

at these institutions is deserving of the highest commendation; it is beginning to bear fruit, by causing far more attention to be given to the working of auriferous, argentiferous, and other metalliferous lodes, and to their treatment, than was given in former years.

The Thames School has been attended with the greatest success, on account of its being situated in the heart of the gold-workings, and in the centre of a large mining population, where the workmen and others can attend the night-classes and not interfere with their daily avocations. Last year the average attendance, including Saturday classes for boys attending the public schools, was 111, while for the year previous this was ninety-three. The average attendance exclusive of the Saturday classes was fifty-eight, as against forty-five for the year previous. The students attending this school are not confined to those residing in the district. There are several young men, and also men well advanced in years, who come from different parts of the colony to attend a course of instruction, and in many cases miners come to this district for the purpose of being able to attend the school and take the chance of finding employment in the meantime in the mines.

The Reefton School was better attended last year than it was for the two previous years, and more interest seems to be taken generally in technical education than formerly; but there will never be the number of students at this school that there are at the Thames. Although Reefton is a large mining centre the mines are greatly scattered over a large extent of country, none of them being within less than a couple of miles of the township where the school is situate, so that the workmen employed in the mines have not the same opportunity of attending the night-classes as those residing in the Thames District, where most of the miners are within a radius of two miles.

During last year arrangements were made with the Chancellor of the Dunedin University to hold night-classes at the School of Mines attached to that institution, and also to get assays of any ores or minerals forwarded there on the same terms as those adopted at the Thames and Reefton Schools in regard to fees and charges. This will give any one in the Otago Mining District an opportunity of sending ores to be assayed at a minimum charge. I also arranged with Mr. W. Goodlet, assistant to Professor Black at the Otago University, to hold courses of instruction in the minor schools on the West Coast for three months last summer, and his services were highly appreciated.

The expenditure on this class of technical teaching last year, exclusive of contributions raised locally and fees from students, was £1,371; and I venture, Sir, to hope that honourable members will consider the colony is receiving full value for such expenditure, and that it is greatly benefited by the system adopted, in affording a means of a technical training to those who wish to be engaged in the mining industry.

MINING LEGISLATION.

It has been deemed necessary to bring in a Bill to amend the Mining Act of last session. Among some of the principal reasons for requiring amendment in the existing law, I may mention a recent decision given by Mr. Warden Rawson at Invercargill, in a case affecting water-rights. The Warden held that no person had any right to pollute such water, or discharge any tailings or *débris* into any stream, unless it had been proclaimed a channel for deposit of tailings. If this decision were carried out literally it would practically put a stop to mining, as the holders of water-rights could prevent any one from running tailings or *débris* into a creek, or even in any way to pollute the water between its source and the place from which the holder of such water-right lifted the water into his water-race. This would have the effect of giving the holder of the first water-right from any stream a key to the whole of the auriferous ground in the locality, and such holder could completely lock up the ground until he was ready to work it. It is proposed to take power in the amending Bill to remedy this defect.

It has been found from experience that the yearly title held under a business-license for sites within gold-field townships does not give a sufficiently secure tenure to warrant any large improvements. It is therefore proposed to take power to enable the Warden to grant a license for a period not exceeding twenty years, with the right of renewal if there be no objection.

There is also a provision in the amending Bill to admit of a Judge of a Native Land Court declaring that any land that has passed through the Court shall be open for mining if the majority of the Native owners do not object. Also, that the agreements already made