

The number of students who have to engage in practical work in mines during the vacation is forty-five, comprising nineteen second and third years' students, and the twenty-six new ones who entered this year. Owing to this large increase, as compared with former years, combined with the great depression in mining in the Hauraki Goldfields, where a considerable number found remunerative and instructive employment last year, it will be rather difficult for some to quickly secure working places in this colony. Several have, to my knowledge, already departed for previously fixed places in mines in the Coromandel and Waihi districts, a number of others have found work in the Westport, Kaitangata, and Shag Point Coal-mines, and two or three have promises of early employment in the quartz-mines of Preservation Inlet; but there are still a good number without any definite prospects, and I am afraid that, in order to secure work here, they will have to be satisfied with lower daily wages than those generally earned by students in former years. They would, in my opinion—as I have told several—have better chances of obtaining remunerative work, and would gain more varied and extended mining experience, in the Australian Colonies, especially Tasmania, where at the present time a large number of copper, lead, and other ore mines are in the stage of active development, and miners not over-plentiful. A good example was set in this respect a few years ago by several students, who tried their luck in that colony, and easily found work in tin and other mines.

Grateful acknowledgments are due to the Union Steamship Company for granting this year, as they did also last year, a liberal reduction in the price of return steamer-fares to students travelling for working purposes.

Regarding the number of students likely to attend the school next year a reliable forecast is scarcely possible, considering that, as our experience shows, but little reliance can be placed upon applications for entry long in advance of the session. Last session, for instance, there were forty applicants on the list, but only twenty-six of these actually attended. As up to the present nine new intending students have sent in applications for admission to the registrar, while on the other hand nine students who have finished their studies are leaving the school, and eleven old students (requiring to attend only one more session) and the twenty-six who have gone through the first year's course may with tolerable certainty be expected to return, the prospective attendance number for next year's session would turn out the same as for the past session—i.e., forty-six, not counting upon any additional applications for entry or the possible staying away of any of those who have already applied. Without any increase in the attendance, however, not only will the resources of the school regarding space, apparatus, collections, &c., during the next session be taxed to the utmost in the assaying, surveying, mineralogy, and petrography classes, but some additions, as well as assistance, will be necessary. Regarding the assaying classes, the two new furnaces erected during the midwinter vacation and the converting of one of the little rooms off the furnace-room into a small laboratory have enabled the lecturer (Mr. Stephens) to get through the session without the two assaying classes (first and second course), which have to go on concurrently, seriously interfering with each other. For next year's session, however, the number of students entitled to take these classes will be so much larger that more new furnaces, together with certain alterations in the arrangements of the working-benches, as sketched out by Mr. Stephens and the registrar, are indispensable. Mr. Stephens will also require an assistant demonstrator for properly carrying on the two classes, which together may count from twenty to twenty-five students.

Another serious deficiency Mr. Stephens has for some time been labouring under, in both the assaying and metallurgy classes, is the lack of a variety of larger samples of raw ores of the principal metals, as silver, copper, lead, zinc, &c., as well as of such metallurgical products as matte, speiss, slags, &c. Mr. Wilkinson, from one of his journeys through the Australian Colonies some years ago, brought back with him a considerable supply of these necessities, and subsequently—during Mr. Fitzgerald's time—Mr. James Park, then director of the Thames School of Mines, kindly presented us for the assay laboratory with a number of samples of refractory auriferous ores from the Hauraki Goldfields; but owing to the larger number of students since, all this stock is now nearly exhausted, and the assaying classes cannot efficiently be carried on during next session without a further supply. As Mr. Stephens, on his present journey through Victoria, South Australia, and perhaps Tasmania, will have excellent opportunities for selecting and bespeaking the required samples, he intends availing himself of them, trusting that the Council will authorise the purchase of the samples on his return. The expense to be incurred in this way would certainly be less, and the selection far more satisfactory, than if the supply were obtained from Europe or Australia on a written order.

With regard to the surveying classes, the lecturer (Mr. Begg) informed me that he thought he might be able to accommodate a theoretical class (first course) of not over fourteen to sixteen students in his present lecture-room. For a larger number the room would, however, be too small—so far as drawing and plotting surveys was concerned—and, as there was no other lecture-room suitable, the only way out of the difficulty would be the temporary use of the library. As to the practical class (second course), Mr. Begg considered that if its attendance exceeded seven or eight students, the provision of another levelling instrument and theodolite would be almost necessary for efficient instruction in outdoor work. In my own classes of mineralogy and petrography, which will both have a larger attendance than last session, I could not possibly carry on without such assistance from a demonstrator as the Council sanctioned for the past session. For the class in mineralogy a long-felt want is the provision of a good systematic collection of specimens of the principal metallic and earthy minerals, permitting easy access and close examination at any time between lectures, which is not well possible with the large collection in the museum. In the petrography class the students were during the past session much troubled with the rock-section grinding-machine—now nineteen years in use—frequently becoming unworkable on account of worn-out bearings, and proving for the use of all quite insufficient. The provision of a new machine and a thorough repairing of the old one—which is practicable and could be done at moderate expense—are therefore necessary requirements.