

A Society for the Advancement of the Maori People.

It is proposed to form an Association having for its object the improvement of the Maori race to an average European standard of living. It is too soon to publish any programme, but it may be said that the encouragement of Maori industry in other than farming and allied occupations, including the initiation of such village industries as have made, and are increasingly making, Swiss and other European communities brightly prosperous, will form part of the work. Not that the land-workers will be neglected, far from it. The Natives have asked, by more petitions than one to the Houses of Parliament this session, that they may be placed on an equal footing with the European in regard to the administration of their lands. Parliament has responded by extending equality of taxation, but the want of thrift and self-denial, the absence of an intelligence which should guard them from imposition, are pleaded as reasons why they cannot be trusted to manage their own affairs. It is to make them as fitting to manage as they apparently are to be taxed, that the Association is forming. We do not know that business qualities which have methods and no morals are good to be learned for any other reason than to be guarded against. But they must be learned. And so must the better kind of business foresight, and generally the Native must be armed to compete with his European fellow-subject, or die.

Notes and Queries.

It is proposed to open a column, both on the European and Maori sides of the paper, for the propounding of questions and the imparting of information on all subjects relating to Maori history and tradition, and it is hoped that many moot points may be settled by consultation between the two Editors and by correspondence from their respective clients.

Where Mystery Broods.

SURROUNDING the Natives who are collected in Wellington to further their petitions to Parliament there is ever present an atmosphere of suspicion and intrigue. It is something more than the mistrust of the presence of the opposing party or his agent, which is natural to litigants. It is a suspicion of the ubiquitous attendance of the secret representatives of a third factor, which collects its data in the dark and uses them in an insidious manner. The belief in its existence is general, and it by no means leads to an excess of cordiality. Paradoxically, the phantom, it would appear, may be appeased by the manipulation of £ s. d., which letters are not part of the Maori alphabet. The power of the Government would banish it for ever. But the Government knows not of its existence.

Bad Object Lessons.

IN whatever way the conservation of sufficient land for the maintenance of the Native race of the future is secured, it is generally admitted that a Trust must be set up which shall administer the estate of the Natives for their benefit. There have been several Trusts established for the administration of Native lands, and they cannot be said to have met with general success. There has been an immense failure of a Trust to carry out its benevolent ends on the East Coast, and that had about 300,000 acres of Native land to administer. As a consequence many Natives are, if not absolutely, at least relatively, landless, and a Bank, exercising its quite legitimate right of foreclosing, has taken possession of an extensive area. It is perhaps in consequence of this bitter disappointment that the East Coast Natives have proposed that a Commission of British gentlemen should be appointed to administer Maori lands. The character of the British gentleman appeals to the Native chief, because the latter believes the former does right consistently, by reason that it is right, whilst the Native chief acts straight, because to act otherwise would do violence to his self-respect. On the West Coast the reserves for the maintenance of the Natives have been placed in the hands of the Public Trustee. The reserves are all Crown granted by the Queen, who made them inalienable from the possession of the individual Natives and their heirs for ever, giving power only to lease for a term of twenty-one years. The effect of subsequent colonial legislation has been to make leases to Europeans perpetual leases, and to vest the lands granted to the Natives for ever, in the person of the Public Trustee, who charges the Natives whom the Queen made owners a yearly rental for such portions as they occupy. This applies to reserves between Waitotara, in the Wellington Province, to White Cliffs, near the boundary of the Auckland Provincial District. The matter is bad in itself. It is worse as an example of what becomes of a title to Native land if placed in the hands of a servant of the State for administration. It is worst of all as showing how a grant of the Crown can be destroyed by a colonial Legislature. Then there are the Native Land Councils established to provide a Trust of Natives with European aid to assume possession of the lands of Natives and cut them up for lease to Europeans. The apparent effect of the administration is, that the Natives will have to wait forty-two years before they receive any rent, and the lands which they thought they had vested in the Council for twenty-one years are known now to be vested in that Council for ever. This they did not understand when they signed the deed. Such transactions make a rocky road to travel, for the enthusiast who starts out to convince the Natives that any Trust is trustworthy.

Parihaka.

NO Maori movement has given so much embarrassment to successive Governments as has the influence of Te Whiti and Tohu on thousands of Natives in past obstruction to settlement. To-day such obstruction is absent, and the policy of the Government would appear to be to leave the prophets alone in their monthly calls of the people to periodical meetings at Parihaka. But at the same time it fails not to suppress, with justice and but a due meed of severity, such breaches of the law as refusals to pay the dog-tax and the introduction of liquor for sale or consumption in the settlement. And we think it is a wise one, although the calls for contributions on the ill-lined purses of the Natives for the support of the propaganda are a grievous check to their material advancement. It is hard to provide a remedy. The movement started in 1869, when the fire of rebellion was smouldering to extinction. Te Whiti propounded the policy of peace under the sovereignty of the Queen, joined to one of co-operation with the Government of New Zealand, in the interests of settlement. But, unfortunately, his manifestoes have been so clothed in metaphor that his meaning has been obscure. The basis of his policy is probably to be found in the following paragraphs from the Conciliation Act of 1853:—

“(71.) And whereas it may be expedient that the laws, customs, and usages of the aboriginal or Native inhabitants of New Zealand, so far as they are not repugnant to the general principles of humanity, should for the present be maintained, for the government of themselves, in all their relations to and dealing with each other, and that particular districts should be set apart within which such laws, customs, or usages should be observed

“It shall be lawful for Her Majesty, in and by Letters Patent, to be issued under the Great Seal of the United Kingdom, from time to time to make provision for the purposes aforesaid, and repugnancy of any such Native laws, customs, or usages in force in New Zealand or in any part thereof in any wise notwithstanding.”

This would account for the consistent indisposition of Te Whiti to enter into negotiation with the Colonial Government, and his demand to treat with the Sovereign or his representative. The reception of the aide-de-camp of the Governor years ago, with the words, “The potato is cooked,” is quite understandable from his point of view. The potato being cooked had lost all vitality, it could be moved, but had no power of voluntary movement—it required help from outside, and it represented the impotence of the Maori people. It was a pitiable plaint. But being misunderstood, it frightened the agents of the Government, who were afraid an indignity was being offered to the Governor's representative.

In 1869, Te Whiti established four prospective days, marking four epochs: The day of initiation, 1869; the Acelanda, which is now identified with the great meeting of Natives meeting Sir George Grey and the Waikato Maoris in 1878; the Day of Death,