

UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS.

There are six University scholarships provided for Maori youths who, having passed the entrance examination, desire to study for one of the learned professions. Three of these are reserved for the study of medicine, and three for general subjects—arts, science, or law. The University requires that medical students shall have passed the medical preliminary examination before entering upon the course, and this is therefore regarded by the Department as the necessary qualification. A University scholarship in medicine is being held at Otago University, a further extension having been granted in this case to the particular Maori youth holding it, after his failing to pass. The other two are waiting to be claimed by applicants possessing the necessary qualification above referred to. Of the scholarships on general subjects, two are being held by students taking law at Auckland College, and one student is taking the arts course at Victoria College. In addition to these, a minor scholarship has been granted to assist a half-caste youth studying at Canterbury College.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.

The percentage of regularity of attendance as set forth in table No. 4 shows, in my opinion, a state of things exceedingly creditable to the children and to the teachers of our schools. There has been a steady increase in the percentage for the past two years, and in twenty-seven schools it has averaged over 90 per cent.

I have remarked in former reports upon the difficulties that Maori children often have to contend with. I made special inquiries this year into the case of the children at *Te Kao* School, and ascertained that no child lived within less than four miles distance of the school, while some lived as far as nine miles away on the gumfields. Under these circumstances a percentage of 93.6 is, I think, remarkably good, and deserves some special recognition, especially when the attendance of these children is purely voluntary. Even the smallest children seem anxious at most schools to attend school daily. This desire I ascribe in part to the fact that they now realise that they are important factors in the school, and that their interest has been roused by the attention bestowed upon them. Hence it is not an uncommon occurrence in our schools for small children to come long distances daily. One boy in a preparatory class rode over twenty miles before 10 o'clock to be present at the examination, which had to be held on a Saturday, contrary to his expectation.

There are other cases known to me where children, finding the streams in flood, have swum to school, the elder ones pulling the smaller ones through the water. The teacher of *Omarumutu* has made application for a bridge, as the children swimming across the *Waiaua* were carried down by the current.

There have been during the year several appointments of School Committees as Attendance Commissions under the regulations, but these have not been productive of very much benefit. In any case, it is very difficult to get Maoris to take action against members of their own hapu, for reasons that are sufficiently obvious to any one who knows the character and conditions of Maori life. It seems to me, therefore, that where it is manifest beyond all doubt that the compulsory clauses of the Act should be enforced to compel attendance the Department should itself move in the matter. Such action, though not necessary in the great majority of the schools, would prove a salutary example, and a single well-defined case would form an effective remedy over a large number of schools. At the same time I cannot help again expressing my conviction that Maori children are very easily attracted to school when they are induced by the conditions obtaining there to regard the school as a source of pleasure.

In not a few cases, as pointed out in last year's report, it has been made evident that the personality of a new teacher has effected a marked increase in the number of children attending. So much has been achieved in this way that the Department now finds it necessary to make considerable additions to schools that were formerly comparatively in very low condition—a result due entirely to the power of the new teacher to make his school attractive.

The attendance at several of the schools has been lowered somewhat owing to the dearth of food caused by the failure of the potato-crop, and the consequent removal of the parents to other parts.

The failure of the potato-crop has during the year brought even harder times than ever to the Maori, and had it not been for the ready assistance granted in genuine cases of need by the Justice Department it would have fared hard with many of the Maori children.

The Roads Department has also done its share in assisting the parents by finding work for them on the roads; and this is, I think, the most useful form that help can take, inasmuch as it impresses upon the Maori the value of work as well as helps him to buy flour and sugar.

Experiments have also been tried in one or two places in the direction of encouraging the Maori to cultivate other crops than potatoes and kumaras merely, and again here thanks are due to the Justice Department for assistance in this direction. In one settlement on the *Hokianga* the teacher had, besides giving out seed to the people, distributed small quantities to the children, who produced for my inspection the various fruits of their labours. It seems to me that much valuable work might be done in many, if not all, of our schools by having gardens—not merely flower-gardens, which already exist—but vegetable-gardens where crops of various food plants might be raised by the children. Already we have had proposals on the subject from several teachers, and I do not anticipate much difficulty in devising a practicable scheme of work in it.

One good result that has arisen partly, at any rate, from the failure of the potato-crop is the failure also of many of the billiard-tables, which are now not so well patronised, owing to the want of funds on the part of the players. I am pleased to be able to state that the remarks made in last year's Native School Report on the subject have contributed, in a larger degree than I had anticipated, to the falling-off in this form of gambling. At the same time few people outside of Maori districts, and not fairly well acquainted with the inner life of the *kainga*, can realise what a hold gambling has not only on adults, but on children. In several districts I have had cases reported to me where children on their way to and from school sit in the scrub playing what is known as "bluff" with cards—matches, buttons, &c., being the stakes. I appealed personally to the leading men of one settlement in the *Bay of Plenty* to stop the children at this, and received their promise to do so—with