

spread of the disease to the other islands in the Group, where with no medical or nursing assistance available it was seen that the results would have been calamitous, all the mails and passenger traffic were suspended until the danger had passed. One result of the epidemic is the formation of classes at all the schools for teaching the elder girls plain cookery, including the preparation of simple foods for invalids.

EDUCATION.

Education in the Cook Islands was placed under the control of the Minister in 1916. Then there were three schools in the Group, two being in Rarotonga and one at Aitutaki. These had an attendance of 450 pupils under nine teachers. Since 1916 two new primary schools have been opened in Rarotonga—viz., Avarua and Titikaveka—one at Palmerston Island, one at Mauke, and one at Mangaia. There are now eight primary schools at work in the Group, and the ninth will be opened at Atiu this year. These primary schools have more than one thousand scholars being taught by twenty-six teachers.

A Technical School, also created since 1916, has been established at Avarua, with classes in agriculture, drawing, and woodwork, and an advanced class in carpentry. In most of the schools classes for simple cookery and for mat and basket weaving are held.

Three scholarships for annual competition, tenable for two years at St. Stephen's College, Auckland, and created by the Administration, were allotted this year. The first holders of these scholarships are now at the College. Reports of their work are highly satisfactory.

This year we have also sent to Wellington four advanced pupils, chosen from the Technical School, to be apprenticed to trades. They are under a bond to return to Rarotonga on the completion of their apprenticeship. By this method the Administration intends to secure the necessary supply of skilled Native artisans required for the Group.

SOLDIERS' RIOTS.

Unfortunately a number of the returned soldiers spoiled their otherwise excellent record by acts of violence and crime. On Saturday night, 7th March, ten or twelve of the men entered a tea-shop and smashed up the furniture and cookery and looted the premises. On the following night (Sunday) a crowd of about seventy men, nearly all returned soldiers, attacked one of the largest stores on the island. They burst open the doors and windows, smashed the shop-fittings, and looted or destroyed the contents. The same night they attacked and looted another store. They announced their intention of looting the remaining stores and the spirit-bond.

For twenty-four hours the settlement was at the mercy of the rioters. By Monday night, 9th March, however, we had formed a strong body of Native special constables, a number of the better-behaved soldiers had placed themselves under their officers, and practically every white man on the island had offered his services and was sworn in as a special constable. This force was disposed for the protection of the Government buildings, the stores, the gaol, and, later, for the suppression of disorder in the outlying settlements.

We had a most trying fortnight until the danger of further outbreaks was past. A special session of the High Court dealt with various charges arising out of the riots against twenty alleged offenders, of whom twelve were convicted and sentenced. There is no doubt that this prompt vindication of the law did a great deal to bring the men to their senses.

The causes of the outbreak were drink, the apparent absence of any force that could restrain the men, and the alleged grievances of the soldiers against the traders.

At Rarotonga the returned soldiers have now quite settled down as law-abiding citizens. In the outlying islands some of the soldiers have made threats of violence towards the traders, but there has been no breach of the peace.

HIGH COURT AND NATIVE LAND COURT.

The High Court has had a particularly heavy year. Besides the usual sittings, a special session was held at Rarotonga to deal with the soldiers' riots, and the Court visited the outer islands when required. Its work continues to expand. In 1913 the High Court dealt with 360 cases; the total for 1917 was 623 cases, and for last year 673 cases.

Mr. S. Savage, who has had a long and valuable experience in the Courts, was appointed Registrar of the High Court in August last.

The Native Land Court has cleared off the arrears of business that had accumulated prior to the appointment of Judge Ayson. This year it will sit at Atiu and at Mauke.

POST AND TELEGRAPH DEPARTMENT.

In 1916 there was one post-office in Rarotonga. We now have a main post-office at Avarua, with three branch offices at Arorangi, Ngatangia, and Titikaveka respectively; a wireless-telegraph station, commercially successful beyond all anticipation (from its opening in September, 1918, to the 31st March, 1919, it dealt with 720 messages, representing charges to the value of £1,087); and a telephone system linking up all the Native settlements with Avarua, which is now being extended to business places and residences. We have provided pillar-boxes in the outskirts of Avarua and post-office boxes at the post-office.