

I go still further, and affirm that, if phylloxera has spread throughout, or in many parts of, the Auckland Provincial District, the proper course to be adopted now (and it ought to have been adopted months ago) is to root out and destroy every single vine-plant in that district, and to absolutely forbid the planting of another vine therein for at least four years. This recommendation will not be palatable to many people, and other ideas will, as they have already been, be proposed. Some will advocate delay; some the gradual introduction of what are called “phylloxera-proof,” or “phylloxera-resisting” vines; some will cry out about the liberty of the subject; some will make one excuse, some another. It is not for me, here, to argue at length on the point. Let me merely put before you the following very brief considerations: (1.) Phylloxera is more destructive to vines than scab is to sheep. If, in the case of scab, the most thoroughly repressive measures are cheerfully acquiesced in, why should not the same hold good with phylloxera? (2.) There is not in reality any such thing as a vine which is proof against, or even certainly resistant to, phylloxera. I am aware that there is a prevalent notion that some American stocks are valuable in this respect; but there is no certainty on the point, and, as I read the latest authorities, the weight of evidence inclines rather in the other direction. (3.) But, even supposing that some vine-stocks might be fairly relied on, it is imperative that their introduction and use should be a matter of proper system and supervision, and the circumstances in New Zealand are not at all favourable to this. In countries like France, Germany, Italy, the Government is powerful and active: in New Zealand it is neither the one nor the other. In California, again, the people themselves are intelligent enough to band together and take combined action against the enemy. Moreover, the various State authorities give cordial and practical assistance to the people. In New Zealand nobody combines with his neighbour for any useful purpose; all pull different ways, except those who do not pull at all. And, although we have two or three journals ostensibly devoted to agricultural matters, the influence of these is, where not actually mischievous, simply paralysing. Therefore, even if some benefit might be derived from a properly-worked “resistance” system, there appears to be not the least chance of success with it in a country like New Zealand. (4.) Repressive measures, such as inundation, treatment with bicarbonate of potash, &c., are no doubt excellent in their way. But these, again, require to be systematically administered, and some of them are even dangerous to life unless in proper hands. In the absence of such an Agricultural Department as is referred to above, measures such as these would simply be a waste of time and money.

This matter is one of no personal moment to myself. Whatever advice I give is the result of, I think, some fair knowledge of the subject, and apart from any personal interest or selfish aim. Assuming, as said just now, that your Committee will consider the vine-growing industry as one possessing more than a luxurious value to the country, I have felt it as a duty to put the foregoing views before them, and to recommend—(1.) That, in order to deal with the phylloxera, no time should be lost in absolutely destroying, to the last fraction of a root, every vine in the districts where the insect has appeared: and the word “district” here means a sufficiently large area to insure that no infected vine shall escape. (2.) That no person should be permitted to plant any vine in these districts for a period of, say, four years. (3.) That, as soon as possible, in order to deal with the whole question of plant-enemies, an Agricultural Department should be established, under a head officer to be obtained from some older country; and that this officer should have a competent knowledge of entomology, of cryptogamic botany, and of practical field- and garden-work. (4.) That the department so established should be furnished with large powers and considerable freedom of action.

I remain, &c.,

W. M. MASKELL.

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MR. SAMUEL H. WEBB, of Auckland, writes, through the Chamber of Commerce of that city, under date 28th July, 1890, relating the difficulties placed in the way of selling New Zealand wine with profit; states that the law at present in force suppresses the industry, which should be one of great importance to the colony, as the climate is most favourable for the manufacture of all classes of wine; and suggests that the law should be amended so as to allow wine manufactured in New Zealand to be sold by the bottle.

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MR. L. L. KINGDON, of Omata, Taranaki, writes, under date 25th August, through Mr. Samuel, M.H.R., stating that he is a producer of wine, but finds that the restrictions prevent him from doing so with profit. He forwarded samples of his Taranaki port, which the Committee had analysed, the result being as follows:—

Character: Clear, colour red, full-bodied, pleasant flavoured and sweet. Contains 12·2 per cent. of alcohol by volume. No noxious matters present. An excellent colonial wine: would keep well if allowed to improve with age.

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JAMES S. WILSON, of Clevedon, Wairoa South, writes, through Major Hamlin, M.H.R., under date 17th August, calling attention to his process of fruit-drying (Patent No. 3836, New Zealand), and states he finds a ready sale for dried apples at 7½d. per pound; also, that apples infested with codlin-moth, provided they are well grown, can be prepared by his process as well as sound fruit.

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VALENTINE BLAGROVE, of Auckland, writes, through Major Hamlin, calling attention to his process of drying and preserving all fruits, vegetables, and fish. States he has a process whereby mussels may be prepared to insure a profitable sale.