

ment of schemes or compromises which Catholics would, in the opinion of the present writer, accept as working solutions of the religious difficulty in education. The treatment of these subjects would, however, unduly prolong the present lengthy article. With the editor's courteous permission, I will hold over for another issue the balance of this article, which closes the present series.

## THE CHURCH IN NEW ZEALAND

### MEMOIRS OF THE EARLY DAYS

(Contributed.)

GREYMOUTH (continued.)

Owing to the sad and tragic death of Father Colomb, Father Binsfeld found himself alone again, and occupying the same position as before Father Colomb's arrival, with the difference that, besides the responsibilities of the parish, he keenly realised the loss of his late confrère. Father Binsfeld remained at Greymouth until September of the following year, 1872. At Greymouth events marched on in a satisfactory manner, but the number of new diggings that were opened out on the goldfields country increased, with a corresponding increase in his labors. Among the new discoveries was Murray's Creek, on the Inangahua, the present Reefton. This was at that time the Ultima Thule of gold-seekers, situated about 70 miles from Greymouth, most difficult of access, and reached by circuitous tracks. The miners called it jocularly the 'penal settlement,' and the hardships encountered in getting to it and experienced there justified the appellation. There was again the difficulty of getting provisions to such a place; these had to be carried on the shoulders of carriers over very rough country from the Upper Grey—a distance of twenty odd miles. The cost of carriage alone to Murray's Creek amounted at the beginning to £28 per ton. Father Binsfeld came on the scene when the quartz reefs were being opened up. The means of communication consisted of a saddle track through the little Grey River over the Razorback range to the junction of the Inangahua and Buller rivers, and from thence up the Inangahua river bed to Murray's Creek or Reefton. It was a venturesome journey, so much so that newspaper writers were in the habit of gathering information about it from travelers who returned to Greymouth. The Little Grey River Valley is up to the mountain range an open country and so far an advantage to the wayfarer of those days, but there is (or then was) a large swamp several miles long in the upper part; this had to be passed through. Flax sticks stuck in as finger posts indicated the erratic course to be steered. When the wind blew one or more of these sticks down, the rider and the poor horse had their trouble to keep on high ground and get on the right track again. Happily there was shingle at the bottom, but still nothing but the thirst for gold could find out such a passage. It was not an unusual thing to pass a dead packhorse that had perished in the attempt to extricate itself. Higher up in the forest the wet surface of the ground was in parts covered with a network of spongy roots that would catch the horse's hoofs trap-like, and when that happened, were it not for the seriousness of the case, the position of the rider would have caused hilarity among expert horsemen. A number of culverts hastily constructed over deep, narrow creeks had to be crossed at considerable risk. On one occasion the narrator counted no fewer than six dead horses that had perished on this part of the journey from exhaustion or accident. From the Buller to Reefton the river bed of the Inangahua formed a safe passage in good weather.

#### The Beginning of Reefton.

No wonder the miners called the Inangahua goldfields the 'penal settlement'; only those among them that were hard-up or most daring penetrated into that 'confusion of nature'—dense forest, cragged mountains, and swift torrents. In alluvial diggings the miner gets a quick return for his labor, for when gold was found he washed and sold it. Not so here, however, as the gold was embedded in quartz, which required expensive machinery to crush. Two years elapsed before such a method of gold-saving could be secured. Meanwhile they had to live on credit, and truly men of that stamp deserved credit. The miners here, as in other places, were capital fellows, the majority of whom were Catholics. They felt the want of a priest, and one poor man came all the way to Greymouth to make known to Father Binsfeld their state of spiritual destitution, and his arrival among them was heartily welcomed. It was the first time a minister of religion had come to the Inangahua, and the good Irishmen were proud of the fact that it was their priest. They had the benefit of a three days' mission and attended well. The facilities

for the celebration of Mass were primitive, but the miners erected a new altar out of beautiful slabs cut from the trunk of a virgin forest tree. The short mission was greatly appreciated by this small community. They had but one regret, their want of money to compensate the priest in providing his travelling expenses, which were no trifle, as a horse-feed, for instance, cost six shillings, the hire of the horse alone being eighteen shillings a day. Priest and people parted with joyful hearts, but the joy of the former was of short duration, as he had to make a very perilous journey. It had been raining, and reaching the Inangahua river it was found to be rapidly rising. There was a journey of eight miles along the river-bed before him, still it was thought by some that it would be safe to start. This river, down to its junction with the Buller, runs through a narrow gorge, with heavily bush-clad banks down to the water on either side. In good weather when the stream is low the stony bed is mostly dry and the river winding from one side to the other may be crossed a number of times with ease. Whilst in flood the case is different, the stream then becomes a furious torrent with a bed of rolling boulders. Father Binsfeld had not proceeded far when he perceived that danger existed both in front and rear. The flood was gaining on him, and there was no escape except pressing onwards with the current, over moving boulders, and at the best each crossing meant facing death anew. This crossing and re-crossing lasted four hours, when, finally reaching accessible high ground, he was safe. The one thought absorbing his mind during the struggle was of eternity, and when the struggle was at an end he could scarcely realise being still among the living. Here he intended to pass the night, but, meeting three horsemen who were surveyors, and in a similar plight to himself, and all being blocked by the river from further progress, they decided to make for a so-called accommodation house not far distant. By cutting their way through supplejacks and along deep narrow creeks, they succeeded in reaching the house, and were amused at the accommodation offered. It was a two-roomed hut occupied by a family. Everything was of the most primitive description, the food being salt junk and paste warmed in the pan for bread. A private corner was provided for Father Binsfeld, to his great satisfaction, during the night. The sun was high up in the heavens when he awoke, and found that his companions had already started. He finally reached home in good spirits, and thankful for his escape from danger. Failing health and the nature of the work wore him down, and the necessity for a change arising, Bishop Viard appointed Father Binsfeld assistant to Father Garin at Nelson, Father Billiard replacing him at Greymouth.

(To be continued.)

## THE ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

(By a Wellington Brother.)

The St. Vincent de Paul Society, which was established about two years ago in the Archdiocese of Wellington, has grown and flourished in a manner quite beyond the expectation of the founders. Instead of one conference there are now four in the city, and there is a prospect of still further extension. The present time is most opportune for bringing before your readers the objects and advantages of this society, with the hope that it may be extended to every parish in the Dominion.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a society of men, who band themselves together to perform works of mercy, particularly to visit and assist the poor, to perfect themselves in a Christian life, and to edify one another by good example. The objects of the society are very often misunderstood. Many people consider our conferences exist for the sole purpose of doling out relief, but this is not the case. The main object of the St. Vincent de Paul Society is the personal sanctification of the members by the practice of charity towards their neighbor for the love of God. If there are no poor to visit, other work can engage the attention of the members. In every district, no matter how prosperous, there are sick to be comforted, bad and indifferent Catholics to be brought back to their duties, neglected children to be cared for, Sunday schools to be maintained, and despondent hearts to be cheered. In the larger centres the hospitals can be visited; also the homes for the aged and needy, the gaols and orphanages. No good work is foreign to the Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul, and when, notwithstanding their efforts, they accomplish little in the way of relieving distress, they have, at least, the consolation of knowing that they have advanced their own spiritual interests.

There is to-day, as there was in the time of Ozanam, our revered founder, a spirit of indifference towards re-