasted, for the old wood-work is rotten, and will require to be replaced before it can be utilised. So with this Mission: it began under the decaying elements of a worked-out gold-field; it has planted its foot down firmly, and if we can only 'hold the fort' until our Master comes with reinforcements (which are sure to come as the result of revived trade and increase of population), victory is ours. But if not, then, except the passing good, which I am thankful to say has not been small, the Mission has not been allowed to remain sufficiently long in the ground to produce its ripened fruits and reproductive seed. There are many who bless God for this Mission, although from their impoverished position they cannot do more to help it. Yet from such I should feel it cruel to withdraw the Gospel; practically, the suspension of the Mission would mean that to many. Distance has been a great barrier to the work (but that also is the great cause of its urgency); yet that difficulty will gradually subside as time goes on, and railways connect the several places. The Presbyterians and Methodists are short of men (cannot get them). I feel there is, therefore, the greater need of continuing the work. Baptists are scarce along the coast (though there are many who hold our principles); still there is much material to work upon. The visitation of families out of reach of places of worship has been an important item of my work. No other than a missionary or a colporteur could reach them, they are principally located in the back gullies and other places inaccessible to ordinary means. I hope that the Committee will, therefore, see their way to

continue their Mission with unabated vigour; and now that the Mission is started, I am of opinion that unmarried men of fair calibre would be the best to work it. Will, therefore, the Baptists and other Christians of New Zealand come to the help of the Lord, and say, 'Here are the funds; go on, and God bless your Mission,' and thus relieve the Committee from all anxiety?

Drink, being the oldest and greatest enemy of the Coast, I have dealt most scathingly with the monster, yet I have got very few expressed enemies, and a large circle of warm friends, who will, no doubt, be good backing for future effort. Something like 300 pledges have been taken since I came to the Coast, and the changed circumstances of many of those who have taken them, are an ample reward for any effort put forth in this direction. Tracts have been distributed in profusion, and their silent message has reached many a christless home. A number have apparently become new creatures in Christ Jesus. Although the funds have always lagged behind, yet it has been inability and not unwillingness to subscribe that has kept the Mission so dependent upon its supporters living in other parts. There has been continued though slow improvement in money matters; yet I am persuaded that another year would make a tangible difference, if not at its close be independent of outside support. I have preached or given Gospel addresses on 123 occasions during the year, besides temperance addresses and lectures on various subjects. The collections have amounted to between £50 and £60, and the expenses to over £30, the exact amounts will appear in my balance-sheet. To the poor the Gospel is preached through our Mission, and, principally on this ground, I advocate its claims, and venture to hope that yet the Baptist cause will get and hold its own in this hopeful district.

GEORGE JOHNSTON.

Greymouth.