

F B Guthrie



*William J Farrer
and the Results
of his Work*

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THE following notes on Mr. Farrer's life and the results of his work were compiled at the suggestion of the Trustees of the Farrer Memorial Fund, and have been approved by that body.

It was thought that, now the beneficial results of Farrer's work have been well established and recognised, the time is opportune to record the inception and progress of a work that has been of such enormous advantage, not only to New South Wales, but to the other Australian States.

Before Farrer commenced his life-work, New South Wales wheat was of a very inferior quality, and in some years, owing to drought or rust, we were actually under the necessity of importing grain for local gristing.

In those days (as the Hon. Sydney Smith recently reminded me) it was common for Government departments inviting tenders for the supply of flour to Government institutions to stipulate "best Adelaide", thereby expressly excluding the New South Wales product.

I recall, too, that in the course of an address to a gathering of farmers at Wagga Experiment Farm late in the nineties, Dr. Cobb mentioned that tenders for flour contracts had lately been invited by the French Government at New Caledonia, with the condition that the gluten-content should not be less than 9 per cent., which was 1 per cent. more than the gluten-content of the best wheat harvested in New South Wales at that time.

Among those present that day with Dr. Cobb was Mr. Farrer, then just appointed Wheat Experimentalist to the Department.

To-day the gluten-content of our f.a.q. wheat runs as high as 12.9 per cent. gluten in a very dry year, and rarely falls below 10 per cent. The credit for such a change is undoubtedly due to the late Mr. Farrer and to his successors in the plant-breeding work of the Department.

Mr. Farrer's self-imposed task of improving the flour-strength of our wheats and producing rust-resisting and drought-resisting varieties has greatly influenced both quality and yield in this, his adopted land, and has materially affected wheat production in almost every other country.

The introduction into general cultivation of Farrer's first creations in 1901-1903 opened the eyes, not only of Australian farmers, but of the world's wheat-buyers, to the possibilities of Australia as a great wheat-producing country. It was discovered that we could produce wheats suitable to the various climates in Australia wheats that could resist diseases like rust, bunt, and smut; wheats that could resist dry conditions; wheats that were suitable to the moist coastal districts and also to the semi-arid country previously regarded as quite unsuitable for wheat production. In addition, it was discovered that we were able to produce in Australia wheats that could compete in the world's markets with the best-Canadian, American, and Indian wheats, a thing hitherto undreamt of.

That is the position in which Farrer's labours have left us to-day.

The present compilation of notes on his work forms a small tribute of appreciation from the Department upon which his memory and his work reflect such distinction.

GEORGE VALDER,

Chairman of the Farrer Memorial Trust.

