

sufficient to hatch and bring forth a very minute elongated insect of no greater dimension than a horse-hair, which feeds on the leaf, and as these insects feed they inject a poisonous substance which not only kills the plant, but descends through the stalk to the tuber, causing the potato to rot within a short time. The above, they say, they have proved—that is, they have seen at night with a lantern the moths in thousands alight on a flourishing crop of potatoes, turning the whole crop white, and on going in the morning they found the moths had gone, but that the underside of the leaves were covered with very minute eggs, and that after one hot day the leaves were covered with the insect described, and the plants began to sicken, and a week later were quite dead. Upon digging up the potatoes they were found half rotten. Although the Natives say the moth pest is the lesser of the two evils, it appears to be quite sufficiently severe. The other and greater pest the Natives maintain originates from the soil, and is of fungus growth, invisible to the naked eye, and arrives at its full strength about the time the mushroom shows above ground. This pest, the Maoris say, attacks the tuber first, and by the time the owner notices there is anything wrong with his crop the potatoes are mostly rotten. In the case of this pest even the few that may possibly be taken from the ground in a seemingly sound state will rot after being housed. The moth pest makes its appearance first in the month of December, and the so-called fungus pest about the month of February. There is only one supposed case in this district of a crop of potatoes being affected by blight before the month of December, and that was at Te Araroa. It is doubtful whether it is an authentic case.

The Maoris are now unanimously of opinion that those who are fortunately situated with respect to frost, enabling them to plant their seed in the month of August, need not have any fear of the blight.

#### *West Coast, Taranaki, &c.*

*Clifton.*—A general failure throughout the district, although at Mimi, Pukearuhe, and Mokau not quite so bad as at other places—probably due to early planting. In many cases there will be no seed available for sowing this year. On the high lands between the Mokau and Mokaiti Rivers some of the crops have almost entirely escaped; but with this exception most of the others are complete failures. No attempt at spraying has been made by the Maoris in this locality. In one place 2 acres of potatoes were planted and only two sacks of very small potatoes taken off. At Purangi and Tarata the blight has been very severe, and the Natives are anxiously looking for work.

*Taranaki.*—A general failure of the potato-crop throughout the whole district.

*Egmont.*—Hokinga Rangī Kaitu reports that 1,054 acres of potatoes and 121 acres of maize have been destroyed by the blight this year, between Oeo and Stoney Rivers; and he trusts that the Government will find some work for the Natives to do during the coming winter.

*Hawera.*—William Fox, Omahuru, states: The havoc caused by the potato-blight may be said to be absolute throughout the district, quite 200 acres altogether are destroyed. Some of the people are using carrots, and are laying in stores of karaka for a stand-by. As to the outlook for the coming winter through failure of the potato-crop, it is most likely the pinch will fall on large families and some of the elder people.

*Patea.*—Ngarangi Katitia reports an almost total failure of the potato-crops in his district, with the exception of about half an acre at Pariroa, the seed of which was given to Tutange by the Government. They took thirty-nine sacks from this half acre. The maize and the kumaras are also affected, although he thinks the constant rain and wet weather has prevented the former from ripening. The leaves of the kumaras have dried up and the plants did not mature.

This is the first time within the knowledge of the oldest Natives that any similar disease or blight has visited their crops.

*Stratford.*—There is no report of any Native cultivations in this county.

#### *Wanganui, &c.*

In the Waitotara district the ravages of the blight were extremely severe, at Parinui 10 acres yielding only one sack per acre, and there are now none for either eating or seed. At Te Ramanui 3 acres were planted, the whole of which were destroyed by the blight. At Rangitautahi the potato-crop was not worth digging up. At Kauaeroa 20 acres yielded only a few bags of miserably formed potatoes, and at Te Aomarama, notwithstanding several dressings of bluestone and soda, the crop was a complete failure. At Pipiriki 5 acres were planted—a complete failure. At Tawhitinui there are none left for seed. At Karitia, no yield at all; whilst at Kai Iwi, where three years ago the potato-crops yielded about 200 tons, this year the best yield was about one sack to the acre. At Taurangaika there were altogether about 50 acres sown, but none taken out; and 8 acres at Waitotara were completely destroyed. At Perikama 4 acres were affected, and at Rakaukahu, though 4 acres were planted, none were taken out.

In the Wanganui district the ravages of the blight are grievously severe, though in the eastern parts of the district the effects have not been so destructive. In Opaea most of the destruction was by frosts. About 40 acres on the Whangaehu River were an abject failure owing to the severity of the blight.

In the Rangitikei district the state of affairs can best be stated by quoting from the report of Mr. Richmond Davies, who acted as sub-enumerator for the district. He says, "After being right through the district, I have found that the Maoris have great reason to grumble, for the blight has been very unmerciful. All through Parewanui, Turakina, and Whangaehu, the Maoris are crying out for potatoes. The only varieties that escaped were Northern Star, Up to Date, and in very rare cases Peach-blossom. The two first-named are not potatoes that the Maoris plant on a large scale. At Moawhango the blight had a little mercy on the people; a few of the crops escaped.