

Dookin Agric College
Dookin, Victoria,
Australia

17.1.1921

Dear Dr Seager Wheeler

In the first place allow me to congratulate you on the honor conferred on you by the Queen's University. It is a compliment paid to the farming community of Canada, through a man most worthy of public recognition for splendid work done, and creative incentive given to others. I guess it is the latter you owe your high honor, since there are others who have improved wheat, but few have given ^{as much} of their enthusiasm & faith in their ideals, & raised national pride to such a degree in the mind of the community of which you are as distinguished a member. I know well what your friends thought of your early endeavours - I had a similar experience. The polite ones would say "his head is in the clouds"; & the downright, in more forceful language, would say, "he's a damn fool - he's mad". However, that is only an ebullition due to ignorance, but, when made wise, these downright men stand firm in their recognition of worth, & especially in the pluck of "the visionary" of the past in his faith & ultimate success. Like you I am now reaping the reward of work done in spite of little encouragement.

Wheeler's notes
with all the lines
are cutting across
all the information.

Secondly I want to thank you for your book. It is written as I imagine you talk - direct, in simple & telling language, & with convincing spirit. I glanced through the pages, & felt that the author had a mission to spread broadcast to his countrymen the vital points of his success, so that they may benefit. It is fine to note the response of your people, & on reading the 'American Agriculturist', I see the wavelets of your enthusiastic efforts have passed over the border to the U.S., and even touch the shores of Australia. I am somewhat surprised 'Minister' is late with you. Here it ripens over a fortnight before Marquis and nearly a fortnight before Red Bobs & Kitchener. Some high yields, for this country, have been recorded by farmers who grow 'Minister'. 30 bu to 40 bu per acre were frequent this season. A plot of mine gave 50 bu per acre. I have so many varieties to attend to & so little qualified assistance, that I am unable to give that time to individual varieties I would like. I have 90 ac in stud & improved strains. 5,000 plants hand sown - single seeds at 6 in apart in the rows, and ^{was} about 2 ft apart, give more work than I can do thoroughly. We are handicapped in Australia by the system of selling wheat. A first class wheat brings no better price than the fair average quality (F.A.Q.), in fact if a red hard wheat was sent in to the buyer, ^{in many instances} he would think it a poor quality wheat. The millers are

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now becoming alike to the importance of high strength
high gluten content wheats, now that they wish to establish
an export market for flour. Without these, no
permanent export market for flour could be established
-ed. There is an unlimited market for our grain
for blending purposes, as it is so dry, & gives such a
fine color to flour. As you are probably aware, it
brings the highest price in England.

This season has been unusually good all over the
wheat growing areas of most of Australia. I wonder
if you know how big Australia is? If the United
States were put down on Australia, there would
be more than a good motor road left of Australia;
most Americans think Australia is a small island;
& if you tell them it has a greater area than U.S.
they think you are telling them a yarn on a par
with a fish or snake yarn.

I think I know the durums you mention, viz, Medeah
& Beardless Medeah. The latter is a crossbred of
mine. It has calid straw. Medeah is rust resistant
-ant here, & also is blast resistant. I will send
along samples of each, and several others, also
some unfixe crossbred varieties with Marquis,
Red Dip, of Huron, &c, as one of the parents. I am
sure they will interest you. I don't often
send unfixe wheats, but knowing your keen-
ness & aptitude, I thought possibly the strains
I would discard may be the very ones best suited
your conditions. Most have red grains.

Unfortunately we have had heavy summer rains,
 these are most unusual, hence the wheat; have
 gone opaque, or look starchy, in most instances.
 I went out among the plots & picked a few of
 the ears remaining. I only keep sufficient seed
 of each row for the following season, & harvest
 the balance of the ^{unfed} crossbred in globs for fowl feed.
 The field types are threshed & drilled in the following
 season, but half a dozen of the best plants are
 first selected for the shed plots, & sown in separate
 rows by hand. I can hear the hum of the threshing
 machine now. I am a bit 'off color' hence it is,
 I am inside writing to you. It will be 3 weeks
 before the harvest has been completed. You are
 no doubt snow-bound, whilst here it is 95° in
 the shade. But the air is dry & the heat quite bearable.
 In Australia the threshing machine is little used
 compared with the harvester & reaper-thresher;
 hence, varieties that will stand & hold their grain
 well down are popular. That is why Marquis
 is not generally grown, also its lateness.
 Among the wheat; I am sending you, in
 all probability you will get some a week
 earlier than Marquis. As regards milling
 qualities of course I cannot enlighten you, as
 I haven't sufficient seed available of them.
 This is the first season Marquis has given a big yield
 for this district, viz 37½ lbs per acre. Most of the high

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gluten wheat's have a tendency to become starchy here. I am sending you a high strength wheat called Cedar which wins a good many prizes for grain. You may have tried it. It has two weak a straw, & is not prolific here. The soft wheats, including margins, are more rust resistant here than most of our own varieties, hence I use them a good deal in crossing, also for their high strength & gluten content. It is so difficult to get at the ^{wheat} bags just now as they are not sorted, otherwise I would send other wheats. Later on I may send another consignment. One I shall include a few fancy wheats I have bred. One or two of the branched wheats I have developed from ^{possible} mutations that have occurred, & by crossing & selecting for 15 years have made them what they are. I lost completely a few one drought season, & the mice came in a plague and got at my reserves. It is a few years ago, but fancy killing 24,000 mice in a day & thousands every day. It is the only occasion we had a mouse plague. Where they came from I don't know. I saw at the time 5 lins were killed in a week at one place. It seems inconceivable.

I won't be able just now to let you know how Kitchener did, but not ^{quite} as well as ~~the~~ ^{Red Bobs}. I shall let you know later on. Your ^{white} Bobs yielded 35 bus per acre. Supreme I haven't in a large enough plot to give a comparative yield. Red Bobs went 35 bus per acre, but the plot drilled in was on the small side. On the other hand, a farmer in New South Wales writes me his Kitchener went 25 bus & the Red Bobs 22 bus per acre and stood well the storms.

Kitchener went 33 bus

His yield of Major was 40 bus + Minister about 30 bus.

I am too occupied with various matters to go into details of the 50 or more selections of cross bred wheats I am sending you, but you will find among them some that will produce clear grains like Marquis. Each selection is from one plant, and often just from one ear. Every packet is from ears producing from 50 to 80 or 90 grains per ear. I get some to over 130 grains. The packets marked with a red stroke at one corner ^{are} of the wheat of the 5th generation when sown this ^{coming} season. The others are this season's 2nd generation, or the 3rd of the coming season. I don't anticipate they will throw true yet. I fancy you will be in a position to introduce some interesting new strains. Were it possible to spare the time I could have sent 1000 including many other crosses with red grain. I don't quite grasp why the Canadians lay so much stress on red wheat, when white wheats may be bred ^{with} equally good ~~at~~ milling & baking ^{tests} varieties. I suppose it is because the red wheats have, so far, proved best, & to keep to uniformity for export purposes. I have made over 250 crosses this season, so you may understand my check plots are extensive, since from these alone next year I will have 1500 selections or more.

I am very pleased to hear from you at any time. Had I not been "off color" I would have condensed more, & written to the point; however you will no doubt be interested. Again with many thanks for back & congratulations very truly yours
H. Pye

26.1.21

I could not get the wheats together in time to send any
letters away earlier. I have added a number of others.
I am so busy and also my men that I could not have them
threshed. I fancy you will not get anywhere else a wide
a selection of new crosses, yet I have a few thousand more.
My experience has not been fortunate in sending on semi-
fixed crossbreds as there are so few farmers endowed
with the scientific spirit. Most simply accumulate
and give a name, as Smith's Prolific or Jones' Wonder.
However the few who have a scientific bent, select as
advised, and do remarkably well. They send the
selections they fix with suggested names, in order that
there will be no duplication of names with mine. I
sent you a copy of the Bureau of Science's pamphlet.
In case you have not received it I am forwarding
another. 'Comeback' is one of Farrer's high strength
white wheats. It is quite early & in good seasons is clear.
Its crosses throw many 'grass clumps'. These are grassy
like plants which have stalks just coming above
the leaves, most not to inches high. Probably you will know
them. Of course they don't form in the fixed wheats.
You could get a good selection of Durums from U.S.
Agric Dept. I grow very few in field lots. Baldhead
is used for hay & ensilage in the more rustic districts.
I have sent an ear of Dookie Marvel. It may interest you
but I don't suppose it will suit you. It may sport.
The letter Z should be given should you write about
any of those numbered wheats with Z in front of the number.
I am always glad to have a small packet of any wheat
you think of interest & I would like a small packet

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sacks of any good barley & early oats you may have.
I would like to get a sample of 'Kareed' wheat. I know
E. V. Wilcox writes about it very highly. I noticed it in
the 'Country Gentleman', 27th March issue.

The fixed price for wheat in Australia is (9³/₄) real
shillings per bushel. All the wheat of the country
is pooled. Teams & tractors are carting it every
day to the railway station. We have no elevators.
The wheat is all bagged in 3 bus bags.

There are a few more Dookie Marvel selections
I found. They are solid straw some have stronger
straw than others. You could possibly select a
solid stiff straw type & call it "Seager's Straw".

with my compliments on the best of the unnamed cross
- breeds. I suppose I'll have to stop writing
on the postal officials will not send me their
bulky epistle. Again, with all good wishes,

Sincerely
H. P. G.

P.S. We had a record temperature today 112° F in the shade
& 171° F in the sun. Still we are smiling & out in the field.
The air is light, dry, & pure, & we have plenty to interest
us, so forget the heat. Any where else heat apoplexy
would snuff out dozens. When you count up the
percent & fancy there will be nearer 100 than 50.
H.P.G.