

of gold at many parts on the west coast of the island had been ascertained. Meanwhile Europeans who from the seaward visited the coast had found indications of gold; and from the settled districts of Canterbury, also, various persons went on a prospecting tour to the west coast of the province. These latter also found gold; but, meeting with many difficulties, on their stock of provisions being exhausted they were compelled to return,* it would appear, without having effected much in the way of discovering gold. In the meantime the Provincial Government of Canterbury began to take an interest in the matter of opening up some parts of the country, and had cut a number of tracks along the more accessible routes of travel, establishing, at the same time, for the supply of the parties engaged in this work, a *dépôt* of provisions, &c., at the mouth of the Grey River;† but it does not appear that the works then in hand were undertaken for the purpose of furthering the discovery of gold. Some of the workmen engaged, however, availed themselves of the opportunity thus offered, and prospected for gold in various directions, and “some of them remained in and about the Little Hohonu and Greenstone Creeks, near the junction of the Teremakau, prospecting for gold, which could be found in small quantities in the banks of the creeks and low gullies, but no good or fair finds were reported. It does indeed seem strange that gold should have been found by many different parties, and in different parts of the country, without any of these finding any but a comparatively trifling amount of the precious metal; and, as in cases these finds were made in localities that afterwards turned out exceedingly rich in gold, it must be concluded that the difficulties were very great, and the means of prospecting very limited, or that the comparative failure in each case was due to a lack of knowledge of the proper methods of saving the gold. But,” says the work from which are taken the above extracts, “at about this time an experienced miner, named Albert Hunt, had been exploring the accessible hills for many months, going through as far as the Wairau on one occasion. He at length attached himself to Mr. Drake’s survey party on the West Coast, and, when not required on Government work, took every opportunity to explore the country and examine likely spots for gold. When no longer required on the survey, Hunt was so impressed with the appearance of the Hohonu that he returned with a party; and, when his mates had despairingly left him, owing to the Provincial Government *dépôt* at the Grey not being available for a constant supply of provisions to those remaining on the spot, Hunt contrived to stay behind, and in a few months got together about 20oz. of gold.” Subsequently, Hunt set to work in a regular way, with a Maori for a mate; and it was afterwards reported that, from his prospecting at this time, the average result was gold at the rate or value of £2 a day. On the 11th of July, 1864, Hunt was with his Maori mate working at Maori Point, Greenstone Creek, and on that date was seen by Messrs. Revell and Hammett to wash 4½oz. of coarse shotty gold, which, he stated, was the yield for the day for two men; and on the 19th of that month these gentlemen proceeded overland to Christchurch to report the discovery of gold at the Greenstone, bringing at the same time 16oz. of coarse gold with them. In the meantime others had been prospecting at the Grey, and French and Smart had obtained 4gr. to the dish in several places.‡ Thus and in this manner gold was discovered on that part of the west coast of the South Island with which this report more especially deals. A rush set in, and on the 12th September Mr. Revell reported that the majority of the diggers were making from £2 to £5 a day. In October, one hundred and fifty diggers had gone out from the Greenstone to prospect the ranges between the Teremakau and Hokitika, and it was reported that at that time seven hundred men were on the field; and that same month 500oz. of gold was exported to Nelson, evidently a part only of the earnings of the miners.

It matters not at this date what then were the sentiments of the bulk of the Canterbury people on its being known that a prosperous goldfield had been discovered on their own territory. The stockowners and pastoralists, and to some extent also the agriculturists, had shared in the benefits arising out of the gold discoveries made in Otago since 1862; but there had been a tendency to increased wages and an unsettled condition of the working population, and a reflux of the unsuccessful and impecunious element, always to be found on the most successful diggings, had ere this set in towards Canterbury, and her farmers and squatters cared little that it should be a burden upon them. At no time had the Provincial Government of Canterbury favoured or given much encouragement to prospecting for gold on the west coast of the province; and now that a goldfield had actually been discovered, and proved payable, if the *Lyttelton Times* of the date of the 30th July, 1864, is to be regarded as an exponent of the public sentiment, these found expression in the following words: “If a goldfield is, after all, to be forced upon Canterbury, without the consent and contrary to the expressed desire of the settlers, they must nevertheless submit to fate; and, should the natural feelings of discontent, swelling up in their prudent bosoms when Fortune’s golden favours are thrust into their hands, be somewhat hard to subdue, the consolation exists that the goldfield has turned up in the remotest corner of the province.” Nevertheless, the importance of the West Coast as a gold-producing country continued to increase day by day. Great numbers of experienced miners arrived from Otago, Victoria, and other parts; and to the discerning mind it was now very evident that, in spite of all drawbacks and discouragements, permanent settlement was about to be established. The rush from Otago and Canterbury is graphically described by Dr. von Haast, the Provincial Geologist of Canterbury, in these words: “In the autumn of 1864 several hundred gold-diggers went there (to the West Coast) from Otago as pioneers; they first worked in the Greenstone Creek, flowing into the Teremakau River, but after a few weeks they removed to the goldfields discovered in the meantime at the Waimea River, six miles south of the Teremakau. The letters of these people to their friends, in which they described the extremely rich finds, and the repeated remark that brilliant ‘prospects’ might be expected almost wherever a pick and shovel was put into the terrace or bed of a creek prospected, soon had the effect of making the numerous diggers who were working in the Otago goldfields leave them in crowds and set out for the West Coast. Besides the restlessness of a goldfield population, which is proverbial,

* “Handbook of New Zealand Mines,” p. 112. † *L.c.*, p. 113. ‡ *L.c.*, p. 117.