

I inquired of them as to how the blight seized the potatoes; and I learnt that it settled on the potatoes after a heavy rain, and would discolour a crop of two or three acres in a few hours. Those that are not rotten when dug up rot in the pits. I believe that the Maoris will suffer for the want of their principal diet during this coming winter. Onions, corn, and pumpkins were in many cases destroyed by this phantom disease."

In the Oroua district, my sub-enumerator, Mr. Hugh Fraser, states regarding the potato crops, ". . . but they will be very badly off this winter on account of losing the whole of their potato-crop, as I think I am quite safe in saying that they will not have a single potato to eat in a month's time. You will see by the returns that they had a large area given over to potatoes, and would have had ample for their own use, and a great many tons for sale, had the blight not affected them. As it is they have not a single acre but what is completely rotten through the blight."

In the Manawatu district, though about 133 acres were planted, the yield was so poor that a potato can hardly be found anywhere. I make the following quotation from Mr. W. T. R. Cook's report: "Throughout the district the ravages of the potato-blight are manifest, and at some places the whole crops have been ruined. In other instances, notably at Kai Iwi, the Natives are now using the very small potatoes, of which they have a very limited supply, the larger potatoes having succumbed to the blight. The corn and other crops of vegetables, marrows, &c., have also been destroyed by frosts, so that the outlook for the Natives during the coming winter is not at all promising. . . . I look upon the destruction of their staple food in this district as a very serious matter, and one in which the Government may reasonably be asked to provide some means of help. The Natives are now practically without their potato for eating, or for seed purposes next year. The prohibitive prices now ruling for this vegetable will make it impossible for the Natives to purchase, with the exception perhaps of a few of the more fortunate hapus. I was therefore asked by many to approach you for assistance by providing some potatoes before the winter is really upon them, or, failing that, seed-potatoes for next spring."

With regard to the Horowhenua district, it is sufficient to quote Mr. S. M. Baker, the sub-enumerator. He says, "Everywhere I have been, from one end of the district to the other, the potato-crop is a failure; in some instances I should say that about seventy-five per cent. represents the loss; but in no case has a district been immune from the ravages of the disease. The Natives are afraid (and to me the outlook is very discouraging) they will have difficulty in procuring seed for next season. Some of them expressed the hope that the Government would assist them in procuring seed for the coming season. I promised to mention this, in the hope that assistance might be granted in this direction."

With respect to Waimarino, the report is much the same, Mr. R. G. M. Park, sub-enumerator, states as follows: "The whole of the Maori potato-crops in this district were destroyed by blight, and some of the Natives are absolutely without potatoes. Bread is at present the principal food-stuff of these people, but it will not be long ere their means in this direction will be exhausted. Then, how will these people subsist? You are aware that this article is the life of the Maori. Deprive them of it, and where are they? These circumstances are deplorable. . . . There are only two instances where potatoes escaped the blight, and these are on land owned by the McDonald brothers, of Karioi. All the rest of the Natives, as I have already inferred, are dreading the approach of starvation."

And so it is quite apparent that the ravages of the potato-blight have been most severe—in fact, as Mr. Richmond Davies says, "unmerciful." In the majority of cases a solution of soda and bluestone and other disease-killing mixtures were applied, but with no satisfactory results. It seemed impossible to discover what kind of potato best withstood the blight, but I am informed that the varieties suitable for early cropping were probably the least affected. The kumara is recommended in some parts of the Waitotara and Wanganui districts. I take the liberty of suggesting that something should be done to assist the Maoris, who have suffered most, with a supply of potatoes, both for eating and seed purposes.

Hawke's Bay.

The blight has done great damage to the potato-crops—the only crop the Maoris were depending on for the winter supply. In several places the potato-supply is already exhausted, and the rest will follow suit in a very short time. Potatoes dug for seed have already rotted.

Waipawa.

The blight has destroyed the potatoes.

Patangata.

Most of the potatoes had been affected with the blight; fortunately they were able to save some. I found this to be the case in all the different settlements, and I also ascertained that whilst the white potatoes withstood the blight fairly well, the dark-skinned varieties succumbed to its ravages very rapidly.

Wairoa South.

The potato-blight is very seriously affecting the Maoris in this district. It has completely swept their crops out of existence from one end to the other.

Wairarapa.

The blight has made sad ravages in the potato-crops, especially amongst the late ones, and the Maoris will feel the loss severely before the next crop comes in. Seed-potatoes will also be scarce and costly for the next crop.