Phytophthora infestans: The making of a US President

In 1845, an unknown disease attacked Ireland’s supply food. It infected the healthy potato plants and made it could not be eaten. The agricultural system made the Ireland’s absentee landlord richer after the famine. They raised the price of healthy potatoes higher than usual, in other hand, the workers could eat the little other. The Times published the typical annual budget for a laborer and his family in Ballinamore in 1845. They said that the condition of their income is much lower than the yield of agriculture that could be produced. Moreover, after the attack of fungi, the laborer got in poverty.

The Irish didn’t know about the source of disease that named Great Potato Famine. It started in 1844 when in wet weather, unseen fungus began to make potato plants yellow and die. Many people of Ireland said the disease was come from the soil that was being overworked and impoverished nutrients. Others thought it the work of Devil, or God’s punishment, or Little People. People tried to solve the problem with several ways such as drying the potato in lime, spread with salt, or treat with chlorine.

The correct answer about it famine came from Reverend Miles Berkeley, an English naturalist, that saw the potato leaf under microscope and found ‘something’ that caused the disease. But the clever people dismissed his idea as baloney. In around 1860, the German plant pathologist de Bary proved him right. He showed the infection spread with the tiny spores from one place to another.

Before any of this known, a despairing exodus was well under way. About five millions from eight million populations moved to Australia and New World made Ireland as a quite country. Among the thousands who crossed the Atlantic were two families: the Fitzgerald from Kerry and the Kennedys from Wexford County. And so it was that John Fitzgerald Kennedy was born in 1917 and became President of US in 1960. He was only available for these rules because the Great Potato Famine by Phytophthora infestans.

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