



*The Settlement at Bruce Bay.*

From Paringa south the road lapses back into a pack-track and for passengers and smaller items of freight the usual access is by air. From the air the difficult nature of the country is obvious. The Alps are only a few miles inland, and the tumbled hills that fall from the mountains are covered with virgin forests and split by creeks and rivers which are often unfordable in the springtime melt. For forty miles south from the end of the road there is only this wild mass of mountain and bush running right down to the rocky coast.

There is timber here in quantity, but on the extent of the worth-while forests the South-Westlanders and the State Forest Service differ considerably. Mica deposits have been found here and a track is being cut in through the bush. There are traces of other minerals, too, including gold and coal, but competent and extensive geological survey is needed to prove the location and extent of deposits. In such difficult country this would be long and arduous work.

Suddenly the hills fall away into a valley which stretches back to the Alps. This valley carries the chief river of South Westland—the Haast. Beside the wide river-bed the aeroplane drops down on to a large landing-field, well drained and protected from river erosion. Beside the aerodrome is the home of one of the pioneers of the Haast, Mr. Cron. He has raised cattle here for many years and driven them out over a hundred miles of track and road to market.

Through the gap in the mountains at the head of the valley will come the long-awaited link with Otago, the Haast Pass Road. The Pass (1,840 ft.), is the lowest

route through the Alps and the road is already over the top, though there remains about forty miles of difficult country down which the road must come to the aerodrome on the coast.

The country from the Haast south is less broken but still heavily wooded. There are patches of cleared land and swamp to break the fireside-rug effect of the variegated greens of the forest. Wider and more placid rivers frequently divide the enveloping carpet of bush. And there are rare houses dotted over the patches of cleared land.

On one of these clearings the plane lands, skimming in over the tall forest to touch down on good, firm turf and taxi round to the front of the homestead. It sounds somewhat of a contradiction in terms to talk of a pioneer with an aerodrome at his front door. This is a recent luxury. Until a few years ago the only means of getting in and out of Okuru was by horse or by boat. This isolation and the achievement of having made a living and reared a family in so remote a spot entitle Mr. and Mrs. W. D. Nolan and their fellow-settlers to a term usually reserved for those who opened up New Zealand about the middle of last century.

As the roads spread throughout the country, if not the earliest pioneers at least their families knew the comfort and safety of relatively rapid communications. But the settlers of South Westland still have no road link with the outside world, and but for the comparatively recent air service they would still be compelled to ride the long, uncomfortable, and often dangerous miles to the nearest motor road. Either that