

Runaway). The undertaking of the construction of this line without any assistance from Government is a very tangible proof that leading sections of the Maori race are waking up to the advantages of European modern methods—in fact, in this particular matter the Maoris of Waiapu can certainly be looked upon as an example to many European communities. It also shows that the Maori is still amenable to the controlling advice and example of his chief, or of those who become, by force of ability or strength of purpose, his leaders. It would not be too much to say that the Young Maori party, headed by Mr. Apirana Ngata, has here shown practical results more convincing than much more pretentious general schemes for the betterment of the Maori, or for redressing his supposed wrongs at the hands of Government, or of his European brother.

In the Waiapu district there is also a strong movement in the direction of improving and farming the lands of the tribal owners, including the taking-up by Maoris of Crown lands opened for selection. In all these respects the Young Maori party has something tangible to show.

Crime does not prevail in any marked degree. The Natives as a whole are becoming more and more temperate every year. The drunken orgies that were once common are in a great measure things of the past. In several of the reports reference is made to their adoption of the European style of living; some are sheep-farmers, others cultivate their land, while others again engage in various forms of remunerative labour. Every year the spread of settlement brings them into closer touch with their pakeha neighbours, and subjects them to the influence of European example.

Attached is a special report containing notes from the Enumerators and sub-enumerators upon the ravages of the potato-blight. These reports show that the blight has been almost universally prevalent. The only districts that appear to have escaped are Nelson and Stewart Island. The blight is said to have also attacked the kumara, though not to the same extent. Maoris have not altogether neglected the important matter of endeavouring to ascertain the cause of the blight; whether the conclusions they have arrived at are correct, or will assist in finding a remedy, will be for the decision of the experimental scientific agriculturist. The precaution of spraying has, to some extent, been adopted, but probably not with sufficient thoroughness.

For the present planting season, a supply of seed-potatoes is being distributed of those varieties that have been found to be more blight-resisting. But it has not been possible to furnish sufficient seed to satisfy the requirements of practically nearly the whole Maori population of New Zealand. Some provision for the spraying of the crop is also to be made.

Kumaras are being imported from America, as it is thought that a change of seed would be beneficial, and that the cultivation of the kumara should, to a large extent, take the place of the potato.

With the same end in view—the providing of a substitute for the failing potato-crop—a free distribution of seed of several of the common kinds of vegetables has been made this year.

Wellington, September, 1906.

H. F. EDGER, Under-Secretary.

---