

my inquiries as to their progress and diligence have been very reassuring. The regulations are, however, being amended so that in future the industrial scholarships will be open to those who have obtained a certificate of proficiency and have had at least a year's training in some branch of manual instruction.

The scheme for the training of Maori girls as nurses has also been to some extent modified during the year. By the new arrangement the Department is to continue its present system of selecting candidates from amongst the girls who have attended a Native boarding-school. Such candidates the Department will maintain for a year, entering them as day pupils at the local hospitals for the purpose of further testing their capacity, reliability, and suitability for the profession. This system should produce four candidates each year—two in Napier and two in Auckland. The day pupils who have satisfactorily concluded the year's trial are to be taken over by the Hospitals Department and placed in regular training in hospitals. For such of these probationers as do not qualify for the full course for a certificated nurse, an adequate training for work among the Maori people will be afforded by a course of two years in a hospital, and to any that complete such a course the Hospitals Department will give such special certificate as will enable them to practise nursing among their own people. If possible the probationers are to be induced to take in addition a year's training in a maternity home. Thus, during the first year there will be four probationers in hospitals, during the second year eight, and if they go on to a third year there may be twelve. Finally, the young women so trained and certificated will pass into the hands of the Health Department, which undertakes either to employ them or to establish them among the Maori people under such patronage and, if necessary, with such assistance as will secure their recognition as authorised agents of the Department.

The Department provides six scholarships for Maori youths who have passed with credit the entrance examination to the University. Three of these are reserved for those who wish to study medicine and the others for students taking the course in arts, science, or law. At present only one scholarship is being held, a Maori youth studying medicine at Otago University. I feel that the results achieved within the last two or three years have been disappointing. Indeed, the experience of the Department in regard to one or two of those who have recently held scholarships has been such as should lead to a reconsideration of the present arrangements.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.

The attendance at the schools during 1907 was in several places seriously affected by epidemics of sickness. In the Urewera country the teachings of the Maori prophet led to the closing of *Waimānā* and *Kokako* Schools. *Ruatoki* was reduced to very small numbers, and *Waioweka* lost practically all its Maori children. In spite of these losses, the roll-number at the end of the year shows that the strength of the schools in this respect is still well maintained. At the end of 1897 there were 2,864 children attending seventy-eight schools; at the end of 1907 the roll-number in ninety-nine schools was 4,183, the average percentage of regularity of attendance having increased from 77½ per cent. in 1897 to 82·41 per cent. in 1907. I think this bears testimony to the advance made in Native-school education generally as well as to the increased desire for education amongst the Maoris.

In eighteen schools the average attendance during the year was over 90 per cent., and in at least one-half it reached over 80 per cent. Sixty-eight first-class certificates of good attendance and sixty-seven second-class were issued during the year 1907, as compared with thirty-seven and forty-six for the year 1906.

For the purposes of sections 141 to 150 of the Education Act a Native school is, in terms of The Education Act Amendment Act, 1907," now deemed to be a public school. The effect of this is that where necessary the attendance of European children in Native schools may be made compulsory. New regulations dealing with compulsory attendance in Native schools are now in preparation.

CONFERENCE OF TEACHERS.

During the midsummer vacation advantage was taken of the presence of teachers in Auckland to hold a meeting for the purpose of discussing the new syllabus which it is proposed to introduce into Native schools. The meeting was attended by a large number of teachers, and its success exceeded my anticipations. The proposed syllabus was freely discussed, and comparatively little alteration appeared to be necessary to make it meet with the favour of all present. I hope to be able shortly to have the necessary amendments made so that the new Code for Native Schools may be compiled and issued without much delay.

In addition to the syllabus, matters affecting Native schools generally were discussed—amongst others that of the *Native School Teachers' Circular*, which it was proposed should be revived as a *Native School Teachers' Gazette* to be edited in the Department. This would, I think, prove a very useful means of imparting information to teachers and giving them advice and assistance generally.

The teachers attended the conference, which occupied three days, entirely at their own expense, and throughout the meeting showed a spirit of enthusiasm that speaks well for the service and should be a source of gratification to the Department.

CONCLUSION.

During the year adverse criticisms of the Native-schools system have been made in one or two quarters. They appear to consist mainly of misconceptions arising from want of first-hand acquaintance with the actual facts. In a paper read before the Auckland Institute it was alleged that the Native-schools system contributed to the passing of the Maori race. The fact is that