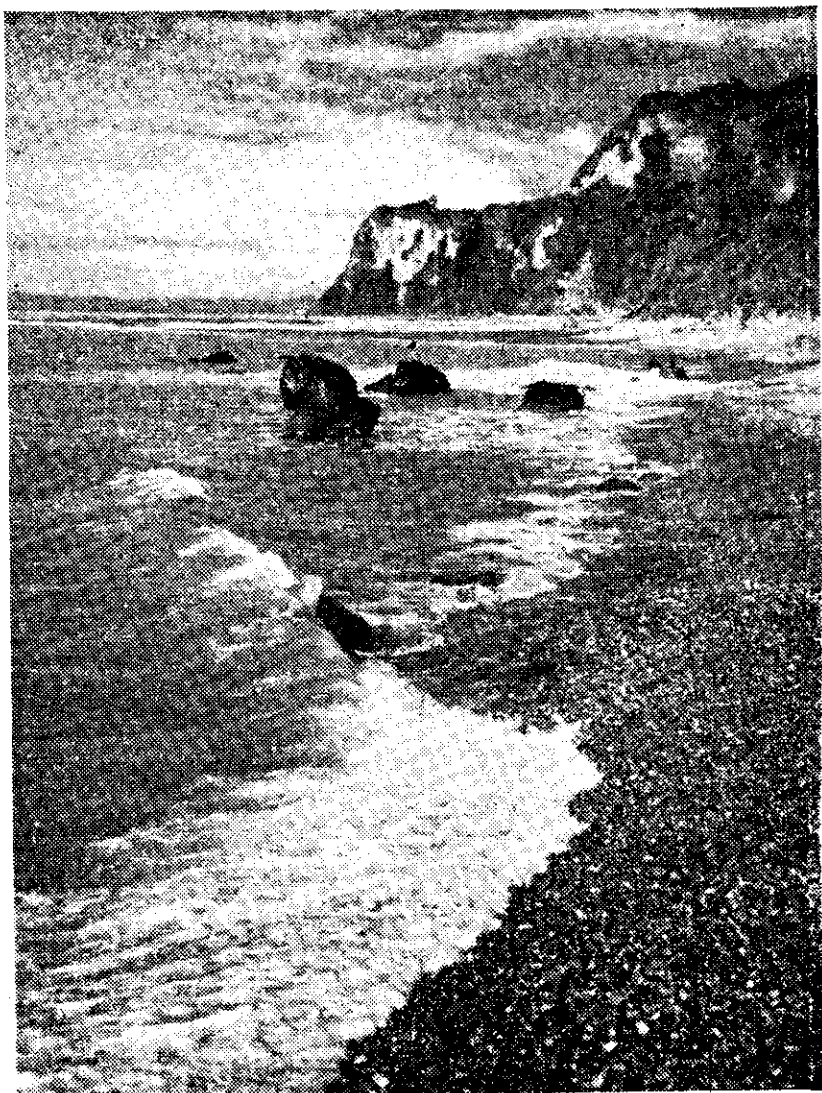




OKARITO BEACH, SOUTH WESTLAND
"Still, for the traveller, the Golden Coast"

gorges, a few hardy types still pan or pocket for gold; some still dreaming of a bonanza: a mother lode untouched, projecting into the sea, or in the mountains under the eternal ice. Even holiday-makers have been known to be infected with the fever of fossicking.

Once through the Buller Gorge we can turn North for Westport and continue up the coast to see the limestone caves at Karamea. Beyond Karamea the map is astonishingly blank — unroaded wild country, some of it still unexplored.

The main road south from Westport to Greymouth (the one-time Crescent City) passes through Punakaiki. The headland near this last named place is the scene of the "Pancake Rocks," weathered limestone formations which (especially in rough weather) are one of the strangest sights in this country.

From Greymouth to Hokitika there is a first-class road along the coast. The traveller passes through Arahura, which name, according to James Cowan, is identified with Ara'ura, the ancient name of Aitutaki in the Cook Islands. According to legend it was from these islands that Ngahue came: Ngahue whose discovery of greenstone is supposed to have given impetus to the Maori migrations.

From Hokitika to the Glaciers, the necessity to concentrate on the road increases proportionately with the beauty of the scenery. But this should not worry

the back-seat drivers—and after all—one can always stop.

Our suggestion for a stop is at Okarito, which is about four miles off the main road. It has been estimated that there were upwards of ten thousand diggers working here in the early days, and thirty-one hotels doing a thriving trade on their earnings. On Okarito Beach near by, an obelisk commemorates Tasman's first sighting of New Zealand, and on the shores of the Okarito Lagoon is the sanctuary of the white heron, the "Kotuku" of the Maoris, now almost extinct. Fortunately for the birds, the sanctuary is inaccessible to the casual visitor. Elsdon Best, in *The Forest Lore of the Maori* records that Maori women were not allowed to wear the more highly prized plumes of this bird—that they were "sedulously taught that, should they presume to, then assuredly all their hair would fall off and so leave them bald-headed before a jeering populace." No such scruples obtained over the egret, a cousin to our white heron, which overseas was virtually exterminated for its plumes.

From the top of Okarito Trig, the Alps still look as they did when Tasman first saw the "land uplifted high" in 1642. The plumed warrior, and the plumed dance-hall girl from Okarito are gone; so are the diggers and most of the gold; but the bush, the sea, the rivers of ice from the Alps remain. It is still, for the traveller, the Golden Coast.

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