

“Annual Examination.”—This was held at the end of November last, and showed in the most conclusive manner the steady progress made by the students during the past year. The examinations were conducted under strict supervision, and in accordance with the regulations of the Royal School of Mines and Science and Art Department, London. The questions set in the different subjects were all of a thoroughly practical character, being intended to bring out whatever knowledge the candidates actually possessed. The number of candidates who presented themselves for examination was forty-seven, and of these twenty-nine secured first-class, thirteen second-class, and four third-class certificates. Mr. R. M. Aitken was placed as first prizeman in practical assaying, geology, and mineralogy, and became the winner of the silver medal offered by the Geological Society of Australasia, with the high aggregate in geology and mineralogy of 97·5 per cent. of the total number of marks. He has recently received the appointment of lecturer to the Reefton School of Mines, which is gratifying to our school, and at the same time a recognition of his industry and ability. Mr. William Harris headed the mining and surveying classes, and secured the only first-class certificate granted under this head. He presented himself for examination in January for a certificate of competency as a mine-manager under ‘The Mining Act, 1886,’ and was successful in gaining his certificate. Among the students who have received appointments from the school is Mr. E. Banks, who has recently been appointed assayer to the large reducing-works at Waihi.

“Coromandel.”—In December I visited this place, and held classes in practical assaying, mining, and surveying. Lectures were delivered in mining and assaying, and in surveying instruction was given in the field in the use of the theodolite and dial, and in the laboratory in the use of logarithms, calculation of co-ordinates of traverses, and plotting surveys to scale. The average attendance in these classes was about twelve. Most of the students evinced the deepest interest in their studies, and the great progress which they made was an ample reward for their diligence. At the end of the year twelve candidates presented themselves for examination, of whom four secured second-class and three third-class certificates. Mr. J. D. Colebrook, who attended the mining and surveying classes, succeeded in gaining a certificate of competency as a mine-manager at the examination held in January.”

It will be seen from the foregoing report that a mechanical-drawing class has been again formed, under Mr. J. A. Adams, and a class for mathematics, which was discontinued for some time after Mr. A. Montgomery’s resignation, has again commenced, under Mr. R. D. Duxfield, M.A. Previous to the end of August last this school was conducted by Mr. A. Montgomery, M.A., and the able and efficient manner in which he discharged his duties and organized this institution is highly commendable. He left at his own request, having accepted the appointment of Geological Surveyor to the Government of Tasmania, and Mr. James Park, F.G.S., formerly of the Geological Department, was transferred to the Mines Department as his successor. The success attending the Thames school is due in a great measure to the regularity with which the classes are held. With the exception of one month during which Mr. Park was at Coromandel, giving instruction at the School of Mines there, the classes at the Thames have been regularly held during last year; and it is only in schools where the classes are regularly held that a good attendance, and also students well grounded in the theoretical principles of mining in all its branches, can be looked for. A few weeks’ instruction now and again by travelling instructors has no real value beyond directing the attention of the miners and others to the importance of becoming acquainted with the different ores met with and of ascertaining the percentage of metals the ores contain. They have done good in this respect; but it would be ultimately of more value to the colony if the instructors’ services were confined entirely to the two schools in the principal quartz-reefing districts—namely, Thames and Reefton. The School of Mines in connection with the University of Otago provides for full instruction on all subjects in connection with mining for those who reside in the southern portion of the colony.

In reference to the Reefton School of Mines a grant of £200 was given last year for additions and improvements, and also for the purchase of chemicals and testing apparatus; but Mr. Fenton, the lecturer and instructor, complains of the apathy shown, inasmuch as he states the students do not come as regularly as he would wish. This is, no doubt, in a measure accounted for, as during the months of June, August, September, and February he was away from Reefton holding classes elsewhere, and the interest that students take in the subjects taught dies away if instruction is not regularly imparted. Both Reefton and Thames are large quartz-reefing centres, and students have an opportunity at each of these places to visit the mines and see the practical working of them, as well as all the machinery and appliances connected with mining. This shows them the practical effect of the theoretical teaching they receive, and leaves a far greater impression on their minds as to the value of the instruction imparted at the school.

The following is an extract of Mr. Fenton’s report on the School of Mines, Reefton, for the year ending 31st March, 1890:—

“I have the honour to submit a report of the work carried on in the schools of mines on the West Coast under my charge for the last year.

“The grant of £200 for extension of Reefton school and purchase of chemicals and testing apparatus (balance given by the Hon. Mr. Richardson) was applied in following manner: £150 to erection of much-needed furnace- and melting-room and chimney to class-room, and the remaining £50, with £20 extra, was spent in importing from England a balance and chemical appliances requisite for instruction of students. These things we expect to arrive this week. They were a long-standing want, as up to the present, if I wanted to do even an assay, it was impossible for me to do it only for the kindness of Messrs. Pickett and Lewis, of the New Zealand and National Banks, who allowed me the use of their balances. . . . It would be most desirable also if we could procure a small roasting-furnace and grinding-pan for test purposes, as in this district nearly all the pyrites are worth from 30z. gold per ton upwards; and I am sure if we had only one trial to roast them, and afterwards amalgamate, which treatment, I think, would be successful and save perhaps