

English by Mr. Fenton. These are, as at the Hokitika School of Mines' museum, supplemented by a continually-growing and most interesting collection of local specimens of quartz and country rock and metallic ores, coal, limestone, and fossils, illustrating the geological and mineralogical character of the district.

On my arrival at Reefton by the afternoon coach I proceeded straight to the School of Mines, and there I found Mr. Fenton about 5 o'clock, surrounded by about a dozen of the upper-form schoolboys. Although, knowing Mr. Fenton's genial ways with old and young, I expected to find his pupils enjoying their studies, yet I was not prepared for what I found. There they were, happier than other boys at play, some grinding the gold-bearing quartz in their iron mortars, sifting and weighing out the powder, and mixing it with the proper fluxes; others roasting the mundie to drive off the sulphur; others, again, charging the crucibles, attending the melting-furnace, and pouring out the molten metal into the ingot-moulds; while others still were cupelling the buttons of gold-bearing lead, weighing the resultant bullion, and calculating the number of ounces to the ton. I saw these boys give in the results they were obtaining, and I compared them with the results obtained by Mr. Fenton himself from the same stone, and, as I anticipated from the faithful way in which I saw these boys doing their work, found that their results and Mr. Fenton's perfectly agreed. I do not know how often this boys' class meets; but, as Mr. Fenton had then been in Reefton only about four weeks, the progress these pupils had made in the practical work of assaying and blowpipe, as well as wet testing, would be marvellous to the uninitiated. And this aptitude of the older schoolboys to take kindly to this practical kind of study, and to make very substantial progress in it, is not peculiar to the Reefton youth. I saw the same thing under Goodlet's tuition at Ross and at Bannockburn, and I believe it will be the universal experience of the goldfields teaching staff wherever boys' classes are instituted in connection with these schools of mines.

The bearing of such results as these on the future development of the mineral wealth of the colony need not be pointed out. This schoolboys' class was organized by Mr. Fenton, with the most hearty co-operation of the teachers of the public school, in order to have the men by themselves at a later hour; but such was the eagerness of the boys for laboratory-work that he found it impossible to exclude them from the adult class.

Mr. Fenton and his pupils, old and young, have assayed hundreds of samples of quartz and other gold-bearing minerals; indeed, they have been assaying everything brought to them since Mr. Fenton's arrival in Reefton. The result of this is that prospectors go out to the ranges by the dozen now where one went out before, knowing that their finds will be assayed for them on their return.

There is no doubt that a very great stimulus is thus being given to intelligent prospecting. Indeed, prospecting, as carried on under the old conditions, when the prospector had no reliable acquaintance with any other metal than gold, and when there were no means available of testing any quartz, mundie, or other mineral he might find, without great delay, much uncertainty, and considerable expense, was a very unsatisfactory occupation, and usually ended in disappointment. Now, under the present conditions the prospector can go out with his blowpipe and reagents, not weighing more than a few ounces, in his pocket. He can test the minerals where he finds them, and, by sampling the quartz of any reef by a process already explained, he can take a few ounces of it, representing fairly as many tons, to be assayed on his return at the nearest school of mines.

The results of these facilities for assaying stone are already very appreciable at Reefton. The miners there are the last men on the face of the earth to put their hands deeply into their pockets to support a movement concerning itself with their pursuits, unless they have good reason to believe that it will pay. These are the men that have created the Reefton School of Mines, and have built and furnished a comfortable home for it in their midst.

I was not an hour in Reefton when I was asked by many leading men how long Mr. Fenton was to be left with them in charge of the school; and, when they were informed that there was no provision made for his continued stay in the district, instant steps were taken to represent to you the urgent need there was in Reefton for the permanent appointment of a gentleman like Mr. Fenton, in the interests not only of the School of Mines which they had created, and the cause of technical mining education in connection with it, but, more strongly still, in the interests of mining generally, and, very particularly, with reference to the splendid opportunity such an appointment would give for the thorough prospecting of the district. The universal feeling in Reefton during my visit was, that if Mr. Fenton were removed there would be a want felt which, previous to his arrival four or five weeks previously, they were unconscious of. He, indeed, by the important character of his work, as well as by his courtesy, and genial and gentlemanly character, made himself and the school an institution which the people of Reefton cannot now dispense with. Such institutions, at the Thames and at Reefton, are now, and will be increasingly in the future, boons of incalculable value to the miners and mining industry of the colony.

On the 29th March I visited Boatman's, and lectured in the evening in Archer's Hall to about eighty miners.

On the 30th I proceeded with Messrs. Fenton and Goodlet to Westport, where I delivered two lectures to large audiences of one hundred and fifty or two hundred.

I visited Denniston on the 4th April with Mr. Fenton, and lectured twice to the class which he had organized there in conjunction with Mr. Brown, the manager of the Westport Coal Company's mine.

I was very agreeably surprised to find, at Denniston, a chemistry- and assaying-class so numerous and so firmly resolved to have a school of mines all to themselves. They had got funds to the amount of about £50 altogether, £15 of which they had remitted to me for chemicals and apparatus. They had also provided a small iron store-room for the safe custody of their chemical plant when not in use, and they had in hand, as I understood, £25, and resolved to subscribe £25, making £50, with which, together with the Government subsidy, they were going to build a class-room and museum for their school.