BLISTER BLIGHT

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"Blister Blight" disease of tea has been known in North India for nearly ninety years, but apart from two severe outbreaks in the first decade of this century, does not appear to have become economically serious. The import of tea seeds into Ceylon was prohibited mainly to prevent the entry of this disease, and it remained unknown in South India and Ceylon until 1946. In October, specimens were received from Dolosbage, and in the ensuing fortnight isolated reports were received from six other districts on the western face of the central range of hills. Thereafter, reports have multiplied until it is now (18th December) known on 68 such estates at elevations between, 5,000 to 1,500 feet. It has not so far been reported from Uva. Its frequency is highest in tipping fields and decreases with the age of the field from pruning.

The disease is most easily recognised during the later stages of infection. It is almost entirely confined to the younger leaves, occasionally spreading to the young stem causing the shoot to dieback. Infections of the leaves are local, and do not result in the death of the leaf. The first visible sign of its presence on a leaf is the formation of a slightly yellowish translucent area, which later becomes shiny and depressed on the upper surface. This produces a swelling or 'blister' on the lower surface of the leaf, from ⅛ in. to ½ in. or more across, which becomes white a few days later. In sunny weather these blisters rapidly become brown and dry up, but in wet weather they remain white for some days. The cause of the disease is a species of *Exobasidium*, probably *E. vexans*.

The future course of the disease in Ceylon is unpredictable. It is undoubtedly capable, as is the case with many other diseases, of causing serious damage if conditions for its epidemic multiplication occur over a long period, or recur at frequent intervals. Fortunately, in North India at least, the fungus has proved extremely susceptible to changes in climatic conditions, which in nature occur sufficiently frequently to prevent the disease causing serious damage.

Managers are requested to keep the Institute advised of the occurrence of this disease on their estates, the extent of the damage, and of the weather conditions during the attack.