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THE SCHOOL OF MINES AND INDUSTRIES.

"I have never been able to get hold of the object for which the school was founded." This was the answer given by the late Director of the School of Mines and Industries in reply to the question before the Royal Commission on Mining as to whether the great object for which the school was founded had not been lost sight of. The more one examines into the past history and the present condition of this institution the more does one sympathize with this difficulty in comprehending its exact *raison d'être*. The school has certainly failed to make a favourable impression upon those for whose especial benefit it was supposed to have been founded. In fact, the leaders of the industrial trades may be said to regard the whole institution with something akin to distrust and suspicion. It was stated in evidence before the Commission that the Trades and Labour Council had objected to the boys at the school being instructed in carpentry, and to the ladies' class in the same subject having work done which they could take away with them to the detriment of the trade. The school was found to be aiming at increasing the number of carpenters at the same time that it introduced a fresh element of competition against those who were already in existence. On account of the objections that were raised the authorities of the school—in the words of the late Director—were "careful not to teach people too much, because, candidly speaking, they were afraid of the Trades and Labour Council." As the same spirit runs through almost the whole of the work of the school it is not surprising that on hearing the evidence one member of the Commission held up the prospectus of the institution, and asked whether the book was not "simply a delusion and a snare."

So much for the industrial branch of the curriculum. The keynote to the policy pursued is expressed in the words "We are careful not to teach them too much." As regards the mining industry also, it may fairly be said that the more diligent the search made in order to discover the school's real field of usefulness the more decidedly does its location retire into the regions of the imagination. Mr. G. C. McMurtry, the instructor in metallurgy and assaying, who seems to be the only official of the school possessing any certificates in the subjects connected with mining, candidly admitted before the Commission that "the School of Mines at present is not of much advantage to the public." For the first year of its existence it was taking fees from students for teaching them metallurgy and assaying, when there were no means provided in the school for teaching the subjects or carrying on the necessary operations. Then at length when an assay furnace was in progress of erection, before the engagement of Mr. McMurtry, it was decided that because Mr. Cloud asked £25 as a fee for supervising its construction the services of an expert would be dispensed with, and the furnace constructed from an illustration of a book in the library. The drawing was not intelligently followed, and the consequence was that when Mr. McMurtry arrived and tried an assay by cupellation it took him nine hours to get up as much heat as should have been obtained in one hour. As for the mining

classes, it was admitted that there was practically no attendance at those held in the day time, although the evening classes were more successful. Mr. Roth on taking charge of the school was very much surprised to find that the institution partook so little of the character of a school of Mines. He said, "I can hardly express my intense astonishment in finding on my arrival here what I had expected to be a School of Mines." So far as mining is concerned the best part of the school's work might have been carried out by any expert engaged by the authorities for two or three hours per week in the evenings. The bulk of the expense incidental to the institution arises from the necessity for employing the whole time of a salaried staff. Yet the practical result of the work done in the day time last year is summed up in the fact that one student passed his examinations in the mining subjects. The rest were not allowed to go on with the second course, and as it was not worth while to establish a day course for the sake of one student the class was discontinued. The Government grant for the year, it may be mentioned, was £4,000.

From the report of the work of the year 1890 it appears that the results of the evening classes are to be seen in five passes in knowledge of lead, silver, and fuel, and five others in two out of the three of those subjects of study. Yet it was announced at the close of the term that during the year no less than 220 individual students were on the roll during the period, and that during the year the total enrolments were upwards of 1,000 in the three terms. From this statement it may readily be inferred how small a proportion of the work of the school is really devoted to the mining industry. Indeed, it must be admitted that the pass-lists generally bear a remarkably small proportion to the total of 220 students. As satisfaction was expressed at the way in which the studies had been carried on during the year it cannot be inferred that the particular classes in which examinations were held are numerically very much in excess of the pass-lists. The only inference to be drawn is that the numbers given at the end of the term were very greatly swelled by those classes such as cookery and dressmaking, in which no examinations seem to have been held. The total number of students whose names appear in the pass-list is fifty-four, and of these the majority took only one subject—drawing being the favourite. This reduces the number of students who are really pursuing a full course of study to about a couple of dozen, and even of these there are not more than about a dozen who have taken more than two subjects. From the pass-lists it would appear that the formidable array of trades in which instruction was promised last year has shrunk, so as now to embrace only carpentry and engine-driving; but the cookery and dressmaking classes have flourished exceedingly. Domestic servants and sewing girls have no Unions through which to exercise pressure in order to put down artificial competition. Perhaps also the weight of their objections would still be discounted by their want of the suffrage.