

# THE WHEAT KING

Selected Letters  
and Papers  
of A. J. Cotton,  
1888-1913



Edited and Introduced by Wendy Owen

Almon James Cotton(1858-1942) was born in Ontario, and after an unsuccessful farming experience there moved to southern Manitoba in 1888. In Treherne he became known as Manitoba's "Wheat King" because of the size and quality of his crops. At the turn of the century Cotton moved again, this time to the Swan River Valley in Manitoba, where he found sufficient land to provide working farms for all his sons. Unlike most early farmers, Cotton preserved extensive accounts and a massive correspondence, including hundreds of letters to prospective immigrants to the Canadian West. This volume of selected letters and papers provides an intimate glimpse into the world of the rural prairies before World War I. Cotton's comments on farming, politics, religion, immigration, and western boosterism – mention only a few of the major topics he discusses – delivered in the brusque no-nonsense style of the farming community. His remarks shed considerable light on a fascinating personality from a key period of western settlement. An avid amateur photographer, Cotton also left a large collection of photographs used to illustrate this volume.

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Wendy Owen is a graduate student in History of the University of  
Manitoba, specializing in the agricultural history of the prairie provinces.



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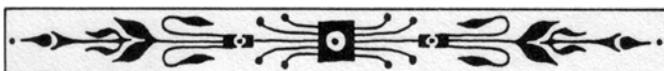
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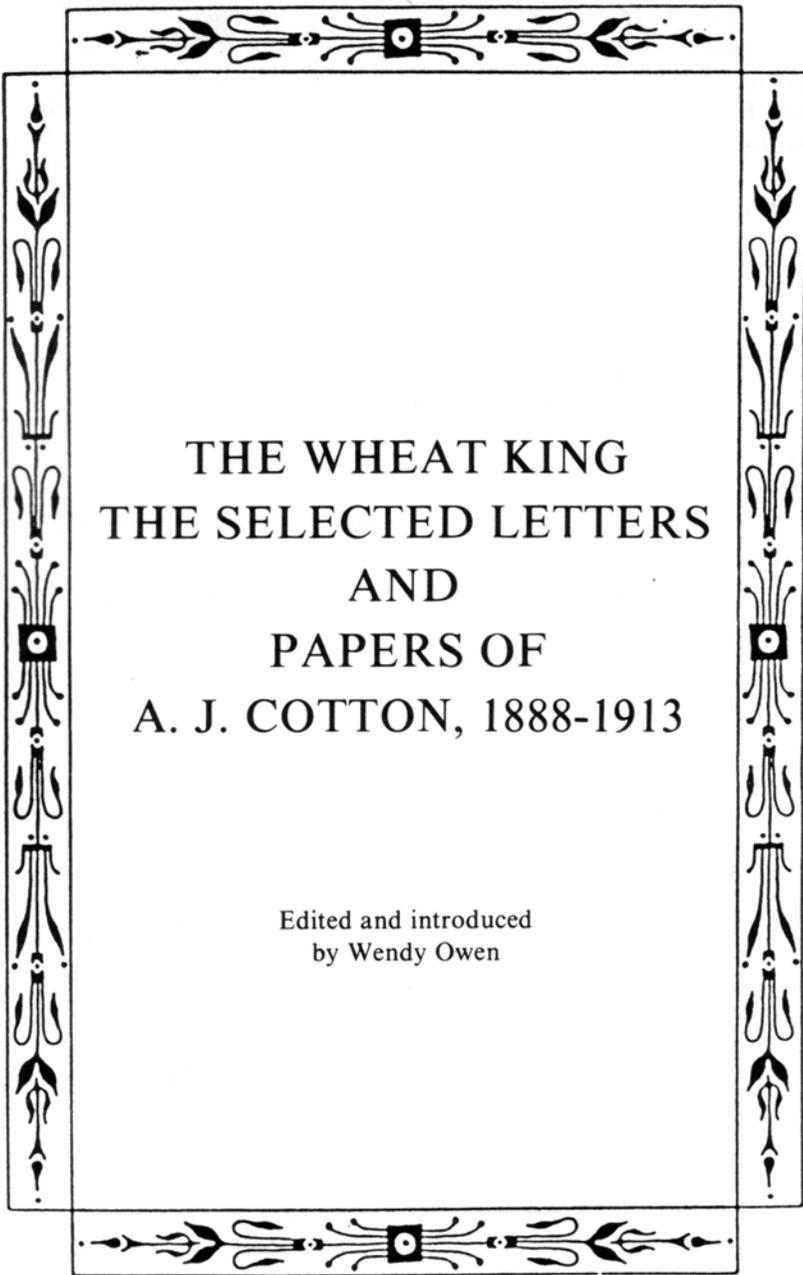
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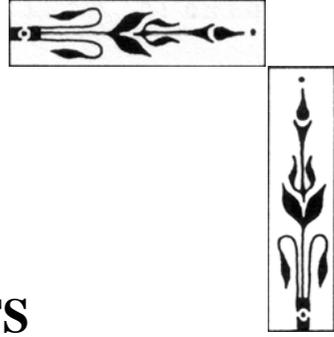


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*To my mother, Eleanor Williams and to  
the “mother” of this volume, Angie Loat.*



Almon James Cotton, 1858-1942



Esther Louise Ford and Almon James Cotton on their wedding day, June 2, 1880.



## INTRODUCTION

The history of the agricultural settlement of the Canadian Northwest has recently been undergoing a renaissance.<sup>1</sup> It remains popularly associated, however, with Clifford Sifton's "men in sheepskin coats," homesteaders taking advantage of free land, Americans coming to the "Last Best West," and organized colonization ventures in both the public and private sectors.<sup>2</sup> Implicit in this view is the notion that prairie settlement offered an opportunity, far the disinherited and dislocated to start afresh in a region where land was plentiful, cheap, and fertile. While much has been written on ethnic settlement on the prairies, the movement of Anglo-Canadians from the east, particularly from Ontario, has received less attention than it deserves, although these individuals, perhaps best characterized as the "privileged settlers," dominated many if not most local communities and most aspects of life, especially in Manitoba.<sup>3</sup> These privileged settlers were responsible, for transforming Manitoba from a multiracial and bilingual society of metis to a society which replicated and imitated the values, assumptions, and institutions of Ontario.

The Ontario farmer in Manitoba has been most frequently observed from two perspectives. The first, embedded deeply in works of political economy and economic history dealing with the settlement process, views the farmer as a nameless victim, subjected to movements and currents which he improperly understood and seldom controlled.<sup>4</sup> The second, embodied in works of "realistic" fiction in the earlier years of the twentieth century, sees the farmer as a tyrannical patriarch, alienated from the land and his surroundings.<sup>5</sup> The letters and papers of Almon James Cotton (1858-1942) reprinted in this volume, offer some useful corrective to both the anonymous victim and the alienated patriarch approach to the prairie farmer. While the Cotton material deals with all the external and uncontrollable forces, it also demonstrates that Cotton

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was a man with an agricultural strategy, or rather a succession of strategies, which made him successful in his own eyes and in those of his neighbours. Cotton's first strategy, begun, from his first decision to move to Manitoba in 1888, depended upon hard work and a proper utilization of capital resources. He was content to be a tenant farmer in Treherne, constantly adding new unimproved land to his acreage, and taking first crops off a virgin soil. After 1899, Cotton while still a tenant farmer became known as Manitoba's "Wheat King," for in that year he had thrashed 19,000 bushels of number 1 hard Manitoba wheat, filling twenty-eight railway cars. As he became successful and his family grew older, Cotton turned from tenancy to land ownership, seeking a large amount of land in the Swan River Valley, moving therein 1901. In his new environment, Cotton operated as a patriarch and a local squire, building up farms for his sons and playing a leading role in the establishment of church, school, roads, railroad, and communications. He even had a turn at politics, although he did not find it very satisfying.

Whether at Treherne or Swan River, Cotton was an enthusiastic and experimental farmer, always committed to sound agricultural practices but equally willing to try something new and to learn from others. He was also an enthusiastic correspondent, writing to old, friends in the east, fellow farmers in the west, and a host of other individuals associated with his various economic and other activities. He also carried on an extensive correspondence with prospective newcomers to the prairie west as an unpaid agent of the Department of Immigration. In these letters, as in his others, Cotton mixed discussion of prairie agricultural practices, an unbounded enthusiasm for the West which can only be described as "boosterism," and his own inimitable opinions on the events of the day. From these letters emerges a personality which gives life to statistics and helps us to understand the thinking of those trans-planted Ontarians who played such an important role in moulding Manitoba in the half-century after Confederation.

Almon James Cotton was born near Port Granby, Ontario, in 1858. Although brought up on a farm, he had gone to work for the railroad upon leaving school, probably because there seemed little future on his family's holdings, a typical situation for younger sons in older parts of Ontario.<sup>6</sup> In 1880 he married Louise Ford, a farmer's daughter from a neighbouring township, perhaps in anticipation of the inheritance of a small farm, from his grandfather in 1881. Initially Cotton was encouraged by his farming enterprise, and by 1884 - with the help of cash he had earned loading barley onto Lake Erie schooners - he was able to extend his acreage by purchase of the adjacent farm. By the fall of 1887,

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however, the Cotton enterprise was in trouble, and the family decided to leave Ontario, "having farmed down there," Cotton later recalled, "until we could farm no longer at a profit."<sup>7</sup> A substantial mortgage and exhausted land probably helped account for his problems. He eventually sold his farm for \$1,400 less than he had paid for it, and embarked , for Manitoba in 1888.

The land to which Cotton migrated in 1888 belonged to Major William McLean, a Port Hope businessman. McLean had visited Manitoba in the summer of 1887 and purchased land about a mile outside Treherne, a village seventy miles southwest of Winnipeg. A speculator, McLean sought someone to bring his land under cultivation. He was willing to give a five-year lease in return, for an annual rental of one dollar payable at the end of the year and the acquisition of all improvements - broken land, fences and buildings - at the conclusion of the lease. Although such an arrangement does not at , first glance appear attractive, Cotton accepted it. He wrote to a neighbouring, farmer in Treherne to enquire about the quality of the land, but when assured it was fertile he signed the lease.<sup>8</sup> Cotton would continue to rent this land until he left Treherne in 1901, later paying its taxes and performing statute labour connected with its possession. While many Canadians dismissed tenancy as exploitation. Cotton always regarded it as the ideal way to begin as a farmer. He was grateful to McLean and attempted unsuccessfully to extend McLean's terms to others in the Swan River Valley. Doubtless aware that part of his problem in Ontario had come ,from a large mortgage, Cotton moved to Manitoba with none of his capital tied up in land and no financial responsibilities resulting from its ownership.

Cotton did not come to Treherne without capital. He auctioned his farm animals, implements, and equipment, with prices ranging from 25c for a seed box to \$75 for a Massey binder to \$145 for a bay horse.<sup>9</sup> He did not sell all his animals and implements, however, and in March of 1888 he packed a rail car with goods and set off west. The car, which travelled from Newtonville, Ontario, to Treherne via the Grand Trunk and Canadian Pacific railways, contained three horses, two cows, a seeder, a harrow, a wagon, bobsleighs, a mower, and various other implements.<sup>10</sup> The rail car also contained the Cottons' household furniture. The total value of the goods that Cotton brought with him he estimated at \$900. but this valuation was probably not on a replacement cost basis. The cost of the car and the tickets for the family - by this time two sons and a daughter, as well as his wife and a hired hand - was \$160. Cotton borrowed this money from relatives in Ontario.

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In the first year in Treherne, Cotton and his hired man broke sixty acres, of which twenty six were planted. Against all advice Cotton sowed twenty three acres with barley, a crop which he had grown successfully in Ontario but which was not generally highly regarded in his new surroundings. Extremely fortunate, since heavy rain came at the right time for the crop, Cotton was able to harvest a more than respectable yield. Cotton and his horses worked for neighbouring farmers as well in that, first season. The first Cotton home was an abandoned floorless shack on some land adjoining the property they had come to farm, and a new house was not constructed until 1889. It took Cotton five years to turn the corner at Treherne, a process combining hard work, good fortune, better than average farming practices, and careful attention to debt management. The basis of Cotton's success was wheat rather than coarse grains, and he was assisted by the spread of new varieties on the prairies at this time. The Red Fife strain, which matured in 115-125 days, as opposed to the 125-145 days of earlier strains, was a great advantage to prairie farmers of the 1880s. In order to encourage its use, the Canadian Pacific produced seed at their experimental farm and even supplied it free of charge to settlers. The development and spread of such hardy strains, many of which Cotton would experiment with, made northward expansion of the agricultural frontier possible.<sup>11</sup>

By June of 1893 Cotton was ready to expand his area of cultivation, and he leased an adjoining half section, for five years. He was to break 155 acres of it, although he had the option of breaking more. The owner was a local man, Isaiah Mawhinney of Holland, Manitoba. Mawhinney himself was to fence 180 acres, but Cotton agreed to fence any land that he broke beyond 180 acres, to pay the taxes, do the road labour, and pay a dollar a year rent. At the end of five years the land was to be in "as good a state of cultivation regarding roots, grubbing etc." as the land that Cotton rented from Colonel McLean.<sup>12</sup> In March of 1896 Cotton again extended his operations by leasing yet another half section. This land was owned by another absentee landlord like McLean, T. G. Phillips, M. D., of Toronto.<sup>13</sup> Cotton leased this land for a dollar a year and the payment of half the taxes. He was also to fence the land and break sixty acres. Leasing land provided many advantages to Cotton. He obtained the right to cultivate virgin soil, but did not tie up his capital in land payments or in interest charges.

By 1893 Cotton had paid off the debts he had left in Ontario and accumulated in Manitoba, and by 1898 he could write, "I can scratch up about \$18,000 and need not work anymore."<sup>14</sup> Instead of investing in land, he maintained a bank account at the Canadian Bank of Commerce

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in Winnipeg, and in the absence of local banks loaned out money in the community. Between 1898 and 1900 Cotton had almost \$4,000 out on mortgages at 8%. He obligated not only neighbours but institutions in the community. He lent money to the Treherne Elevator Company and the Matchett Methodist Church, requiring only 7% interest here while charging up to 10% to some borrowers.<sup>15</sup> The lack of local banking facilities in rural areas was always a problem, and those who had their capital tied up in land were forced to deal with men like Cotton who had the cash to correct a temporarily blocked cash flow. The lender obviously benefitted as did the borrower. Cotton was doing informally what others did more formally when they organised small local banks like the one begun by Bailer, Lockhart and Brown in Gladstone. That bank had started with capital of \$10,000, and like Cottons lending was designed to serve local men and local needs.<sup>16</sup> Money lending had always been a principal means of acquiring local influence, as well as additional income, in small rural communities. Whether many borrowers observed that the man who had the available cash was merely a tenant farmer who owned no land in the community is not known.

The years in Treherne were prosperous ones in many ways. Not only did Cotton flourish financially and pay off his debts, but his skills as a farmer were widely known and he was held up as an example to the community. Two more children had been added to the family, and the Cottons now had, five children: John Nelson (b. 1881), Wellington Herschel (b. 1883), Frances Lillian (b. 1886), Almon William (b. 1893) and Allan Burnaby (b. 1898). In addition, there were kinsfolk. Mrs. Cotton's sister Sophronia had married Samuel Henderson, who had worked for Cotton in Ontario and became farm forman at Treherne and later Swan River. William L Ford, Mrs. Cotton's younger brother, had also moved in with the family at Treherne and took up land near Cotton at Swan River. When Ford moved north his parents gave up their Ontario farm and moved in with him.

With a growing and maturing family, Cotton began to feel the need to provide for his children, difficult to do on leased land. He was also probably unhappy about having his capital invested in ways where he could not control it. In an event, he began to cast around for new land at reasonable cost. His letters became filled with references to the way land prices were rising in his district and in southern Manitoba. In one epistle Cotton noted "a farmer living 3 miles from Treherne who has a section of good land, with a house on it worth \$1,600, a \$600 barn, and \$4,000 in chattels and he is offering the whole lot for \$14,000 with \$10,000 down."<sup>17</sup> Such figures suggest prices were made from the vantage point of a man who had no intention of investing \$10,000 in an

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improved farm. He wanted fertile land at reasonable cost. The Swan River Valley was ideally suited to his needs.

In 1898 Clifford Sifton decided to open the Swan River Valley for settlement. The influx of settlers into the Dauphin district following the construction of the Dauphin Railway by the Lake Manitoba Railway and Canal Company, had put great pressure on the Dominion government to open more land in the region. As early as April of 1897 the *Nor'West Farmer* was pressing for settler access to the Swan River Valley, partly because of the favourable reports that emanated from miners and trappers who had been there.<sup>18</sup> T. A. Burrows, the Dauphin area's representative in the Manitoba legislature and Sifton's brother-in-law, was asked to visit the Valley on behalf of the Dominion government to advise upon its suitability for settlement. He recommended that the land be opened, and to facilitate that action a wagon road should be cut in the Valley.<sup>19</sup> By March of 1898 it was known that the minister had concurred in the recommendation. The Valley would be joined to Dauphin by the Winnipeg and Great Northern Railway Company (later the Canadian Northern), and from there a rail link already existed to Winnipeg and the Lakehead. The chartering of the railway company meant that in addition to homestead land there would be railway land available for purchase. A great deal of excitement followed the news of the Swan River land being made public, fanned by articles in the *Dauphin Herald* and an extravagant write up by the *Manitoba Free Press*.<sup>20</sup>

The early summer of 1898 saw the beginning of a land rush into the Valley, with Dauphin as the nearest railhead benefitting greatly from the trade brought by the intending settlers and land speculators. Even those who did not come by train had to go to Dauphin if they wished to purchase railway land, for the Land Commissioner for the railway (the same T. A. Burrows who had earlier advised the government on its promise) had established his office there. The Dominion government's office was set up in a tent at the mouth of the Valley, near the present site of the town of Minitonas. It was from here that Hugh Harley, the first government agent, supervised the surveying of the valley into the projected eighteen townships, of which ten were provisionally subdivided.

One of the earlier visitors to the Valley was A. J. Cotton. As soon as spring work was finished on the 1,000 acres that he farmed at Treherne, Cotton prepared a covered wagon and provisions and "set out for a drive of over 700 miles into a new country where if it suited me, I would pick out new land."<sup>21</sup> He was among the first of the many experienced farmers who would rush to the

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Valley, “with their stock and equipment, picking their lands and occupying them with the practised skill of the Boer voortrekkers.”<sup>22</sup> Few, however, were prepared to buy land on the scale that Cotton anticipated. On his trip he was accompanied by two of his Treherne neighbours, Jack Staples and Alfred Flack, who also “took up land.”<sup>23</sup> Cotton had decided in the winter of 1897 that he should start looking for land suitable for his sons. He examined various parts of the province, but none had proved suitable and reasonably priced. Land with bad water and a scarcity of wood cost as much as \$12 per acre.<sup>24</sup> While Cotton could have afforded such a price, it would have taken all his capital. Land in the Swan River Valley was far less expensive. Railway land, which was considered “good soil” and had an abundance of wood and water, was available for between three dollars and four and one-half dollars per acre.

Cotton did not take any of official statements about the quality of the soil as gospel, managing instead to make contact with an “old timer who knew good land when he saw it” and who had prospected the valley on horseback in the fall of 1897. Cotton was prepared to take his word as to the quality of the soil.<sup>25</sup> Significantly, Cotton did not waste any time with homestead land. Not only was the railway land of better quality, but it had the advantage of being adjacent to the rail line. It would be impossible to farm on the scale that Cotton enjoyed at Treherne if there was no way of getting the wheat out easily and cheaply. The knowledge that the railway would be at Swan River the following year and that there was a line projected to run southwest down the Valley made the region appealing. Although the route of the latter line had not yet been determined, Cotton was sufficiently experienced to recognize the likely coincidence of the right of way and the railroad’s land holdings.

In 1898 Cotton remained in the Valley only long enough to prospect for the kind of land he wanted. He had brought a bag of soil from Treherne to compare with that in the new area. On the way up to the Valley he had stopped to talk with T. A. Burrows in Dauphin and Hugh Harley at the Tent Town, so he had a fair idea of the land available and the way it was being surveyed. Cotton found the land that he wanted thirty miles up the Valley, on the banks of the Swan River. “Feasting my eyes,” he wrote. “I picked out 1,400 acres of the finest land in the valley.”<sup>26</sup> The land Cotton selected had not been fully surveyed and was therefore not officially for sale. It had been established, however, that “those who first filed applications to purchase would have the first chance of doing so.”<sup>27</sup> While Cotton was still making up his mind others were joining him in the Valley. In order to file for the land he would have to get to the railway office in

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Dauphin. Worried that he would not arrive ahead of his competition as he was “handicapped by a heavy team, the others driving light rigs, “ Cotton abandoned thoughts of a race and went instead via Fort Pelly to Russell, where he telegraphed his application to Dauphin.<sup>28</sup> His claim was filed ahead of the others.

Cotton’s choice was 2,400 acres of railway company land. Initially, however, he had filed only for two sections (13 and 19) in Township 35, Range 28, and it would be some time before these applications were acted upon. In October of 1898 he offered to buy land in Treherne but was not successful.<sup>29</sup> He would eventually apply for more land in the Swan River Valley, including two quarter-sections in Range 29. These additional acreages would bring his holdings up to three and one-half sections. He was insistent on the close relationship between rail transportation and large-scale wheat farming, writing in 1899, “I want to make more application for some more land in the Swan River if there is any possibility of the railway going west, far enough for accommodation.... I intend to farm the valley on a large scale ... but could not make a success unless in close proximity to railway shipping point.”<sup>30</sup>

In May of 1899 Cotton paid in full for section 19, which was to be the base of his farming operations. For the first time he talked of moving to the valley “with an outfit and capital of about \$25,000 to \$30,000 to begin operations in building and breaking.”<sup>31</sup> Whatever hardships he and his family had undergone in establishing themselves in Treherne, in Swan River Cotton was clearly well capitalized. During that spring Cotton probably received some intimation about railway intentions, for he also paid the first installment on the equivalent of three sections that he wished to add to his base section. At that point the railway ran within six miles of his nearest land and about twelve miles from the farthest, but he anticipated “a railway through the land before two years which will make it convenient.”<sup>32</sup>

Cotton did not initially intend to farm all the land himself. His original plan was to keep a section and one-half for himself and to let out the remainder on roughly the same terms he had enjoyed when he had first started in Treherne. According to a newspaper advertisement Cotton placed in Ontario, he would offer “leases of five years to break and bring half under cultivation, put up what buildings required, fence it with two wires and pay taxes.” The land was described as being “good, easily cultivated, with hay and running water and within a short distance of building material and firewood.”<sup>33</sup> Over the years he accumulated a great many letters about renting his farms, but few actual tenants. Even kinfolk were hesitant to accept his projections of success over a five-year period.<sup>34</sup> He found it

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necessary to add further inducements, such as buildings, in order to attract tenants at all. Newcomers to the Swan River Valley continued to be committed to the myths of land ownership and a sturdy yeomanry, despite Cotton's example and advocacy of tenancy. According to a survey done in the Valley in 1914, no more than five percent of the farmers in the Valley were tenants.<sup>35</sup> In April of 1900 Cotton began work on the land in Swan River, employing a party of men under the supervision of his brother-in-law Sam Henderson. The gang, which included Cotton's son Nelson, broke "250 acres of virgin soil."<sup>36</sup> Cotton himself remained in Treherne, and was joined by his breaking party in time for an early harvest. Although the spring and summer of 1900 had been extremely dry "not an inch of rain has fallen since last Fall," he reported, "Manitoba never had such a scorcher" - and most of Cotton's neighbours lost their crops or ploughed them under, the reports of Cotton's harvesting in the local paper suggests that his earlier pessimism had been to some extent unwarranted.<sup>37</sup> Cotton's wheat cutting was evidently a "harvesting scene worth going to see, with jive binders travelling in procession around the fields."<sup>38</sup> The shortage of grain, of course, increased the price for those fortunate enough to harvest. But generally money was tight, and Cotton, who had \$10,000 on loan, found it hard to collect because it had been "such a poor year."<sup>39</sup>

Slowness of collection may have hampered Cotton, but he pressed ahead in 1901 with plans to develop his Swan River property. The land broken the previous year was seeded, and in June George Brock, a Treherne builder, left for Swan River to supervise the erection of a "Fine house, a granary and a barn."<sup>40</sup> Considering the scale of his operations and the amount of his capital, Cotton's house was a modest affair; he never engaged in ostentation. The farm leased from Colonel McLean was advertised as being available after thrashing.<sup>41</sup> The leases on the other lands at Treherne terminated at the same time. The summer of 1901 was a busy time, for Cotton, who was supervising his Treherne operations while travelling between there and Swan River and preparing his move. His farming operation at Swan River was again supervised by Sam Henderson, who had also filed for his own homestead adjoining Cotton's land in the Valley. The season at Swan River was relatively promising, with 3,500 bushels of wheat and 2,000 of oats thrashed despite a bad hail storm.<sup>42</sup> As soon as the thrashing was completed at Treherne in October of 1901, the Cotton family embarked for their new home. It took two days to pack the rail cars with their possessions and those farm implements

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not already moved. On the morning of their departure they were seen off at the station by a large crowd of well-wishers.<sup>43</sup> The journey up to the valley was not without incident, the party detained for a whole day by a train derailment. Having left Treherne on Thursday morning they arrived in Swan River at midnight on Saturday. Staying overnight in the town, the family drove proudly to their farm the following morning. They were able to carry with them only their personal possessions. The heavy goods had to be left in a storage shed near the station because the roads were impassable until the snow came and sleighs could be used to haul them in.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless A. J. Cotton and his family moved in 1901 in style, a far cry from their original arrival in Manitoba in 1888, when they had existed in Treherne in much the same state as those Swan River pioneers who spent their first Valley winter in makeshift log cabins.

The state of the roads in the Valley had been a concern for Cotton before he had actually moved there. Until the branch line was constructed, the farmers would have to use existing roads to haul their grain to market. Cotton joined others in agitating about improved roads and the construction of bridges across a river which could be nasty in spring. Existing roads were impossible in the spring and fall, as Cotton had discovered in the spring of 1900 when trying to haul two carloads of effects to his farm. "Those first two miles out of town," he wrote, "were something terrible to contend with."<sup>45</sup> The condition of the roads would be "enough to discourage anyone from becoming a settler," he argued, and would leave "a bad impression in the mind of the land seeker and the intending settler."<sup>46</sup> Bridges were as important as roads, and he organized petitions and eventually the labour to build a bridge across the Swan River when the municipality finally agreed to supply the materials.<sup>47</sup> Cotton's concern for the impressions made on prospective settlers was not merely rhetoric, for he had long been an exponent of immigration to the North west, although that commitment took on new meaning once he moved to Swan River.

For A. J. Cotton, what the West needed was people. He boasted about their arrival and did all he could to encourage them. While he was very proud of Canada's English heritage and considered Canada "the greatest country in the British Empire," he was more concerned with the newcomers' work habits than with their country of origin.<sup>48</sup> Naturally he expected them to assimilate quickly. In reassuring one enquirer from Minnesota that he would not become liable for service in the Canadian army by coming to Canada, he added, "I dare suggest that you would not have lived in this country for ten years before you'd see clearly that justice and fair play reigned supreme, so that if it ever were necessary you would be only too willing to help protect and uphold our laws."<sup>49</sup>

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As Cotton pointed out to a correspondent in 1901, "I am not a land agent and have no special or vested interest in getting settlers to come here. It's just that being a farmer who was himself poor when he came out, but who has nevertheless made a good home for himself and his family, having met with great success, I feel it is my duty to reply to anyone asking about this country by encouraging them to come here and do likewise."<sup>50</sup> Manitoba was, after all, "the best farming country under the sun."<sup>51</sup>

It is not clear exactly how Cotton first became involved in promoting immigration, but over the years he had an increasing volume of letters from all over the world, receiving a small pittance for stationery and postage from the immigration authorities in return for his efforts. Such personal attention was probably the best immigration promotion available, particularly within the ranks of the farming community. At first much of Cotton's correspondence came from Ontario, perhaps because of an extended grapevine of individuals concerned about the problems of Ontario agriculture. One Ontario newspaper, reporting the move of a local man to Treherne in 1899, commented that their informant said there were "so many people settled there that he formerly knew that he could hardly realise that he was in a strange country."<sup>52</sup> As he prospered and particularly after he became known as the "Wheat King," Cotton was asked to contribute articles to various immigration pamphlets issued by the dominion and provincial governments, as well as the various railway companies, and he also wrote for farming journals and local newspapers.<sup>53</sup> Features on his success also appeared in eastern newspapers. The publicity meant that Cotton came to receive letters not only from eastern Canada, but from all over the United Kingdom, the United States, Brazil, India, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway.

Cotton scrupulously answered these letters and as those reprinted in this volume suggest, responded to every query in them. His advice was generally the same: come to the West. His comments for Ontario farmers were particularly personal and influential. He had, after all, "also, farmed for seven years in Ontario for myself before I came West and am generally in favour of this country."<sup>54</sup> The intending settler had to be prepared to work, particularly if coming without a stake:

Some young men have the mistaken idea that if they come here they need never exert themselves, believing that fortune will simply smile upon them and success will follow without any effort on their part. Now, I say any settler coming here with the intention of making it

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his home and of improving his condition will almost certainly have to exert himself. He must do his part and do it well: and if he does this he will have no difficulty at all in making a success of life.<sup>55</sup>

Nothing distressed Cotton more than those who would not work, whether they were young, farmers or young clergymen.

After moving to Swan River, Cotton usually included a discussion of the virtues of the Oallev. It did have the advantages of homestead land and inexpensive land for sale by the railway. There were also "plenty of creeks and rivers there, lots of firewood and plenty of big logs for lumber." It was possible for each settler to "get a permit to cut 10,000 feet of wood free of charge, for building purposes and it will cost you only \$5 per thousand for sawing."<sup>56</sup> However, Cotton recognized that "another man ma v have settled in a different part of the province and honestly believe that his place is best."<sup>57</sup> Each individual had to make up his own mind after obtaining the best information possible, and Cotton was full of suggestions on whom to consult.

If Cotton was flexible about location, he was considerably more dogmatic about experience. Greenhorns inexperienced at farming ought not to take on more than the v could handle. He was very keen on the notion of working for someone else for a year or more until the newcomer had gained experience of farming in the region, and he often suggested that urban dwellers resettle in Winnipeg rather than in the country side. Cotton was not angling for cheap labour with this advice, as he usually had no need of extra hands; he typically suggested that jobs could be obtained through the provincial immigration commissioner in Winnipeg: "He is in close touch with farmers regarding their need for help and he would have no difficulty at all in placing your two sons with an experienced farmer from whom the v could learn about general farming in the Canadian North West."<sup>58</sup> From his own experience, Cotton felt that haste in attempting to run a farm in an unfamiliar region was a mistake.

To one intending immigrant who pressed to come and work for him, Cotton emphasized that his own standards were very rigorous: "I must have my work done properly and to my satisfaction - and my horses taken care of and looked after right."<sup>59</sup> The intending farm hand, hopeful of becoming a full-fledged settler, was warned in no uncertain terms that farming was very different in Manitoba than in Ontario and that he would have to be able to take advice openly and willingly from those with experience. Cotton was very particular "that his ploughing should be done in a workmanlike manner and that the stooking should be done satisfactorily." The applicant was also warned

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that the lodging in Manitoba was poorer than that in Ontario. Nevertheless, one observer at Cotton's farm in Treherne noted that there was plenty of good food for the hired hands, who "are quite at home, have free access to the papers of which there are plenty."<sup>60</sup>

Cotton was a prolific reader of newspapers and journals, and at one time received twenty-seven publications by subscription. His selection ranged from local Manitoba newspapers to Ontario local newspapers to Manitoba dailies to various trade papers, such as *The Commercial*, *The Nor' West Farmer*, and *The Grain Growers Guide*. He also subscribed to uplifting religious papers, including the *American Christian Herald* (to which he complained about the absence of a Canadian section) and the *Canadian Christian Guardian*. As the last publications suggest, Cotton was a staunch Methodist, and was very firm that his employees not drink, smoke, or swear, injunctions which he applied to himself and his own family.

In February of 1899, Cotton approached the Manitoba Government Immigration agent for some pamphlets to send out in reply to the letters he was receiving "almost daily from the United States as well as Ontario inquiring about the country."<sup>61</sup> He eventually came to an arrangement whereby the immigration authorities supplied him with stationery and paid the postage for his letters. The more successful Cotton became, the more publicity he received, and the greater the number of enquiries that reached the Cotton farm. In the fourteen months between December of 1900 and February of 1903 he wrote 373 letters in reply to immigration enquiries. In 1903 the mail came mainly from the United States, perhaps indicative of the growing American interest in the Last Best West. In 1906 the letters Cotton received reached a peak of 329 enquiries in a single year. The next year the number of letters fell sharply to 121, a decline he attributed to the withdrawal of his name from the immigration literature.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, Cotton had over the years written over 2,000 letters to prospective newcomers, and he was still receiving enquiries as late as 1922.

Keen as he was on immigration and the development of the North West, Cotton was not often hostile to people because of their back-ground. The one instance of active opposition to government policy regarding immigration came in 1899 and concerned the arrival of the Doukhobors in the Swan River Valley. There had been no mention of land for Doukhobors when Cotton had been in the Valley in the spring of 1898, but shortly thereafter the Canadian government had decided to reserve Range 29 for these Russian sectarians. Unfortunately for the government, a number of Canadians had

## THE WHEAT KING

taken up homesteads in the range, and late in January of 1899 these men were "served with notices to vacate their homesteads, unless they wished to have Doukhobors for neighbours."<sup>63</sup> Although Cotton was not directly affected at this point - the land for which he had applied was in Range 28 - many of those settling in Range 29 were neighbours and relatives from Treherne, including William J. Ford, Cotton's brother-in-law. Ford had in fact taken up two homesteads, one for himself and one for his father John Ford, who was giving up his own farm in Ontario and coming to Manitoba to join his son.

Not previously active in such matters, Cotton fired off a number of letters complaining about the actions of the Dominion government. He wrote to Clifford Sifton, to Robert Watson (Minister of Public Works), and to J. G. Rutherford, his Member of Parliament. On the provincial level he wrote to Premier Thomas Greenway and to the provincial immigration agent. His message in all the letters was the same. Writing as a "British subject and a lover of British justice." Cotton argued a "British subject should never be turned out to make room for a Doukhobor."<sup>64</sup> When the land had been taken up there had been no suggestion of such group settlement. Buildings had been erected, goods and stock moved fifty-five miles from the railhead, and now the government was giving them the privilege of moving out. As Cotton put it. "some privilege I must say!"<sup>65</sup> Attempts by the government to argue that land had been available for years in the Valley did not impress the settlers. They mounted a concerted campaign of letters to politicians of both parties, and to the press.<sup>66</sup> The government gave in to the pressure, and settled the Russians further west. Cotton exulted, "Our efforts have prevailed; we have won the battle and we have the valley."<sup>67</sup> Cotton's hostility to the Doukhobors moderated as he saw them in action, and by 1905 he wrote to Peter Verigin, the Doukhobor leader, offering to help obtain a wool carding machine for the colony. He characteristically added that he thought there ought to be "English schools for your children."<sup>68</sup>

As his activities in 1899 regarding the Doukhobors suggested, Cotton had accepted - perhaps even taken for granted - a role as community leader in Swan River which he had not attempted to exercise in Treherne. He was involved in local school administration for the Harlington District for many years, resigning in 1918 when the school building was used for social events of which he did not approve.<sup>69</sup> He was also a prominent lay leader of the Methodist church in his community, providing money, land, and a general enthusiasm for the growth of the denomination.<sup>70</sup> Local improvements were also constantly fostered by

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Cotton, including roads, bridges, railway expansion and efficiency, and telephone service. He even had a brief if unsuccessful, flirtation with politics.

After his arrival in Swan River he was pressed on a number of occasions to accept the position of reeve by acclamation, but he consistently refused. His first response when it was suggested in the autumn of 1902 that he should run as a candidate in the next provincial election as the first representative from the new constituency of Swan River was also to refuse, observing “not much more than abuse in those petty offices.”<sup>71</sup> On nomination day, however, A. J. Cotton’s name stood as the Liberal Prohibitionist candidate for the new riding. Cotton was a lifelong Liberal, brought up in Edward Blake’s constituency of West Durham in Ontario; he had cast his first vote for Blake. In Manitoba he had been a firm supporter of the Greenway government and of the Dominion Liberal Party, but he had not been active in politics. Despite his initial reluctance, Cotton was drawn into provincial politics, partly by his newly-acquired status in the Valley, partly by the emerging temperance issue.

A staunch supporter of the temperance movement, Cotton boasted publicly that none on his farm smoked, drank, or swore. His Ontario Methodist background combined with a practical objection to drunkenness to lead him to believe that the temperance question was of “vital importance to the Province ... as well as each individual.”<sup>72</sup> The emergence of the temperance question at this time in Manitoba reflected many currents within the province, including the fears of Protestant Anglo-Canadians that it would succumb to the values of the new foreign immigrants.<sup>73</sup> Cotton was less a social reformer than an embodiment of personal values, but at the Swan River Temperance Convention of March 18, 1903, he was unanimously chosen as the Prohibitionist candidate for the provincial legislature. He made clear in his acceptance speech that he did not wish merely to stand as the Prohibitionist candidate, and would therefore accept the Liberal nomination as well were it offered. His reasons for preferring a joint ticket stemmed from his observations in the 1899 provincial election at Treherne, where a Prohibitionist candidate had split the ticket and allowed the Tories to emerge victorious. Such behaviour, Cotton had argued at the time, “is doing Prohibition harm.” Significantly, he added, “We think through the Grit party we can get it quicker.”<sup>74</sup>

When the Liberal convention met on April 13, 1903, to choose their candidate. Cotton was unable to be present due to the state of the roads.

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Nevertheless he emerged triumphant on the second ballot over the other contenders, William Sifton and W. J. Osborne. Cotton's Conservative opponent was J. W. Robson, reeve of Swan River and an experienced politician. Cotton had approached Robson in February of 1903 to see whether he would accept the Liberal nomination. Robson had refused, but said that were Cotton to stand as the Liberal candidate, he would not run against him. Nevertheless, Robson was in the race and was a strong candidate. Cotton suspected that the Tories had the edge in the Valley, but hoped the alliance between "the Prohibitionists with the Liberals, or the Liberals with the Prohibitionists" would be successful.<sup>75</sup> Unfortunately, the alliance was not as helpful as Cotton would have liked. A feeling developed among some Conservative Prohibitionists that Cotton had only accepted the Prohibitionist nomination "to catch Prohibitionist Conservative votes for the Liberals."<sup>76</sup> Cotton refuted this charge, but his total lack of political experience and involvement worked against him. He had become involved despite himself, and had nothing to do with the creation of either the Liberal or the Prohibitionist organizations in the Valley. As a prominent settler he was an obvious candidate, but his success depended upon skills which he did not possess.

Not only did Cotton face problems among the Prohibitionists, but he also had difficulty within the ranks of the Liberal party. As early as February of 1903, J. W. Robson had warned Cotton about the problem of holding Minitonas, the other main town in the constituency. There was considerable rivalry between the municipalities of Swan River and Minitonas, and when Cotton gained the nomination over the Minitonas candidate William Sifton, the Minitonas Liberals became in Cotton's word, "sulky." During the campaign Sifton went out of his way to undermine Cotton's position, at one point suggesting that it would be better to vote for Robson or not at all than to vote for Cotton.<sup>77</sup> As the constituency was a difficult one to canvass, much depending upon the organization in each locality working for the candidate, Sifton's lack of support was very serious. A visit from Thomas Greenway to speak on Cotton's behalf did bring the Minitonas Liberals into line publicly, but there was little enthusiasm for Cotton in that end of the Valley.

Cotton mounted an extensive campaign in 1903:

I was three weeks on the platform every night and only missed one night. And some nights it would be 2 and 3 and 5 o'clock in the morning before I would get home and bad roads and a hard constituency to work.<sup>78</sup>

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As the campaign progressed, Cotton developed into “a good platform speaker.”<sup>79</sup> The campaigning in the Swan River constituency went on two weeks longer than the main provincial campaign, ostensibly because of the size of the riding, but some suspected that the date was a piece of political maneuvering by the Tories, designed to give the voting in the Valley the aura of a by-election. It certainly had that effect. As the campaign progressed Cotton became more and more disenchanted with politics, but felt he must fight on to the end. The Roblin sweep of 1903 was to all intents and purposes the end of Cotton’s hopes. Voters doubtless saw little point in electing a man to office who would do nothing more than form part of a relatively ineffective opposition. However, the Tories continued to work hard. Roblin promised that the projected railway line down the Valley would finally be built, that government support would be given for a much needed and long awaited bridge across the Swan River, and finally, that the municipalities of Minionas and Swan River would be exempted from their seed grain indebtedness.”<sup>80</sup> These actions were dear to Cotton’s heart, but Robson would reap the benefit.

The Conservatives also sent in one of their big guns, Robert Rogers, for the last stages of the campaign. Cotton felt that “Rogers and his car load did me up, “describing how “the minister of the opposition came up and sidetracked their private car at Swan River and brought nine with them and money galore and whisky and made a good job of it for themselves.”<sup>81</sup> While Cotton had respect for his opponent Robson - “He was a very decent fellow. I kept him one night at home when speaking near here” - he had nothing but contempt for the tactics used by the Tories and the liquor interests to carry the election.<sup>82</sup> “ They had not a speck of shame or decency in the whole campaign. The Hotels spent about \$10,000 to carry the Constituency.”<sup>83</sup> Certainly the outcome might have been different had the election been held on July 10 and not August 3. As it was, Cotton carried only one poll, and that one largely populated by ex-Treherne residents. The final vote was Cotton 272 and Robson 503. This foray was Cotton’s only attempt at politics and the experience left him bitter. He even refused to join the Grain Growers’ movement, although he recognized the importance of farm representation in government.

After 1903 Cotton exerted his influence privately rather than through the medium of politics. The construction of the long promised branch line guaranteed by Robson in 1903 had been originally projected before Cotton had come to the Swan River Valley. Once he had finalised his purchase, Cotton began to campaign actively to make the line a reality.

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He initially tried to offer an incentive to the railway company by suggesting that if the v provided him with a shipping point he would “go into farming in a big way and will boom the valley.”<sup>84</sup> This approach failed, but he continued his efforts with a stream of letters to important figures, and when surveyors arrived in the Valley early in 1903, he attempted to get the road run as close to his own land as possible. He was successful, probably because what he wanted was the best route. However, although some grading had been done, in 1905 the Valley farmers were still waiting for the steel to be laid and dreaded hauling their grain to Swan River.<sup>85</sup>

Grain handling was an important issue in the Swan River Valley, as it was generally throughout the Canadian west. One of the reasons the Valley had been settled so quickly and extensively was the existence of the railway; by 1899 the line to Dauphin had been extended to the Valley and the town of Swan River created. The Valley proved as fertile as had been promised, but the problem remained one of getting the product to market. In Treherne in 1899 Cotton had experienced a shortage of railcars, writing:

The Farmer’s Elevator is full to the eaves and has to refuse wheat. Farmers here are desperate. What is the matter with the railway company that you cannot supply cars? The situation is deplorable and something should be done at once to relieve the strain. Grain is locked up here. It cannot be moved and buyers have been advised to withdraw.<sup>86</sup>

Shortage of railcars was to be a perennial problem. In 1902 the whole west suffered when the harvest was so abundant that the railways could not cope.

Shortages were not only of cars, but of storage facilities such as elevators. As Cotton wrote in 1903:

Not only is the situation deplorable: it is bound to get worse.... The quantity of grain grown last season was one hundred million bushels! The railways are stagnated, congested and powerless to move the wheat farmers already have. All elevators are full to the eaves and ever v available building (excluding churches) is crammed with wheat. Some stations have almost acres of bags piled up waiting for cars.<sup>87</sup>

Both the Canadian Northern and the Canadian Pacific failed to keep pace with

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the agricultural expansion; in 1903 Cotton estimated that the railroads needed 200 more engines and 6,000 more ears.

The situation throughout the west inspired Cotton in 1903 to draft an article entitled “The Elevator System of our Canadian North West,” reprinted in this volume. In this prescient piece, apparently never published, Cotton demonstrated how quickly the major growers such as himself had arrived at both an appreciation of the problem and the possible solutions. Cotton pointed out that difficulties caused by shortages of rolling stock and elevators were compounded by the treatment meted out to farmers through the inequities of the grading system. Cotton was no small homesteader, but one of the most successful farmers in the region. If men like him felt so abused, the system was obviously in trouble. Cotton’s remedy for the injustices was for farmers to unite and build an elevator system of their own. Although he did not join in the subsequent agrarian protests after World War I, it was the sense of privileged farmers like himself that they were being exploited which, fuelled those movements.

Grain handling problems continued in the Swan River Valley despite farmer organization. Cars remained in short supply and the co-operatives were sometimes accused of being as derelict as the commercial companies. Even government control of wheat marketing during the War did not resolve the problem. In 1918 Cotton complained that he had not “ploughed one furrow of fresh breaking for 3 years now,” chiefly because he spent his time hauling grain over poor roads. He added, “I really think the government should get some farmers to run things, for a while. I bet I could get grain out.”<sup>88</sup> Sentiments like these do much to explain the success of the United Farmers of Manitoba in 1921 and of the Progressive Party in the Dominion elections of the same year.

Much of Cotton’s energy in the years after his political defeat in 1903 were spent on local affairs, including an attempt to organize a townsite on his land. In September 1904 he and the railroad which would run down the Valley agreed “for the use of 50 acres as a townsite. I am to have every other lot.”<sup>89</sup> The townsite was laid out and lots sold before the steel had actually been put down, and Cotton began boosting the town in particular as well as the west in general. “There’s no doubt about it,” he wrote, “the town is sure to be a success, as it is backed by a first class grain district. Naturally those who can get in on the floor will have the advantage.”<sup>90</sup> The town was called Kenville despite several attempts to name it Cotton. A. J. wrote letters to small businessmen who might locate in “his” town, and he had sufficient political connections to ensure that Kenville gained a post office and economic influence to

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obtain a bank. The town never properly flourished, largely because the volume of local wheat produced never reached the figures Cotton had projected. He was convinced that political considerations gave preference to other places, especially Durban, which lay on the land of J. W. Robson.<sup>90</sup> Kenville never produced much financial gain for Cotton, and it did not even perpetuate his name, but its encouragement was typical of the sorts of activities in which men like Cotton became involved.<sup>92</sup>

The principal factor in the move to Swan River was the opportunity for Cotton to provide contiguous farms for his sons. He did not have much success in developing his land through offers to tenant farmers similar to that extended to him by William McLean, but gradually each of his four sons (and a nephew) was placed on land near Cotton's "home farm." Nelson took over section 13 in April of 1906, at about the same time that he married a local schoolteacher, Vita Mackay. Herschel moved on his own in 1913, and Almon and Allan got their farms in 1922. All Cotton's sons farmed on a share system until they inherited the property under their father's will, and all remained on the land until their own deaths or retirements. A. J. Cotton had indeed created a dynasty in the Swan River Valley.

Cotton gradually withdrew from large-scale farming himself as his sons took up their patrimony, but it took many years to bring his dream of a good life in the Swan River Valley to fruition. Not until World War I was he free of debt. Although he refused offers of involvement in public affairs beyond the Valley, in 1917 he did accept an invitation to become a member of the newly-formed Board of Governors of the University of Manitoba, and he was regularly reappointed until 1934. He left the problems of mechanizing the land mainly to his heirs, and by the 1920s contented himself with acting the role of the patriarch to increasing numbers of grandchildren. One classic photograph shows A. J. standing proudly at one side of his lawn, set up for croquet, surveying a large assortment of members of the younger generation.

In 1931 an article about Cotton appeared in *The Country Guide*. Entitled "Every Kick Did Me Good," the article obviously recorded Cotton's mythologization of his early life. Nevertheless, it did provide the essence of A. J. Cotton. He had suffered some setbacks, but a combination of hard work and good fortune had enabled him to succeed. The "Cotton Farm" was surrounded by holdings called "Cotton Corners," "Cotton Creek," "Cotton Bridge," "Cotton Valley," and "Cotton View," all operated by his sons and adopted nephew. Thus Cotton's children were provided with a more than adequate patrimony, settled on farms in an agricultural community that their father had done much to create.

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Cotton barns.

In his success, A. J Cotton epitomized the “Promise of Eden” that so many Ontario farmers had hoped for when they moved to the west. Eden, of course, not only required success for self, but also for the generations to come. In this ambition A. J. Cotton had certainly been fulfilled.

The basis of the selection of letters and papers which follows is the collection of Cotton Papers at the Public Archives of Manitoba (PAM),

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Quebec River — March 7<sup>th</sup> 6

J. Abel Smith Esq.  
Dominion Immigration Commission  
Winnipeg

Dear Sir

I enclose a letter I have just received from W. Beecher Smith of England. He wrote me some time ago about placing a number of young men and he mentioned to him about the large amount of Railway Construction on hand for 1906 and the large amount of employment it would give at good wages and in his reply states he could place a number of Yorkshire men on Railway Construction I have just written him stating I have forwarded his letter to you and by doubt that you could place any number of men he could send out on Railway Construction I told him you would write him. I am forwarding you a number of letters showing you the kind of correspondence I am receiving I am answering them all and will give you an idea what I am doing in way of inducing letters to come to our Canadian West-ward like for you to look over these letters personally and return them to me to be filed.

I remain yours Truly

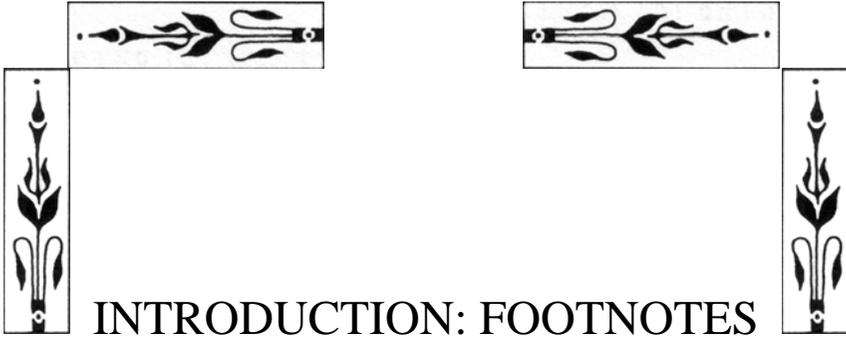
A. J. Cotton  
Quebec River  
Main

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generously donated by the Cotton family. The collection includes a series of account books (CAB) and seven letter books (CLB). The latter are letter-press books commonly used at the time to keep copies, involving special paper and ink employed at the time of drafting the original letter. According to family tradition, Cotton pressed the books by sitting on them, timing himself by singing hymns as he waited. The copies are often difficult to read, rendered virtually illegible by time and the original process employed. Cotton dashed most of his letters off in the early morning, and paid little attention to the niceties of style, such as capitalization, paragraphing, punctuation, and spelling. He was exceptionally fond of the run-on sentence. In transcribing the letters, I have attempted to make them more readable for the modern audience while preserving much of the original spirit in which they were written. Punctuation has been silently supplied, obvious misspellings have been corrected, and the erratic use of capitalization eliminated. Annotation has been kept to a minimum, seeking largely to explain obscure reference in the text, and has been confined to headnotes to each item. Cotton became in later years an avid photographer, and the illustrations in the volume are from the family collection.

Many people helped make the production of this volume possible. I must thank the Cotton family at Swan River for access to material not held at the Public Archives of Manitoba as well as to the major collection and for their kindness to me when I visited the Valley. This volume would never have come into being without the efforts of Angie Loat, who provided enthusiasm, advice, and unfailing hospitality. I am also indebted to Barry Hyman and the staff of the Public Archives of Manitoba; Pat Cherniak and Merle MacLeod at the Legislative Library, Winnipeg; Margaret Fancy at Mount Allison library in Sackville, New Brunswick; Richard Bennett of the University of Manitoba Archives; and Bob Raeburn, secretary to the Board of Governors of the University of Manitoba. Last but not least, I wish to thank my husband and children: Jack, Geraint, Jonathan, Carla, Sian, and Michael. Naturally I am responsible for any mistakes or inaccuracies.

Wendy Owen  
March, 1986



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70. Cotton to J. S. Woodsworth, June 12, 1911, reprinted in this volume.
71. Cotton to J. S. McAdam, November 28, 1902, PAM, CLB.
72. Cotton to W. L. Armstrong, April 29, 1903, PAM, CLB.
73. Morton, Manitoba, 282-3; A. R. Allan, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada 1914-1928* (Toronto, 1971), 10-13; John H. Thompson, "The Prohibition Question in Manitoba, 1892-1928," unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1969.
74. Cotton to W. I. Ford, December 3, 1899, PAM, CLB.
75. Cotton to Thomas Greenway, April 4, 1903, PAM, CLB.
76. Cotton to W. R. Mulock, april 29, 1903, PAM, CLB.
77. Cotton to R. E. Leach, May 2, May 9, 1903, PAM, CLB.
78. Cotton to Colonel McLean, October 22, 1903, PAM, CLB.
79. *Swan River Star*, July 29, 1903.
80. *Ibid.*
81. Cotton to William Williams, December 10, 1903, PAM, CLB.
82. Cotton to Colonel McLean, October 22, 1903, PAM, CLB.
83. Cotton to William Williams, December 10, 1903, PAM, CLB.
84. Cotton to D. B. Hanna, July 5, 1900, PAM, CLB.
85. Cotton to Rodmond P. Roblin, September 21, 1905, reprinted in this volume. 86. Cotton to Robert Kerr, September 28, 1899, PAM, CLB.
87. Unpublished manuscript, March 1903, reprinted in this volume.
88. Cotton to United Grain Growers, June 10, 1918, PAM, CLB.
89. Cotton to T. A. Burrows, March 28, 1904, PAM, CLB.
90. Cotton to Alex McKenzie, December 5, 1905, PAM, CLB.
91. Cotton to Davidson and McRae, January 15, 1908, PAM, CLB.
92. Cotton to Canadian Town Properties, January 17, 1926, PAM, CLB. For the pattern, see Paul Voisey, "Boosting the small prairie town 1904-1913: An example from southern Manitoba," in A.F.J. Artibise, ed., *Town and City: Aspects of Western Urban Development* (Regina, 1981), 147-176.

# IMPORTANT AUCTION SALE!

OF VERY VALUABLE

# FARM

In the Township of Clarke.

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## MR. A. J. COTTON

Has favored me with instructions to sell by Auction

### AT AMERICAN HOTEL, PORT HOPE,

ON

## SATURDAY, OCT. 29th, 1887

At one o'clock, p. m., his valuable farm, better known as the "Henderson Farm,"  
being composed of the

**Centre ONE HUNDRED ACRES of Lot No. 5, in Broken Front,  
Township of Clarke,**

Three quarters of a mile from Port Granby, one mile from Newtonville Station on the Grand Trunk Road, two and a half miles from the Village of Newtonville, where there are Stores, Post Office, Schools, Churches, Hotels, Blacksmith Shops, Carriage Shops, and a School House within 10 minutes walk of dwelling. The land is a very rich clay loam; there are about 95 acres cleared, well fenced and in a high state of cultivation, balance is heavily timbered with hardwood and enough cedar to fence the farm over again; this piece of wood has never been culled. There are on the premises a very comfortable dwelling, 1 frame barn 36x55 ft., 1 frame barn 30x40 ft., 1 frame driving shed 15x30 ft., stables and implement sheds underneath the barns. A good orchard of choice grafted fruit trees, composed of Appie, Pear, Plum, Cherry, etc. Two living streams cross the farm; 1 good well of water with pump. This is one of the most desirable farms in the County of Durham, and parties intending to purchase a one-hundred acre farm should not lose sight of this sale, situated as it is in one of the best sections in Canada. Parties acquainted with this farm know it to be one of the best grain growing farms in the Province.

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TERMS OF SALE.—\$200 on day of sale, and enough to make up three-fourths of the purchase money on completion of agreement, say within one month; balance of purchase money can remain on mortgage for a term of years to suit purchaser, bearing interest at 6 per cent. per annum. A GOOD TITLE WILL BE GIVEN. Sale without reserve.

**JAMES KERR,**  
AUCTIONEER.

Clarke, Oct. 10th, 1887.

Geo. Wilson & Son, Printers, DAILY GUIDE Steam Print, Walton Street, Port Hope.

Auction poster, 1887.

## THE WHEAT KING

### INVOICE, 1887

[PAM, CAB, December 1887]

[The following is the list of goods which Cotton sold at auction in Ontario prior to his departure for Manitoba.]

Dec. 8th, 1887	\$	c	Dec. 8th, 1887	\$	c
Sas & seed Box		25	No. 2 Hayrake	1	25
Well Bucket		05	Woods Reaper	2	00
Stone boat		10	Massey Binder	75	00
Grain Cradle		10	7-32 foot Ladder	2	00
Long Sleigh	1	50	Wood rack	25	
Bob Sleigh	3	00	Fanning Mill	2	00
Cutter		50	Straw Cutter	50	
Buggy	6	75	32 Hens @ 15 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> each	4	96
Old Seeder	10	00	Pen No. 1 Sheep		
New Seeder (Combined)	50	00	(4 in number)	17	00
Mower	5	00	Pen No. 2 Sheep		
Scotch Harrows	4	00	(5 in number)	25	00
Iron Harrows	4	00	1 Gray Cow	40	00
Horse Hoe	5	00	1 White Cow	21	00
Two Horse Cultivator	15	00	1 Red Cow	41	00
No. 1 plough	2	00	1-3 year old Heifer	19	50
No. 2 plough	3	50	1 red Steer (2 years old)	17	00
No. 3 plough	7	00	1 Steer & Heifer @ 12.75	25	50
No. 4 plough	25		2 red Heifers @ 8.50	17	00
Turnip roller	1	00	3 Heifers @ 8.00	24	00
Wheelbarrow	1	75	1 Bay Horse	145	00
Sulkyrake	7	00	1 Black Horse	120	00
Land roller	8	00	Double Harness	10	00
No. 1 Wagon	9	00	1 Black Mare in foal	76	00
No. 1 Hayrack	2	00	1 Bay Mare in foal	81	00
No. 2 Wagon	2	25	1 Bay Colt	36	00
A. J. Cotton					

## *Introduction Footnotes*

Family group in Ontario, just before the move west in 1888.



From left to right: standing - Annie Ford (Mrs. Cook), Amy Ford (Mrs. Yates), Sam Henderson, Sophronia Ford (Mrs. Henderson), William Ford, and Almon James Cotton; seated - Sara Ford, and Esther Louise Ford (Mrs. A. J. Cotton); and in the front row -John Nelson Cotton, Frances Lillian Cotton, and Wellington Herschel Cotton.

**LETTERS AND PAPERS  
OF  
A. J. COTTON**

**To MAJOR WILLIAM McLEAN**

[Port Hope Daily Times, 23 August 1888]

Treherne  
August 4, 1888

[Major William McLean was a Port Hope businessman who dealt in agricultural machinery. His military title stemmed from his position in the local militia - the 14th Field Battery. A lieutenant at the formation of the battery in 1872, McLean had been made major in 1883 and become lieutenant-colonel in 1893, a post he held until his retirement in 1901. Cotton rented his first land in Treherne from McLean.]

Dear Major McLean,

I tell you things are beginning to boom in the way of crops up here. I don't think, in the history of man, anybody ever saw such crops as there are up here. If the people in Ontario were told about them they would not believe the statements -- they would think it impossible. Last year there were big crops in Manitoba, but they will not compare with this season's. For instance one farmer, east of Treherne, had 80 acres of wheat last year, and had 3,500 bushels an average of 43 bushels to the acre all round; some went 53. The same farmer told me that he has been all through his wheat this year, and it is much heavier and will have a larger yield. Mr. Sharpe, east of here, had wheat that went 49 bushels to the acre last year. Mr. Marwood's son who lives about three miles west, had wheat that averaged 56 bushels to the acre all round, and the present year he says is a great deal heavier. This is a specimen of the crops last year in this locality, and this year they will be heavier still - if frost and hail storms keep off - of the latter we had one a week ago, which did considerable damage to crops.

Well, Sir I am highly pleased with the country and believe there is no country under the sun so well adapted for farming. I tell you, sir, it would be a blessing to a majority of struggling farmers in Ontario if they would come west and settle and be out of misery. Manitoba has had a hard name but that was before there were railroads; now it is different, the hard times are past and the hardships are less. It is astonishing what the country will produce under favorable circumstances.

This has been a fine season for growth, and the harvest will be abundant. The farmers are doing well, and where you see farmers do well, all classes do well (machine agents as well.)

There will be a tremendous amount of wheat to leave Manitoba this winter and it will take a lot of traffic to export it. As for barley, Manitoba can excel Ontario every time. I do believe some barley up here will go sixty pounds to the bushel. I never saw barley grow so heavy in weight. I have had a good deal of experience in raising barley but it requires no skill

## THE WHEAT KING

to raise barley in this country; it is no trouble to raise 60 bushels to the acre, the only trouble being the price. We want more railroads to export the grain, it costs so much to get it away that the farmer gets a small price but he has the number of bushels every time. Now, for instance take barley that weighs from 53 to 60 lbs to the bushel, when 48 lbs make a bushel there is 5 to 8 lbs extra on each bushel by measure, while in Ontario I have seen barley weigh as low as 43 lbs to the bushel. That's where Manitoba has another advantage. Wheat also weighs over weight and oats are something astonishing as to weight. Manitoba can grow anything. Change the name, give it some other name, and you will see the Ontario farmers flock up here. It is the name that bothers them. I know it did me; I used to think the name enough discouragement, but tell these farmers to never mind the name but come to this country and live, not stay in Ontario and barely exist. There is lots of room; why sir, when I get on a rising ground and look around I can see only a small patch under cultivation as compared with the arable land.

Another advantage Manitoba holds and no other province can grasp from her is a favorable spring. You can get on the land as soon as the snow is gone and put in your crop with ease, even the heaviest clay is not sticky, but is all pulverized, and you can walk over the land with a carpet slipper and not even get it soiled. The spring is cool for putting in grain; no killing horses by going through wet clay and no mud holes. All alike, even land and level to the bargain; no wet hollows. I call this an advantage, and as soon as your crops are in, the warm, rainy weather comes on and vegetation starts with a bound, and a promising crop is started and that is the forerunner of a bountiful harvest. The soil is all alike; not as in Ontario, or at least a good part of it, where all the soils are in one field. The one soil here is black clay loam, with an underlying clay bottom. What can a farmer find better to ensure a crop? Now, sir, let every man that is laboring heavy for a bare living come to Manitoba, and let him bare his arm and go to work and success is sure.

If the farmers want to see what Manitoba can raise and can't afford to come up and see the country, let them go to the Toronto Exhibition this fall and there open their eyes and look at the Manitoba exhibit, and there they can view with their own eyes a sample of Manitoba production, and if that don't convince any farmer that Manitoba is the farming country they are no farmers. Later I will try and give a few details about the yield of grain this fall.

**To ROBERT KERR**

[PAM, CLB, 1, 369-70]

Treherne  
October 6, 1898

[Robert Kerr was the Canadian Pacific Railway's general manager, based in Winnipeg. Cotton's complaint about the shortage of rail cars for shipping wheat was a perennial one for all western farmers. The C.P.R.'s lack of cars was exacerbated by the continually increasing grain crop produced in the West. The Treherne Farmer's Elevator had been established in 1891, and Cotton was one of the original stockholders and directors. Farmers' elevators were a response to what was perceived by farmers as the inequities of the grain system. At these co-operatively-owned elevators, farmers felt they received full market values, just weights, equitable dockage, and fair grading of their grain. The presence of a farmers' elevator also tended to increase the price offered for grain. E. A. James was a local railway official.]

Dear Sir,

I am one of the directors of the Treherne Farmers Elevator and the manager brought this matter before the board that he cannot get cars after repeatedly asking for them. He has twenty cars to shift at once or should be shipped a week ago and this wheat is still laying in the elevator and as soon as the weather gets fine thrashing will begin in earnest and there is more space ordered than can be supplied if we do, not get cars at once. I ordered from your agent here on September 20th twenty cars for my own wheat, and up to this date there is only twelve loaded, and I can't see the reason you don't send us cars. Mr. James "C.P.R." was at Treherne a short time ago and scarcity of cars was mentioned to him, and a party heard him say there were lots of empty cars up the main line, but it would not pay to haul them down. If such is the case the farmer should not be allowed to suffer for want of cars. I don't know why Treherne should get the go by, but such has been the case the last three years. Impossible to get cars when wanted. I am in a position to know this to be a fact, as I have been connected with the Farmers Elevator since she was first built. And for instance last fall we could not get cars and our elevator was filled to the eves and became disabled. At one time we thought it would collapse and we wired to you for a special train to relieve us, but no one could expect no favor from the C.P.R., therefore our elevator received damage to the amount of seven hundred dollars besides shutting down and loss of receipts. Now I call this an injustice, and still the appearances look favorable for a repetition of the same this fall. Now, Mr. Kerr, I have given you the situation here and if there is a possibility of relieving us I hope you will look into the matter and do so.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

## THE WHEAT KING

**To E. R. WAYLAND**

[PAM, CLB, 1, p. 60]

Treherne  
October 10, 1898

[E. R. Wayland was the elevator company to which Cotton consigned his grain in Fort William. The grain was to be held in Wayland's elevator until Cotton was ready to sell it. The grading system for western wheat was defined by the Dominion Parliament in 1885 as follows: (1) Manitoba Hard No. 1 would be composed of 85% Red Fife and weigh sixty pounds to the bushel; (2) Manitoba Hard No. 2 was at least 85% Red Fife and weighed fifty-eight pounds to the bushel; (3) No. 1 Northern was at least 50% Red Fife and sixty pounds to the bushel; (4) No. 2 Northern was at least 50% Red Fife and fifty-eight pounds to the bushel; (5) No. 3 Northern was all wheat fit for warehousing not good enough to be graded No. 2 but weighing not less than fifty-six pounds to the bushel; (6) Rejected was all wheat fit for warehousing but too low in weight or otherwise unfit for No. 3. When Cotton was ready to sell, he would wire a number of grain dealers informing them of the quantity and quality of the grain. If interested they would wire offers and Cotton would accept the one most advantageous.]

Dear Sir,

I have received up to this mail waybills, inspections, and outruns from eight cars and I am pleased you are looking after my interest, but today's mail brought me three northern which I do not understand. They are as follows: Inspection no. 3192. no. of car 28350. Grade 1.2. date Oct. 5th. Inspection no. 3184. no. of car 22480. Grade 1.2. date Oct. 5th. Inspection no. 3183. no. of car 15690. Grade 1.2. date Oct. 5th. Now I think the inspector must have been a little off that day. I wish you would look into this at once as there must be some mistake, for these three were 1. H[ard] cars. I graded this grain into the elevator and saw it loaded. It was all hard, dry and in good shape and well cleaned. You did not make any remarks with the way bills, why they graded northern and I am surprised. I wish you to attend to this at once and see if it can be remedied for I am dissatisfied with those three grades. I would like to hear from you at once on this matter.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

**To "THE CHRISTIAN HERALD"**

[PAM, CLB, 1, p. 6]

Treherne  
November 17, 1898

[The Christian Herald was an illustrated Methodist family journal published weekly in New York City.]

Dear Sir,

Enclosed please find (\$2.00) two dollars for subscription to the Christian Herald. Please send it along as long as the two dollars lasts, and then don't stop it until I say so. I made a mistake before as I intended having the paper for a year but thought it was only a dollar a year and I only sent a dollar instead of \$1.50 and you stopped short.

Now sir I wish to ask a favor from you. My family is greatly taken up with your paper and I think all Canadians are who are subscribers and you have a large list of them. I for one and I think they will agree with me that we would be pleased if you would devote one page to Canada and Canadians and it would also increase your circulation. I am sure your Canadian subscribers would appreciate it very much and you have also a great many Canadians in the States who are subscribers to your valuable paper that is noble, uplifting, and should be in every family.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To F. H. MATHEWSON**

[PAM, CLB, 1, p. 9]

Treherne  
November 25, 1898

[F. W. Mathewson was manager of the Winnipeg branch of the Canadian Bank of Commerce. He was later transferred to Montreal. The wheat referred to in this letter was the wheat shipped by Cotton to Fort William. The Hartford Company was an insurance company based in Hartford, Connecticut. "Buy December" is a reference to buying and selling wheat on the futures market.]

Dear Sir,

Yours of the 16th Inst. to hand. You asked if my wheat was insured. Yes, I am fully covered by insurance in the Hartford Company to the amount of \$10,000. I insured for nine months. You say you think there will be no profit in holding at the present outlook. I would not try to hold until spring at a loss. Neither would I like to sell if there was a possibility to gain

## THE WHEAT KING

before August. Some parties here advise me to sell my spot and buy December for four cents less, but as I have not had any experience in this line I do not care to venture without sound advice, as I want to be on the safe side. Now, Mr. Mathewson, as you are a man of experience and constantly in close connection with grain men I would be pleased to have your advice on the situation.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

### **To T. G. PHILLIPS, M.D.**

[PAM, CLB, 1, p. 12]

Treherne  
17 December 1898

[T. G. Phillips was at this time practising medicine in Toronto. He and his wife owned some of the land that Cotton was farming. Phillips later lived at Treherne. The brother-in-law mentioned in this letter is William I. Ford, who had taken up a homestead and bought additional land in the Swan River Valley.]

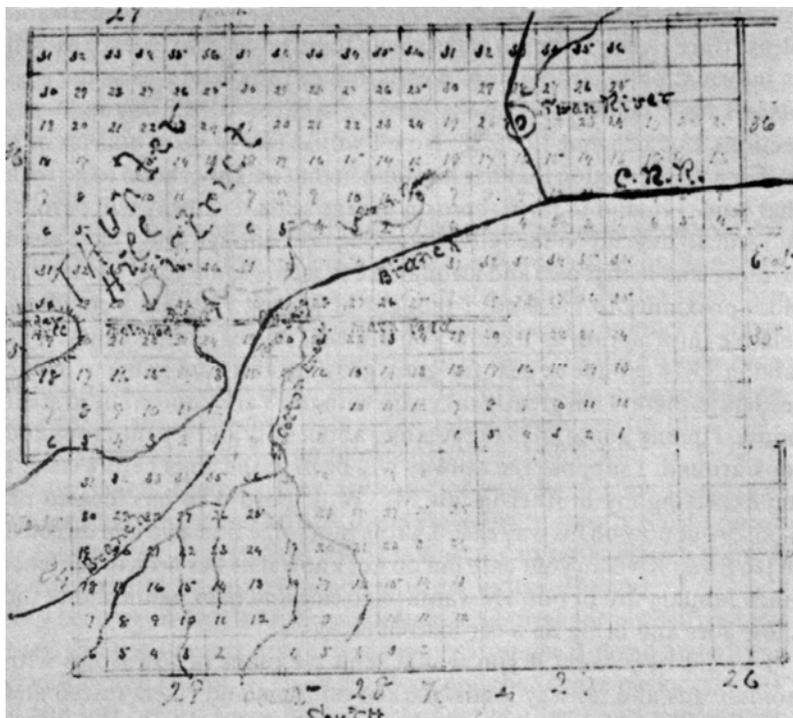
Dear Sir,

Enclosed please find tax receipts for South 1/2.8.10.W. and two dollars rent due on the same for year 1898.

I wrote you on October 22nd making offer for East 1/4 and not getting any reply thought probably you did not care to sell. I see you have had about as much winter in Toronto and Hamilton as we have up here. We have had it very winter like here but here these last two days we have had a Chinook and today thawing. Thrashing hardly done yet and two machines going yet. Elevators are full, can't get cars, farmers have to hold back. Money slow and collection slow. Quite a number from here going to Swan River Country, about twenty-five families left Treherne this last two weeks. My brother-in-law went also. All taking up land and taking effects with them to settle down. It is going to be a fine district and the Railway's going in with them. Wishing you all a Merry Xmas and Happy New Year.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton



Cotton's suggested route for the projected branch line through the Swan River Valley.

**To HUGH HARLEY**

Treherne

[PAM, CLB, I, 24-25]

January 23, 1899

[Hugh Harley was the government land agent for the Swan River Valley. When the valley was opened for settlement in 1898, Harley established his office in a tent in what became known as "Tent Town," at the entrance to the valley. He was thinly disguised as "Hugh Hurley" in Douglas Durkin's *The Heart of Cherry McBain* (1919). Subsequently settling in the town of Swan River, Harley became its postmaster. The absence of roads, especially in newly-opened areas like the Swan River Valley, meant that winter - when goods could be moved by sleigh - was one of the best times to move goods and wheat. During spring and fall, the roads tended to be impassable, a problem increased by the absence of bridges across the river.]

Dear Sir,

I would be pleased if you would make me out a list of homesteads that have been taken up in the valley, that is, mark them off and also could you

## THE WHEAT KING

mark off list of railway land that has been applied for on plan and please trace rivers. I want to make a map for my own convenience as well as information regarding homesteads and railway lands, as in the first place I have made applications for two sections of railway land viz. sections 13.35.28 and 19.35.28. Now I would like to get a quarter or a half or a whole section that has hay on it in that neighborhood to go with that land. I intend to farm there on a large scale if railway will permit. But will all depend on the railway coming near enough and I have good farming land in that part and I would like to secure some good hay land in close proximity to my land. I thought in writing you that I could get reliable information as I know you are well posted on the valley. The land in 35.28 cannot be beat for grain growing and I am going to locate settlers in there. I am greatly taken up with the Valley and want to see it boom. I intend going up in the summer about July and see the crops and look around. I suppose the railway will be in to the tents before then. I am expecting my brother-in-law Mr. W. I. Ford who has located on 6.35.29 out now on his way east. I wrote him some time ago and directed [it] to Swan River in your care but do not know if he has been to the tents since January 3rd or not. He wants to go east and back again before the snow goes and bring up a car load of effects.

I would be pleased if you would send me plans of townships with homesteads and railway lands marked on them and rivers traced and such information as would assist me in making [a] map as I can't yet get a map of the Valley as I want it.

Wishing you the Compliments of the season.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To W. F. McCREARY**

[PAM, CLB, 1, 30-32]

Treherne  
January 30, 1899

[W. F. McCreary was the first federal commissioner of immigration, a position created by Clifford Sifton in 1897 and based in Winnipeg. The commissioner administered the various activities of the Immigration Department and worked in close liaison with the Dominion Lands Branch and the C.P.R. McCreary, a former Winnipeg mayor, held the position of commissioner between 1897 and 1901, at which time he took up a seat in the Dominion Parliament. In the general election of November 1900, McCreary took the Selkirk seat for the Liberals with a majority of one. The Doukhobors were a sect of Russian dissenters, who because of their pacifist beliefs, were persecuted in their home-land. With the aid of Count Leo Tolstoi and British and American Quakers, the Doukhobors were allowed to depart Russia and emigrate to Canada. Between 1898 and 1899, 7,400 Doukhobors came to Canada, settling in three colonies in what is now Saskatchewan. The North Colony bordered on the western edge

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

of the Swan River Valley. Hugh John Macdonald was the son of Sir John A. Macdonald. He had settled in Winnipeg in 1882 and set up a legal practice with J. Stewart Tupper (the son of Sir Charles). In 1899 Macdonald was leader of the Manitoba Conservatives, and led them to victory in the provincial general election later that year. This letter is typical of many Cotton wrote on the same subject in this period.]

Dear Sir,

My attention has been called to a very serious matter dealing with the government in regard to settlers in the Swan River Valley on Range 29 with especial reference to township 35 in that range. In this township there are 35 homesteads taken up by Canadians and a number of those are from Treherne who homesteaded in that township and all have been notified by the Department of Interior that they can get out and take up homesteads [in] some other part as this range is reserved for the Doukhobors. Now I claim this is an Injustice to those homesteaders. They all wish to remain there as they are satisfied and have gone to a great expense to get there and settled. They are going to stoutly rebel against the government if they allow the Doukhobors to settle among them. I say it is a shame on any government to act in this manner.

My brother-in-law W. I. Ford took up land there for himself and his father, and last summer drove from here to Thunder Hill and underwent difficulties and hardships to locate there, and then drove back again last fall and just before Xmas loaded a car here of effects and implements and took [them] out to Thunder Hill and drew this 55 miles and put up his buildings and just came here on the 27th on his way to Ontario to bring up his father and mother and another load of effects for their homesteads. He told me they were just served with notices about the 23rd to vacate the homesteads unless they wished to have those Doukhobors for neighbors. Now this is interfering with their private rights. They are British subjects and should be treated as such. If the government wishes any moving to be done let the Doukhobors do it. There is plenty of land west of this range that is vacant for all of them and such being the case, why interfere with the Canadian settlers who had no assistance? I am a Grit to the back bone but such treatment of our own Canadians (and a number of them have served their three years in the Volunteers) is a disgrace to any government. Mr. Ford told me last night that in the Swan Valley a petition will be presented to the government signed by those settlers that they wish to have British rights and do not intend to move out, hoping the government will not settle any Doukhobors in Range 29 in the Valley. And if this is not done there is not a Grit in Treherne but will turn their backs on the government. One Tory here has been served with a notice of the above and

THE WHEAT KING



Doukhorbor woman and child at Cotton Farm, ca. 1902.

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

has sent it down to Hugh John for him to look over and have his opinion. Now, Mr. McCreary, by all means advise the government to be cautious in dealing with those Canadian settlers and meet their wishes. As one of them are worth 25 Doukhobors to this country. And whatever the government does let it satisfy the settler and encourage him. Don't tramp on him and turn him out for a Doukhobor. There is land enough here for all. And if there is an advantage to give let the British subject come first.

This is of Importance to me also as I applied for two sections of land there and intend going there to farm on a large scale, but my land is in Range 28. I have been the means of bringing a large number of settlers to this country from Ontario and all are doing well and I have spoken up for this country wherever I went and wrote about it in the press and always spoke up for the Grit government and intend to do so as long as they protect the settler. Hoping to hear from you in this case.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To T. A. BURROWS**

[PAM, CLB, I, 75-76]

Treherne  
February 15, 1899

[Theodore A. Burrows had since 1896 been land commissioner for the Winnipeg and Great Northern Railway Company. William Mackenzie and Donald Mann, who promoted the railway, had built a number of branch lines in western Canada. In 1895 they bought and completed the Lake Manitoba Railway and Canal Company. Their companies developed into the Winnipeg and Great Northern and eventually into the Canadian Northern Railway. Burrows was a lumber merchant and was brother-in-law to Clifford Sifton. In 1890 he had been asked by the provincial government to construct a colonization road into the Dauphin area, the first step in opening the country for large-scale settlement. In 1892 Burrows was elected as the first M. L. A. for Dauphin, and continued to hold the seat until he left provincial politics in 1903. In 1904 he won the Dauphin seat in the federal parliament, his riding including the Swan River Valley. He was defeated in 1908, amidst rumours that he had exploited his connections with Clifford Sifton.]

Dear Sir,

I wish to make application for some more land in the Swan River if there is any possibility of the railway going west far enough for accommodation. If it is at all possible I intend to farm in the Valley on a large scale and make section 19 township 35 range 28 my base. But [I] could not make it a success unless in close proximity to [a] railway shipping point. I have heard you have not definitely settled on what route you will put the line

## THE WHEAT KING

but hope you will bring the western end of the Valley in as close connection as possible as I think the very best land is in that end, in township 34, ranges 28 and 29, and township 35, ranges 28 and 29, and are getting thickly settled with the exception of township 34 range 29 which has not had a chance on account of the government's action in reserving it for the Doukhobors, which I think was a great mistake. I still think they will adjust matters and plant the Doukhobors west of range 29 which will be more agreeable to the settlers, as they consider their just rights as British subjects were ignored. I was surprised at the action the government had taken in notifying the settlers on homesteads in town-ships 35 and 36 range 29 that they have the privilege of moving out if they so desired which I thought was an injustice to ask a British subject to move out to make room for a foreigner, and again in refusing settlers to take up homesteads in township 34, range 29, stating it was reserved for the Doukhobors. I am glad to see the settlers in the Valley holding for their just rights as I know it for a fact that some of the best land in the Valley is in township 34, 35 and 36, range 29. Where British subjects should have the privilege of locating, as there is plenty of land west of range 29 for the Doukhobors where settlers are not locating. I was sorry to see in the paper that your sawmill on the railway terminus was burned, it being a loss to you as well as an inconvenience to the settlers. I am going to take a trip up to the Valley next summer and look over it and hope to see it boom and look over this other land that I am applying for. I wish you to file my application for the following lands in the Swan Valley: southeast quarter section 25 township 35 range 29; northeast quarter section 13 township 35 range 29; northwest quarter section 16 township 35 range 28; southwest section 31 township 35 range 27; west half section 21 township 35 range 28. And you have previously filed applications for sections 19 and 13, township 35 range 28, which will make a total of 3 1/2 sections. Please let me know if any applications are first on this land that I am applying for now. You said 13 and 19 was all right in the summer.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*



Cotton horses.

**To W. I. FORD AND MR. AND MRS. JOHN GAY FORD**

[PAM, CLB, I, 84]

Treherne  
24 February 1899

[William I. Ford was at the time of this letter in Mariposa, Ontario, helping his parents prepare for their move west. John Gay Ford had decided to retire from farming and join his son, who had filed for two homesteads in the Thunder Hill region of the Swan River Valley, one in his own name and the other in his father's name. John Gay Ford died shortly after his removal to Manitoba. His wife Sarah survived until 1912, eventually living with the Cotton family. J. G. Rutherford was the Liberal M.P. for the federal riding of Macdonald (which included Treherne). A local veterinarian, Rutherford had been M.L.A. for Lakeside (also including Treherne) before resigning to run federally. His opponent had originally taken the seat, but following a declaration of a void election Rutherford won by acclamation. He was defeated in 1900. Clifford Sifton was minister of the interior in charge of western immigration and settlement.]

Dear Brother, Father and Mother,

Just a line or two. I just intended to drop a card but thought it was not enough and again perhaps you may not receive this. Well, just received [a] letter from J. G. Rutherford M.P. He got word from Sifton that no Doukhobors will be settled in range 29. They will all be moved out of the province farther west where they should be. I think our efforts prevailed and won and we have the Valley. I think I will have my share of it. Anyhow, I hope you are all well as we are. I have been to Treherne for two whole days about smokestack at elevator that was blown down and

## THE WHEAT KING

yesterday we had it all ready to raise when we broke it into two in raising and now we have it raised tonight, ready to put in boiler. Just excuse this scribble. I hope you are getting along fine. I have not bought a team - offered \$235 for a team yesterday and today I saw the team on the street and now I would not do so. Expect 3 more carloads in shortly. I expect to get word from you before this reaches you. I hope you will get every thing packed in your car in good shape and I think Alick Avery will be good assistance and good help to you. Now mother and father I expect to see you soon.

Good Bye

Almon

Now Will drop me a card when you leave and another at Winnipeg and again at Dauphin and so on.

### **To W. C. MAITLAND**

Treherne

[PAM, CLB, I, 90-91]

20 February 1899

[Maitland was from Lucasville, Ontario, and had written to Cotton looking for work during the coming season. Stooking was the practice of standing sheaves upright in the field after the sheaves came off the binder.]

Dear Sir,

Your letter of the 8th Inst. to hand. Now, sir, I have a place open for you if you think you can fill the bill. There are several observations for you to view, some of which are as follows: the work here is different to what it is in Ontario and you will have to take advice sometimes pretty freely and fully. Also lodging here is poorer than in Ontario (and a good many things you will have to put up with which I have no doubt has not cost you a thought). I must have my work done properly and to my satisfaction, and my horses taken care of and looked after right. Hours as follows: we rise at 5 o'clock, have breakfast and hitch on to plow and seeder, harrow at seven in morning and quit work in evening not later than 6:30 except in harvest, thrashing, and haying. My stooking must be done satisfactory as I am very particular about it and also my plowing must be done in a workmanlike manner. I will also have new land to break which will be new to you and will require skill, strength, and patience. Now I have mentioned some of the requirements which I expect my men to be efficient in. I might also mention that I expect seven stookers to keep up



Stooking the Cotton way.

with five binders and I do not use bundle carriers. Now, sir, if you think you can fill the bill you can begin work for me on March the 15 for eight months for the sum of \$160 and you do your own washing. There is a laundry inside of two miles. If you accept write me at once, if not no harm done.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To THOMAS HATTON**

[PAM, CLB, I, 114-15]

Treherne  
March 21, 1899

[Thomas Hatton was a farmer from Portage la Prairie who was planning to settle in the Swan River Valley. David Blythe Hanna had worked with several other railway companies before he joined what later became the Canadian Northern in 1896.]

Dear Sir,

Your letter of the 15th Inst. to hand last night. Now I might say if you have time while in Winnipeg by all means see Mr. D. B. Hanna, manager of Winnipeg and Great Northern Railway. His office [is] at Portage Avenue. I have no doubt he will give you valuable information. Tell him I advised you to see him. Get him to give you a few introductory lines to his land commissioner at Dauphin and be sure and stop at Dauphin at the land

## THE WHEAT KING

commissioner's office (*Theo. A. Burrows*) for full information as to what lands are taken up in Swan Valley. Be sure and not leave Dauphin without this information as you cannot get it further on. Ask them for a list (a full list) of railway land taken up. Then go on to the Valley to the government land office and there see Mr. H. Harley, land agent. Ask him for a full list of homesteads taken up. In fact, you will find over and get sorted and get just what you want. You will find W. I. Ford on section 6 township 35 range 29. You will find some good railway land in township 34 ranges 28 and 29, but [it] is a good distance from the present survey of railway. I am not acquainted with the land at the north of the Valley. I think you are a little early for selection as to season as I think the snow will not be off and most likely you will have to camp out some nights. Also make inquiries from Mr. Harley at the land office Swan River regarding land now under survey. You see, you cannot get a list of that land but still you can pick out your land and have your name put down as a squatter and you will have more choice that way ask Mr. Harley for full information on this point. I will now chose wishing you and Mr. Sharp every success. Give Mr. and Mrs. Sharp my best respects and Mrs. Cotton's.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

### **To ALEX WOOLLEY**

[PAM, CLB, I, 122-3]

Treherne  
March 22, 1899

[Alex Woolley was a prospective settler from Springfield, Ontario. He did move west, settling in Saskatchewan. He and Cotton continued to correspond for many years. Elva, Pierson, and Waskada were towns in the southwestern corner of Manitoba, near Saskatchewan and the American border. Carievale is just across the border from Manitoba in Saskatchewan. Gainsboro is on the same C.P.R. branch line as Treherne.]

Dear Sir,

Your letter of the 6th of March to hand, asking for information regarding our North West. I am from Durham County, Ontario. Came here the spring of 1888 and find this country the very country for a farmer to better his condition in. I speak of this country as I find it, by experience, and I claim I do not think I could do as well in any country as well as I have done here. And I think any farmer or one that has been raised on a farm and has energy and determination and tries to get along, he will do well and sure to succeed. My crop last year was as follows: wheat 515



Five binders at work at Treherne.

[acres] averaged a little over 31 bushels per acre, equalling 16,026 bushels; oats 135 acres at 60 bushels per acre equalling 8,100 bushels; barley 13 acres about 45 bushels per acre, equalling 625 bushels, making a total of 24,741 bushels of grain for 1898. I have not sold a bushel of wheat yet of last year's crop. This spring I expect to sow 660 acres wheat which will take a thousand bushels of seed. I run four binders but expect to put on five this harvest. I run three drills and seven harrows 19 feet wide each. We farm on a larger scale here in general than in Ontario. I began on a very small scale. My first crop only amounted to about 400 bushels of barley. I came here in debt and today I can scratch up about \$18,000 and need not work any more. I could not do so in any other country. Our winters [are] clear and cold, but I would rather have them than the Ontario changeable winter. No trouble to keep our cellar from freezing. Have not had anything frozen. I had the same opinion you have - thought everything would freeze up here but not the case. If you or anyone are not in comfortable circumstances and wish to better their positions, [you] could not do better than come West. Thrashing here costs from 3 1/2 to 4¢ per bushel and the machine furnishes 13 men and the farmer the rest. Yes, hogs will pay well here. Horse feed grows well at a small cost. We sow 1 1/2 bushels per acre of wheat. Barley and oats 2 bushels. Yes, I will put on five binders next harvest, and I put on seven stokers. It is a fine country up around Elva and Pierson. Gainsboro and Caravale all the land you want for 3.00 per acre and a splendid country around Wascada only quite a distance from railway at present.

## THE WHEAT KING

They have dry summers up that way occasionally but I think up there as a whole are doing fairly well. Yes, in our part the land is high. I will forward your name to the Department of Immigration so you can be supplied with every information regarding this Country. Any more information you may ask for I will gladly answer them.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

### To "THE NOR'WEST FARMER"

[PAM, CLB, I, 140-I]

Treherne  
April 14, 1899

[The Nor'West Farmer (1882-1936) was a farm journal which in addition to practical farming advice contained articles of general interest to farmers. In 1936 it was absorbed by the Country Guide.]

Dear Sir,

In replying to Mr. Kitson, Burnside re "How to seed" in April 5th number. The first instance why I harrow the back-setting at least seven times is in most cases less would not be sufficient to form a good seed bed. Breaking that is done for backsetting is generally a sod and tough and requires more harrowing. And in my experience I have harrowed back-setting twelve times before I had a proper seed bed. By doing so I find it leaves a firm bottom that will not dry out, with a fine surface for covering the seed which also prevents evaporation. Two chief points we should not ignore. Again, plowing new land for spring crops. I have found it in my experience that four inches is deep enough to plow new land. I mean by new land, land that has only had one crop off. If you plow deeper than that, it is not necessary, as you have enough soil to form a good seed bed and firm bottom, and [it] is not advisable to draw more producing qualities from the soil than is required, but keep them stored for future crops. As land becomes older I plow deeper, spring plowing not less than six inches and harrow[ing] three times immediately after the plow to retain moisture. In general farmers do not use the harrow enough. There is too much slipshod farming done. This one harrowing business is about "played out." I believe in raising a good crop and if a little common sense will help produce it, I believe in putting it into practice. I think it more profitable in growing 25 or 30 bushels of wheat to the acre than 15, as I consider a 15 bushel crop is more exhaustive than a larger crop. For where you see a 15 bushel crop you generally see a full crop of weeds, which is produced by improper cultivation which is not profitable to the producer and



A walking plow with three horses.

impoverishes his land for future profitable crops. If each farmer used good common sense in cultivating his land to produce good crops and less weeds, his land would be kept in better condition. I for one would rather raise a good crop than a poor one and work on that theory.

I would be pleased to hear from Mr. Kitson through your valuable paper as to his plan of seeding wheat, oats and barley on fall and spring plowing and which plan he obtains the best results. As I think his land must be altogether different to what we have at Treherne, I think this would be a profitable discussion for the farmer and of great importance.

A. J. Cotton

P.S. Mr. Editor: Dear Sir I did not receive any paper of March 20th. Don't know reason why. A.J.C.

**To ALEX WOOLLEY**

[PAM, CLB, I, 142-3]

Treherne  
April 20, 1899

Dear Sir,

Your letter of the 10th Inst. to hand and am glad to have an opportunity of answering your questions. I will answer then as you have asked. I do not use the large drills but they are common here up to 26 tube drawn

## THE WHEAT KING

by 4 horses. My drills - I have three - are only 14 tube called "The Superior Press Drill" made by the Massey Company before amalgamated. I use three horses on each one and we sow about 50 acres a day. We put three horses on each harrow. I have 20 work horses and we keep them busy. Yes we raise cattle, a few. I have 26 head, but only hogs enough for own use. We keep no sheep; my neighbor keeps a few. There are low numbers kept in the province. Grain here is worth as follows: wheat 60[¢], oats 40 to 45, barley 30 to 35, butter 45, cheese 10, eggs 10 to 15, hogs live 4 to 4 1/2 , potatoes 35, hay [\$]6.00, sheep 4 1/2 to 5, horses from \$200 to 350 per span. We raise no peas, only a few for table use, but they do well, far better than in Ontario. In some parts of Manitoba they have creameries and cheese factories and do well, but here we only raise wheat. Our spring is very late. Last month we had a snow storm and today about 6 inches of snow on the land. We have not sowed any yet, but quite a bit sowed in the neighborhood. This snow will do no damage. I have about 300 acres ready to sow and was ready to start today. I will give you the dates at which spring open[ed] since I came here. These are the dates at which I began to sow, but as a rule I harrow a week before I sow. In 1888 began to sow April 6; 1889 March 25; 1890 April 7; 1891 April 15; 1892 April 18; 1893 May 2; 1894 April 26; 1895 April 8; 1896 May 7; 1897 April 9; 1898 April 13. And the following is the average yield of grain I have had since I came here and may be of interest to you. 1889 wheat 23 bushels; 1890 wheat 21 1/2 , oats 32; 1891 wheat 28, oats 55, barley 51; 1892 wheat 29, oats 61 1/2 , barley 57; 1895 wheat 22, oats 40, barley 43; 1894 wheat 30, oats 61, barley 38; 1895 wheat 40, oats 76, barley 57; 1896 wheat 14 1/2 , oats 36 1/2 , barley 43; 1897 wheat 26, oats 45, barley 25 on alkali land; 1898 wheat 31, oats 60, barley 45. These are the actual yields I have had since I commenced to farm in Manitoba. I also farmed for 7 years in Ontario for myself before I came west and am greatly in favor of this country, No we make no sugar here although a few soft maples in patches. You say you have a notion to come out and see the country in the harvest. That is right and see for yourself. You would do well in this country with your boys and you could soon give them a start in this country. They would help you at first. Land here is high. 320 acres sold here the other day to an Ontario farmer for \$7000 and not a building on it. I have a boy 18 and another 16 and two small ones and one Girl. I keep 4 men all summer at \$20 per month and by the year the wages are about \$200. It is wonderful the people that is coming in to this country. Any more information you would like I will cheerfully give it for the asking.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

**To DUNCAN McBEAN AND COMPANY**

[PAM, CLB, 1, p. 157]

Treherne  
May 25, 1899

[Duncan McBean and Company was a firm of Winnipeg grain dealers.]

Dear Sirs,

Your postcard to hand last mail, but do not hear from you very often how the markets are. I am still holding my 20 cars wheat at Fort William and am loading another car next week. Now I want to have this understood, that when I am ready to sell this wheat it goes to the highest bidder and when I wire you I expect your reply will be the very best you can do afloat, clear of commission. So you will have a chance to get the wheat if you bid up.

Also, do you buy oats? I have about a 1000 bushel White Banner oats for sale, plump and dry, but an odd kernel of barley among them. Quote price for oats at Treherne on Track.

Grain around here looking well and growing fine.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To COLONEL WILLIAM McLEAN**

Treherne

[PAM, CLB. 1, 161-3]

May 25, 1899

[Binder cord was used during the harvest to tie the sheaves as they came off the binding machine. It was usually sold by weight rather than length.]

Dear Col,

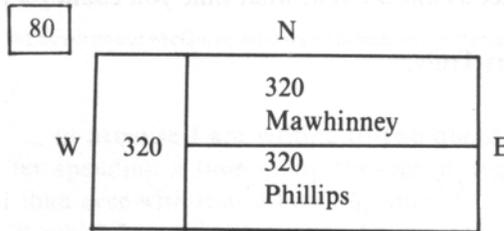
It is a long time since I wrote you or received any letter from you. I seem to write less all the time. I hope this will find you all well enjoying fine sunny weather. I see you have had a somewhat late spring and backward weather, but it seems we are treated no worse than other countries in that respect and have to take our share and be satisfied and hope it has been no worse. Well, Col, we have had a very backward late and wet and cold spring up here, and a very tedious one for putting in crops, having snow and rain in abundance and some to spare. We have had two snowstorms since seeding began. One of them snowed six inches on the level. Ontario people that had just come up began to look around to see what would come next. Of course this was unusual for this country to have such broken

## THE WHEAT KING

weather. However by sticking at it as well as we could we managed to get our wheat in by the 19 of May and will finish at oats tomorrow, which will not be too late if favorable weather continues like what we have had this last week, as grain that was even sown late has made rapid progress and the fields are beginning to look green, causing the farmer to smile once more. I don't think the acreage in general is any larger than last year, but the more coarse grain sown and more summer fallow, on account of the lateness of the spring, but plenty of time yet for a good crop if climatic conditions are favorable. I see your fall wheat is mostly killed, which will be hard on the farmer, and no doubt clover has suffered as well. There has been a large immigration to the West this spring and will continue most of the summer and is making Manitoba lively. Real estate is booming. Land is going up fast, has nearly doubled in the last year and a half. One of the half sections that I work has been sold this spring. We call it the Mawhinney Farm, just north of the railway and east of your farm. I have three more crops off it yet. It was sold for \$7,000 cash and not a building on it, a pretty big figure. The sale does not affect my lease. Treherne is grown and some fine houses and stores going up, a very good business done there. I think pretty close to 400,000 bushels of wheat marketed there which means a great deal of money changing hands. The Farmers Elevator has taken in about 200,000 and there are two other elevators besides the mill, one being a new one erected last fall. Wheat is being delivered freely now after seeding and prices are looking better. I have not sold any of last year's wheat yet. I have about 15,000 bushels at Fort William for sale and I have about 2,000 bushels of oats for sale. They are worth 40c here now and scarce. Railway building will be carried on extensively this summer and will require plenty of feed. Well, Col, I have been away to Dauphin making a purchase. I have bought a farm in the Swan River Valley and just closed the deal. 2,400 acres in all, being 3 1/2 sections. It is a fine block of land, not all together but in reasonable distance. It cost me from \$3 to \$4 per acre. From six to eight miles from railway present time, but expect a branch to run through inside of two years. It is settling up fast. Already since last fall there is a village as large as Treherne with about 800 of a population and this village will have to be moved some distance this summer to railway townsite, and at the other end of the Valley there is a village built up since March and now has 1200 of a population at the present time. I am looking forward to see you this summer and hope you will not get disappointed in coming. Come up and see our crop. I have in wheat 650 acres, oats 50 acres, barley none, total of 700 acres of crop. I expect to run five binders this harvest and if crop

Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton

turns out all right will use about a ton of cord. I have taken another small farm west of here, only 80 acres, making a total of 1,040 acres in a block as follows:



We have been working 10 teams, this spring and 3 seeders and seven harrows. Not at once but while we were harrowing with all our harrows, we harrowed at the rate of 275 acres per day on harrows 20 feet wide. We are all well and send our regards to you all.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To W. F. McCREARY**

[PAM, CLB, I, p. 168]

Treherne  
June 3, 1899

[Although there were occasional shortages of male farm labour, especially at harvest-time, female help was in perennially short supply. Finding help for the hard-pressed farm wife was always a difficult problem, particularly given the recurring low wages paid to women. The "Welcome Home" was one of a number of organized homes for transient women run by various charitable and religious groups in Winnipeg. Such homes supplied temporary housing and served as labour exchanges.]

Dear Sir,

I write you to see if you can secure us a girl. It is impossible to get one in this district, and the one we have had for the last two summers has got married, so we are without at the present and apply to you for assistance.

I was speaking to Mr. T. Metcalfe about the girl you sent him and they are well pleased with her and advised me to try a Galician. We want a girl that can milk and assist in farm housework, a good smart strong girl and one that is willing to learn English and pick up our ways. If you could get us one suitable we would be thankful to you. I put an advt. in the *Free Press* for a girl for a week and had only one application and [that] from O. F. Fowles of the "Welcome Home", who offered us a girl. He said she had only one failing, that was for liquor, and he wanted to get her out in

## THE WHEAT KING

the country. So I sent her fare to him along with \$.50 commission and said to send her on last night's train and [she] did not show up and no word from Fowles.

If you could let us know about what time you could get us one and oblige.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

### **To J. J. ASHLEY**

[PAM, CLB, I, p. 204]

Treherne  
July 24, 1999

[Ashley had written to Cotton from Pickering, Ontario, looking for a job at harvest-time. Harvest labour in Manitoba was usually supplied by men who came from the east on the "Harvest Excursions," often originating in Toronto and organized by the Manitoba Department of Agriculture and the C.P.R. The Department of Agriculture would attempt, by surveying the size of the crop and the number of labourers already in the west, to estimate the number of extra hands that would be needed to take off the crop. Trains would then be arranged to carry the men at special rates in time for them to be used in the harvest. Once in Winnipeg the labourers would be sent to areas in which there was demand. Arriving at the requisite number of men was a complex process and seems usually to have been fairly successful.]

Dear Sir,

Your letter of the 14th inst. to hand and contents noted. I was away when your letter came to hand, hence the delay and I answer on the first opportunity. If you would like to help me harvest I will keep a place for you wages \$1.50 per day. I have no doubt it might be the best thing you ever done to come to Manitoba. Now is your chance. Let me know as soon as possible as I must have all my men engaged in good time. Our harvest will be on in about three weeks.

Let me know at once.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To MR. McGUIRE**

[PAM, CLB, 1, 208-9]

Treherne  
August 5, 1899

[Little more is known about McGuire, who was a farmer in the Portage la Prairie district.]

Dear Sir,

According to promise I am writing to you about the Swan River Valley, after spending a time going through it again [I] feel more impressed than ever with it as a farming country, especially the west portion of it, which I consider the choice. I think in the near future it will be a fine country. I met some old time settlers from southern Manitoba and they conclude it has advantages superior to their part and will develop more rapid. There has been difficulty in getting there this spring on account of high water and no bridges across the river, and where water has been from 10 to 12 feet deep we all know it is impossible to cross with teams and rigs. Such has been the case this spring, but of the land being too wet to work in the west end of the valley this spring is not so and if you work that part you would be pleased with it, and would come to the conclusion that you would not find anything better. Now I do not wish to go into an elaborate speech or give any undue praise. I will simply say with eleven years in this country in a good part I am well pleased with the valley and feel sure it will be a complete success. Now I cannot move into the valley for two years yet, but will be making preparations to do so and as I have 3 1/2 sections there and will hold 1 1/2 sections in reserve for myself to go into, in the meantime I will lease the other two sections in portions of a half section each to parties wanting them as follows: I will lease a half section on just the same terms as I began with when I first came to Manitoba (and now one can start up with one half the capital that it required when I began). Now I will lease each half section for five years, the one that leases it to pay taxes, break and put under cultivation 160 acres, put up what buildings they require for their own accommodation, and fence with two wires, and have the privilege to break more than the 160 acres if they wish. Now these are the exact terms I began with in Manitoba and I will give the same and I can assure you it was the best bargain I ever made. Now, Mr. McGuire, here is a chance for you to go to the Valley and, look around before you buy. Think over this and if you wish to accept it let me know. I might say that out of the four half sections, three parties have spoken to me already since they have known my plans, and if you think about taking on, do not delay too long. Crops here are looking immense far ahead of Portage.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

## THE WHEAT KING

To MASSEY-HARRIS COMPANY

[PAM, CLB, 1, 21I-13]

Treherne  
August 5, 1899

[The Massey-Harris Company was the noted Canadian firm of farm implement manufacturers.]

Dear Sirs,

I beg to call your attention to the treatment we as farmers are receiving from your company. In June last your agent at Treherne solicited my cord order, claiming you were going to furnish again that celebrated Pure Manalla Brand the same as you furnished last year and equal in every respect in regard to quality and satisfaction and guarantee[ing] the same to be pure manalla and up to standard. Therefore I did not hesitate to give my order. And the other day being notified by your agents that the cord was ready for delivery I went to your warehouse, and instead of finding the cord your agents had accepted my order for I was offered an inferior cord put up in balls branded "Blue Ribbon" and having a brand around the ball bearing the stamp "Blue Ribbon." I simply refused to take the cord as this was not what I ordered. Your agent Mr. Anderson tells me this is Pure Manalla Cord sent here by mistake in Blue Ribbon sacks (Bosh). I said I would not take the cord at the price quoted in order, as it looked inferior in quality. I asked for a ball to make a test and see if it would come up to standard. My request being granted, I tested it with the following result: 1 pound exact weight Blue Ribbon Brand measures 593 feet; 1 pound Pure Manalla (bought from your Company last year and measured last season) measures 665 feet.

Now, I expect to use 1800 pounds pure Manalla @ 665 feet per pound @ 13¢ per pound = \$234. Now if I use this inferior cord branded Blue Ribbon it will take 2018 1/2 [pounds] @ 13¢ per pound = \$262.20, a difference of 218 1/2 pounds @ 13¢ = 28.20, which you as a company has the cheek to ask me to pay, for the privilege of binding my crop with your inferior cord.

Why gentlemen (no gentlemen does business on this principle) I claim this is a barefaced piece of dishonesty, an imposition that cannot be



Binding the harvest.

overlooked and you as a company should be brought to task for trying to obtain money under false pretences. I have dealt with your company for a number of years in Ontario and here in Manitoba and I intend to stop right now unless we get fairplay. You must know this cord is inferior and not up to standard. You may call this cord Pure Manalla. So I can have two grades of wheat and call them pure red Fife but at the same time one is No. 1 in quality and the other No. 3. Value being altogether different. That is just the same with this cord. You solicited and accepted my order for Pure Manalla to be first class quality at 13¢ per pound and now you want me to accept a third class quality at the same price and try to make me believe I am ignorant and don't know the difference. If Pure Manalla @ 665 feet to the pound is worth 13¢, this Blue Ribbon Brand @ 593 feet to the pound is only worth 1 1/2 ¢. So if you can't fill order with price according to quality I want you to cancel order at once. If your company cannot stand on its merits we had better shun it. I am an old customer of your company and I having dealt largely the last number of years and your cord previous to this has given me satisfaction (except Famous Worlds Brand to which I got mulched to the tune of \$40). I feel that there must be a solid reduction made in price to fully compensate me to take this cord, or I will be perfectly satisfied if you forward me pure Manalla according to order equal to last year's cord. Your agent Mr. Anderson claims it to be pure Manalla but notwithstanding Mr. Anderson's emphatic declaration that this is pure Manalla it is the poorest quality that has ever come under my eye and is away below standard, being coarse fibre and coarse spun and too

## THE WHEAT KING

much twist, making a low grade cord unsuitable for our requirements. I will hold replacing cord order until I hear from you. Hoping to have a speedy reply.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

### **To COLONEL WILLIAM McLEAN**

[PAM, CLB, I, 233-34]

Treherne  
August 28, 1899

[W. H. Brewster of Treherne ran a thrashing outfit that moved from farm to farm during the harvest season. He thrashed all Cotton's crops during the latter's thirteen years in Treherne.]

Dear Col,

Your letter of the 14th inst. to hand and was glad to hear you contemplated coming up this fall. We are in the midst of our cutting now and will probably finish about September 2nd if all goes well. The grain has come in very fast and we expect to begin thrashing about September 6th and expect it will take about three weeks. Brewsters will thrash; as usual I don't make any change. We met with a little mishap the other day. Our five binders ran away and we had quite an exciting time for a while. I was the only one that got hurt - being on the middle binder I was in a hot spot for a while. I have laid up with a sore knee and side, but am able to get around again but not able to walk much. You was speaking about land in the Swan River Valley. I would certainly advise you to go and see it for yourself I have no doubt you will be highly pleased with it. There is all kinds of land in there and some excellent land. As for myself I am well pleased with it and have come to the conclusion it will make as fine a country as here, after being developed, although at the present time it is almost practically untried. But take appearance, location, and altitude into consideration, it looks alright and has great advantages, being good land well adapted for wheat. Good water and in abundance, plenty of wood, plenty of cheap lumber and stone, also sheltered from the hot blighting winds by the mountains, and plenty of rainfall and enough hay. Also within reasonable distance of railway. Those are advantages we cannot overlook when combined. Before purchasing I would advise you to go and pick out your land and be suited. As for myself, I am well pleased with the valley; if not I would not have invested so heavily. I have some prime land

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

there and feel satisfied with it. There has a great many from Treherne taken up land there. I hope you are all well. I suppose harvest is over there now. Here it will be about finished this week, and a tremendous crop. I have a splendid crop. Will be able to tell after thrashing better. I will write no more this time, hoping to see you soon.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To R. P. ROBLIN**

[PAM, CLB, 1, p. 242]

Treherne  
September 6, 1899

[Rodmond P. Roblin was a Winnipeg grain dealer with a chain of elevators at various railway depots throughout southern Manitoba, including Treherne. At the time of this letter he was a leading member of the Conservative opposition in the Manitoba legislature. Prior to 1898 he had been the party leader, but had withdrawn in favour of Hugh John Macdonald. He later became premier of Manitoba.]

Dear Sir,

Your wire duly in hand in answer to mine re wheat. Your offer was good and came almost a hair's breath in getting it. I was making out telegram to wire you to that effect when I received another wire [with a] better offer and I sold. I might put up another 10,000 l. H[ard] new wheat almost any time as I am thrashing now. It is a good sample. And when I am ready to sell I will wire you and you do your best. What do you think of the wheat situation in regard to new wheat? Do you think she will go up or down. Just tell me what you think.

I may have 20,000 new wheat. Can't hardly tell yet. A lot of 1.H[ard] in this neighbourhood, this year far ahead of other years. Thanking you for your good offer,

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

## THE WHEAT KING

### **To MANAGER, CANADIAN BANK OF COMMERCE, WINNIPEG**

[PAM, CLB, I, p. 239]

Treherne  
September 6, 1899

[J. K. McLennan was an independent grain dealer based in Treherne, with a seat on the Winnipeg Grain Exchange.]

Dear Sir,

I sold my wheat yesterday (and wired you to that effect) to J. K. McLennan. 1 Hard, 70¢ 1. Northern 65 1/4 [¢] afloat - Fort William, and hand over documents on receipt of payment and please send me a statement as to charges against it.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

### **To ROBERT KERR**

[PAM, CLB, I, p. 248]

Treherne  
September 28, 1899

[Before the large storage elevators were built at the Lakehead, disposing of wheat could become a problem for the farmer. Even after the Lakehead expansion, a shortage of rail cars to ship wheat to the Lakehead could be a problem, although the need to get the wheat to the shipping point before freeze-up when navigation closed had been a particular difficulty.]

Dear Sir,

I wish to call your attention to the grain situation at Treherne. The Farmers Elevator is full to the eaves and have to refuse wheat. Farmers here are desperate. What is the matter with the railway company that you cannot supply cars? There is mismanagement somewhere and the farmer is suffering on account of it. The situation is deplorable and something should be done at once to relieve the strain. Grain is locked up here and cannot get moved. Buyers have been notified to withdraw from buying. The situation calls for censure of the railway company. Hoping you will do your utmost to relieve us,

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton, one of the Directors  
Farmers Elevator, Treherne

**To THE FORD FAMILY**

[PAM, CLB, I, 250.2]

Treherne  
September 29, 1899

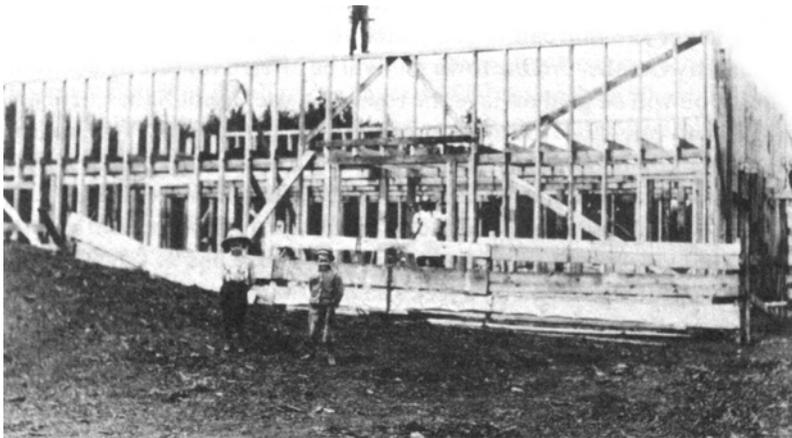
[Fronia and Muriel were, respectively, Mrs. Cotton's sister Sophronia Henderson and her daughter. Mrs. Henderson was the wife of Sam Henderson, who had before his marriage worked for Cotton in Ontario. When the Cottons moved to Manitoba, the Hendersons remained in Ontario, moving to Peterborough. Henderson began to work for his brother-in-law again in May of 1898 after moving to Manitoba. The Hendersons moved to the Swan River Valley along with the Cottons in 1901, initially living in a small house on the Cotton farm. Although Henderson continued to work for Cotton, he also filed for his own homestead at Harlington and bought a further quarter-section. Henderson later became Harlington's postmaster. His daughter Muriel assumed the position after her father's death in 1911. Mrs. Henderson had in July of 1899 accompanied her parents to the Swan River Valley, helping to tend the ailing John Gay Ford. Samuel Lockhart was an acquaintance from Ashburn, Ontario, who had corresponded with Cotton. He had visited Treherne in the summer of 1899 before he went on to the Swan River Valley, where he did buy land and settle. The Treherne Times first appeared in 1899. Cotton's knee injury was a result of an accident while driving a binder earlier in the summer. A. E. Hamilton was one of Cotton's new neighbours in the Swan River Valley. Louise is Mrs. Cotton.]

Dear Father, Mother, Will, Fronia and Muriel,

This letter is for all hands. We received a letter Fronia wrote, I think August 30 or September 1st, and have had no word from you since. There you said father was a bit better. I do hope by this time he will be able to sit up and a little better still. I would like to see you all very much. I was glad to hear mother was smart and well. I hope her ankle is all right again. It is a good thing I have good health. It is too bad father is not having full enjoyment in his new home, but hope for the best, that all will be well in good hands. I know you do the very best you can for him. I see by the paper the railroad is completed into Swan River and on next Wednesday October 3rd the town lots will be offered for sale by auction. I guess you will be glad to have the town so close. I sent Sam Lockhart out there to buy land. Let me know if you have seen him. You said in your letter you had a slight frost. I hope it did not do any damage. Tell me all about it. About the same time they had a frost at Russell and down at Selkirk and Stonewall they were frozen up. At Walt Barkwell's I saw some frozen he had down by the river. Froze bad at Carman and all the way from there to Elm Creek and on to Winnipeg at that time you mentioned. We began to thrash on September 6 and finished on September 25th. We were shut down twice with a little rain but got through splendid. Our yield was 29 to the acre which I think was good and I feel thankful, but appearances were for more. It is all l. Hard. Splendid sample, the yields are as follows in rotation: we thrashed 92 acres = 35 1/4;

## THE WHEAT KING

121 = 27 1/2; 72 = 30; 55 = 25; 5 = 24; 80 = 19; 25 where barley was last year; 25 = 21; new breaking by bluff = 36 1/2; 91 between Sharps and railway = 37 and oats yielded *107 per acre*. Making a total yield of wheat 18,600 bushels. I sold 15,000 bushels old wheat @ .70 afloat and 10,000 bushels new wheat @ 50 1/2 at elevator. Have balance still on hand. We have our [illegible] up and 125 bags old oats chopped for fall plowing, and then we will plow steady with nine plows. I am not plowing this fall, my knee preventing me. I can get around and but a misstep or a little rough makes it awkward. Pains considerable at night, and keeps swollen so am having quite a holiday now. We have about 60 acres plowed. Plows pretty dry. Our horses in good condition. We had some heavy frosts last week, you may say for the first weather fine and roads good. Farmers Elevator full to the roof and cars. Clarks had 6 stacks burned the other day. Jessie is [illegible], a paper started in Treherne, called the *Treherne Times* and [illegible] well again from the fever. Charlie Arby married last week and has put up a fine house. Coulter has put up one. McGowan has put up one. Jim Perrie has put up one. Parkers is putting up a fine one. Old man Watson has put up one south of his [illegible] doing this summer. Fred Wilson has left Mc-Lewan and going into partnership with James Calvert in Rogers old stand. Bob Emmons thrashed wheat, went 25. Dick was with me through thrashing and Frank Howse and Rog Robson. Hired 3 teams this year for I bought 3 more wagons and ran ourselves. We had all our own stook teams on and Nelson took one and did well.



Raising a barn at Will Ford's farm at Thunder Hill.

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

Give me all the news and now the railway is in you will be able to write oftener. Tell me all about your crop and send me samples if possible. Also if you could get sample of wheat from Lyons and Hamilton and one that has wheat and from that man at the Rolling River crossing. I forget his name. Tell me what harm the frost did and if you even notice it on the grain. I would like to see a sample of Hamilton's wheat, it being close to 19. Would give me some idea. All the news you send would be interesting. I know the Thunder Hill branch was nearly building this year. Did you hear anything about it? The Gilbert Plains railway is building. Billy Staples is thinking about going out to saw this winter. How are Lyons getting on? Give my respects to him. Did [illegible] find his horses yet? I saw the advert in the Dauphin Press some time ago.

How are your potatoes? Have you dug them yet? How much hay did you get up and was it good? Did Charley Banks come out this way? I have no doubt you will have a long letter to write next time. Col. McLean wants to buy land up there, a section somewhere near mine, as he thinks it must be good. Tell Fronia the baby is creeping like a 3 year old and can stand up by himself by the lounge and pull himself up by the cradle. We are all well. Louise is busy. She was going to write some but I was hurrying this off for this mail as I think the mails leave Dauphin on Tuesdays. We send all our mail that way now. Hoping to hear from you soon.

My fondest love to father and mother and Fronia and Muriel and yourself.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To COLONEL WILLIAM McLEAN**

[PAM, CL.B, I, 255-66]

Treherne  
October 2, 1899

[The sale of Rupertsland by the Hudson's Bay Company to the Canadian government had involved a land settlement. Part of this settlement resulted in the Hudson's Bay Company being granted one and three-quarter sections of land in each township as it was surveyed. E. B. Eddy was an American who had moved his match company from Vermont to the Ottawa Valley in 1851.]

Dear Col,

Your letter dated September 22nd to hand. Was sorry to hear you were giving up coming up this fall. I fully expected to see you. Sam Lockhart call[ed] on us and said Alf Mitchell was up and told him you

## THE WHEAT KING

intended leaving for the west on September 12, so I met the train for ten days expecting you and then came to the conclusion you had gone farther west and would wait until your way home to call and see us, and was disappointed when your letter came that you had decided not to come. Well, Col, from the tone of your letter you have a strong inclination to invest in land in the Swan River Valley. I don't think I can give you much fuller information than I have already done in connection with the valley. I might go back to a year ago last winter when I had made up my mind to get some land for the boys and began to look around for a suitable location. I first turned to the southwest corner of the province in the vicinity of Wascada, Elva, Carnduff, Gainsboro, Caravale. "It was cheap land that I was after" and after considerable correspondence I came to the conclusion the west was too dry and subject to those hot drying winds that are so detrimental to the heading crop and also lack rainfall, and decided not to invest there. Then I turned to the Winnipeg district and could get blocks of land there to suit me as regards area, but seemed too flat and cold bottoms and bad water and roads and full of noxious weeds. Then I decided not to buy there. Then I turned to the Roland district and found land there to suit me, but the water was bad and wood scarce and land pretty high; there was two sections there that suited me for grain but the price was \$12 per acre and it was cheaper land I was after, and then again subjected to frost, although a good country for grain. Then the Swan River country came up before the public as a fine agricultural valley that would be well adapted for raising grain and I turned toward that and wrote to one of the parties that prospected there on horseback in the fall of 1897 who was an old timer and knew land when he seen it. And he told me it was going to be a fine valley and was surprised at the marvellous growth he saw there, and a railway was projected at once to the valley and today to go through it. So in June 1898 as soon as spring work was completed I got ready to go there and prospect for myself and see if it was as represented. And I prepared my wagon with a cover over it and enough provisions to do me and on 15th June I set out for a drive of over 700 miles into a new country, and if suited, to pick out land. After many hardships I reached the Duck Mountains and began the ascent over them and then I came in sight of the valley nestled among the mountains, with Thunder Hill and Minnionas Hill looming up in the distance as watchers over the fertile valley and all the habitation to be seen there was 3 white tents where today stands Canvas City with a population of over 700. I was among the first settlers to prospect the valley; there was some land surveyed. So after camping at the tents for dinner I started westward up the valley, having

already crossed innumerable rivers such as Vermillion, Turtle, White Mud, Wilson, Valley, North Pine and South Pine, North Duck and South Duck, Favell. I still had larger rivers to cross including Minnitonas, Rolling River and Swan River. I did not select any land until I had proceeded 30 miles up the valley and arrived at the banks of the Swan, and then I saw land that would be the pride of any farmer, land that white men had scarcely trod. Wild and in its originality producing a marvellous vegetable growth. Soil unsurpassed in richness. Land slightly undulating and watered by innumerable streams of splendid water and having an altitude of from 1 100 to 1200 feet proving it to be right for grain growing, covered with rank vegetation and scrub consisting of small poplar, willow, hazel, plum, cherry, saskatoon, cranberry - but no oak -growing on a rich soil of about 18 inches of vegetable mould on a clay bottom, having all the necessary qualities for grain production. In easy access to wood and building material, consisting of poplar, spruce, and laurel and cottonwood. Hay in sufficient quantities for settlers' own use. Nestled in a valley 50 miles long by 30 wide, protected from the south and northwest winds by the Duck Mountains on the west and north by the Porcupine Hills, with a railway projected to run through the valley. Was it not a paradise to be in? I then camped on the banks of the Swan River and prospected on horseback and feasted my eyes on the land, and I picked out 2,400 acres of the finest land in the valley, land which any farmer would be proud of. At this time this land was only partially surveyed and the surveyors were at work in the valley, and a portion of the land I had taken was still unsurveyed, but I could locate it. At this time this land was not for sale, not being inspected and not in the market, and the first ones that made application would have the first chance to purchase. Therefore before I had made my selections others were on the spot. So what had to be done had to be done quick. So as soon as I selected I broke camp and started for the nearest telegraph office. I knew I could not make Dauphin Office as I was handicapped with a heavy team and others had light rigs, so I struck west through the territories via Fort Pelly and crossed the Shell River at Assippie and reached Russell, the nearest telegraph office, and wired to Dauphin my application ahead of other prospectors and secured my land. You see that that time my stay in the valley was limited and I did not see a great deal of it. So this spring I again took a trip to the valley, took [the] railway as far as Yorkton, then drove in 80 miles and spent two weeks in there and looked my land over and was better pleased than ever with it. One section I had taken up without seeing; I bought it expressing for hay and pasture and when I looked it up I found to my entire satisfaction 600 acres of

## THE WHEAT KING

first-class wheat land on it. I have 2000 acres of first-class wheat land, balance hay and pasture, on each half section I can plow a mile without a break and still have a stream, water on each, but having it in sections I can divide to advantage and have a running stream on each half section. I am from 4 to 12 miles from the present townsite of Swan River, which will be put up by auction on October 3rd, situated on the Canadian Northern Railway and Canvas City will be moved to this townsite. My land is not in a block but mostly in township 35 Range 28. I have one good section Township 35 Range 27 and one quarter in Township 35 Range 29. By looking at the map you can locate this valley. It comprises townships 34, 35, 36, 37, ranges 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, and west of that is in the Territories having been allotted to the Doukhobors. The Doukhobors had been allotted Range 29, but I wrote and protested to the government to remove them outside of Range 29, as that range was good land and would be all taken by Canadian settlers. And it would be no injustice done to the Doukhobors to move him into the Territories where he would be just as well satisfied and give the Canadian settler every advantage. This was done to the satisfaction of all parties, and I am of the firm opinion that those Doukhobors will make good settlers. Now the Doukhobors being west, there will be branch line run into their colony. This branch will run through my land or in close proximity to it, and a town will also be located there and will give me a good shipping facility. Grain has been untried there in one sense, as last year was the first and it was put in under disadvantage, being on spring breaking. The first frost that appeared there was on September 8, the same date that it came here. This year little grain put in. I did not hear lately as no established mail is running and we only get mail about once a month from there. The last word I received was dated September 1st - on August 30 had a slight frost, could notice it on the potatoes but not enough to injure grain. I have written away for samples of grain to be sent me. All the best of the valley is taken up but still there may be some odd sections pretty good left. In the vicinity of my land all that is any good was taken up last spring. The land was open for sale on May 16th and I went up to Dauphin and closed the deal with the commissioner and loaded up pretty well. To show the extent of immigration to the valley, when out there this spring I counted 27 shacks adjoining my land by homesteaders. Each section being surrounded by settlers, and also having full confidence in the development of the valley. Now in regard to land for sale I think there is plenty of it in other parts and poor land in other parts also. So before choosing I would say, see it yourself and make no

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

mistake. In the township that I am located in there is nothing any good left, except school lands and Hudson Bay lands. This Hudsons Bay section 26, Township 35, Range 29 I would not say for certain if the whole section is open for sale or only three quarters, but this land is similar to mine and good land. But the company holds this land exceptionally high they are the last to be sold on that account. But I would suggest before purchasing to look over the land. My land is located as follows:

All	Section 21 Township 35 Range 28 W. 640 acres
All	Section 19 Township 35 Range 28 W. 640 acres
All	Section 13 Township 35 Range 28 W. 640 acres
Southwest 1/4	Section 31 Township 35 Range 27 W. 160 acres
Northeast 1/4	Section 13 Township 35 Range 29 W. 160 acres
Southeast 1/4	Section 25 Township 35 Range 29 W. 160 acres

Ranging in price from \$3.00 to 4.50 per acre, but I think there is land near townsite quoted at \$6.00. Terms are the same as C.P.R. lands. For instance, if you buy a 1/4 section @ \$3.00 per acre your first payment would be \$71.90 and nine subsequent payments would be \$60.00 each year; if \$3.50, first 83.90 and 70; if 4.00, first 95.85 and 80.00; if 4.50 first 107.85 and 90.00 and so on up to 6.00 per acre. No interest, as interest is added into payments @ 6%. If at any time any purchaser wishing to pay in full on remainder of payments, will have rebate of 6%.

As I said before, that country is really untried but it looks allright. Old settlers from southern Manitoba who came to this country twenty years ago and helped to develop it speak of the Swan Valley as a finer country and easier to develop and has every appearance of making a fine section. Those parties have had a wider experience than I have had of the west. As for myself I am perfectly well suited with the valley and will take chance on farming there. I sent out a car load of cattle this summer to pasture there and while I was there I saw some of the finest thoroughbreds I had ever seen come in from Yorkton. Returning again to the valley I met two old timers and asked their opinion of that section. One was Mr. McKenzie who keeps store at Fort Pelley, has been 29 years in that part, has travelled from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the boundary of the Arctic Circle with dog trains, has spent his life in the wilds. Spoke in glowing terms of the valley. He said at Fort Pelley it froze every month in the year, but the Swan Valley was alright except at its western end as regards frost. I also saw another man but forget his name. He keeps Post Office and Hudson Bay store at Fort Pelly, has

## THE WHEAT KING

spent 40 years in that part, he kept Hudson Bay store for two years at the lower end of the valley close to Swan Lake and said that was the part where he grew the best garden he has ever had. He said tomatoes and melons ripened fine and potatoes, carrots and beets was marvellous for their size. That was the most reliable information I could gather and seemed to be sufficient. I am speaking of this as I heard it. I never saw such a marvellous growth of weeds. Some places while I was on horse-back weeds came up to my shoulders and the horse would almost get tangled in it. No sod has been all heavy timbered and burned off and will be easy to bring under cultivation. On each half section I have I could plow from 40 to 60 acres without putting an axe to it, and with such a tremendous growth of vegetation, fires will be rampant and the valley will soon be ready for the plow. Plenty of stone in the rivers for building purposes. It is also well watered with spring streams of splendid water flowing into the rivers. This spring settlers had many hardships getting into the valley from the terminus of the railway. They had 26 miles of muskeg to go through and impossible to take an empty [cart] over. A great many got discouraged and gave it up. Rivers were high and no bridges and were impassable for a while. Several were drowned and horses also. While I was at Cowan, the railway terminus, on my way home, the railway was lined with shanties and settlers living in them. Mostly from Ontario. I asked them what was the matter. They said roads impassable and were waiting patiently until they could get in. They said they were allright as the men were in the valley putting up their



Swan River pioneers and their garden produce.

shacks and getting things ready so when roads were passable they would be allright. These were the stout-hearted ones; "some faint-hearted ones had turned back." It is not the latter that has built up this west but the former, and we want more of them. Mr. Eddy the Match King of Ottawa was west this summer and came to the conclusion that in less than 25 years there would be more people west of Rat Portage than are in the whole of Canada at the present. He spoke mild. There is room for twice as many. Well, Col, I guess I had better stop. I have given you as full information regarding the Swan River Valley as I have at my command. I fully expected you would [have] been up, then I could [have] told you better than writing. I think you would be pleased with the valley if you [had] seen it.

I will now turn briefly in a few lines on the crop. We had ideal harvest weather and the cutting progressed finely. We had five binders constantly at work until finished. We used 1800 pounds pure manilla cord in the cutting. We began thrashing September 6 and finished September 25 at noon. Had a couple of light stops with rain but all through good weather and I had a satisfactory job done with Brewster's machine. My yield of wheat was as follows: 18,600 bushels off 650 acres are about 29 bushels average. Oats I thrashed 3,213 bushels off 30 acres or 107 bushels per acre. Have 20 acres more to thrash. In wheat and oats thrashed = 21,813 bushels. I had one field of wheat went as low as 19 bushels to the acre. Other fields went 24 and 25 and 121 acre field of old land went 27 1/2. Another field went 30. Another went 35 1/4, another went 36 1/2, another 98 acres field went 37, altogether making an average of about 29 bushels per acre. This is all no. one Hard wheat, the highest quality and grade. About two weeks ago I sold 15,000 bushels of old wheat @ 70¢ afloat at Fort William and another day I sold another 10,000 bushels of new wheat at 55 1/2 cents and have the balance of new wheat left yet. The Manitoba farmer is making a good honest living and will every time he gets a chance. I would like to see some of those Ontario farmers come up and get the chance also, but I suppose they can't give up the buckwheat and oats. We are busy plowing now with nine plows. Have 125 acres stubble plowed already for wheat and 100 acres of new land and summer fallow ready. Am trying to get 700 acres ready for wheat next year. Sorry you could not come up to see us and note the improved appearance of the country. Thrashing will get pretty well wound up this month. Around here grain is busy coming to market. In Treherne with 3 elevators and flour mill and elevator grain is being stored rapidly. The Farmers Elevator alone, having a capacity of 75,000 bushels, is now full to the eves and cars being scarce [it] is difficult to keep running. It has taken

## THE WHEAT KING

in as much as 8,000 bushels of wheat in a day this season, and the other two elevators and mill elevator taking in besides will give you an idea of the volume of business done at Treherne. Later on I will gather some statistics regarding trade to send you. I will now close for this time, hoping you have had a prosperous season. We all join in sending our kind regards to you, Mrs. McLean and Family.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

### *To F. W. HEUBACH*

[PAM, CLB, 1, p. 268]

Treherne  
October 4, 1899

[F. W. Heubach was the general manager of the Winnipeg Industrial Exhibition, one of the forerunners of the Red River Exhibition. The "Durham" refers to a British breed of cattle.]

Dear Sir,

Your favor of the 9th September to hand asking if I would like to become custodian of bull or boar. I was busy with my thrashing at the time and since then I have been looking for [a] responsible party to recommend to you, as I have not stock enough at present to take one myself. And thanking you very much for the offer, but I will recommend W. T. Smith of Treherne as a party who would be a good man to handle one (Bull). He has one now that he is about to dispose of. Last year he had 140 cows put to him. I would like to see a good animal in this locality and Mr. Smith would be a suitable person to take charge. I count the Durham as the leader and I think it is a good idea to improve the stock of this new country by importing first-class bulls and lay a good foundation. Again thanking and wishing you every success in your enterprize.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To EDITOR, "PORT HOPE GUIDE"**

[PAM. CLB, I, 282-3]

Treherne  
October 14, 1899

[The Port Hope Guide was a weekly newspaper. Cotton remained a subscriber during all his years in the west.]

Dear Sir,

Please put the following advertisement in your valuable paper:

**MANITOBA  
FARMERS ATTENTION**

Having purchased two thousand four hundred acres of first-class land in the Swan River Valley, I am prepared to lease the same for a term of five years to good farmers in lots of 160 acres and 320 acres farms to suit farmers. Terms are as follows: for a term of 5 years for bringing one half under cultivation, putting up necessary buildings, enclose with two wires and pay taxes. This is a chance of a lifetime. This land is a clay loam about ten feet deep with clay subsoil. Partially covered with scrub and easy brought under cultivation. Running water on each farm, and hay within short distance of building material and firewood. This is a first class wheat land, no better in this province. These are snaps for farmers. Anyone wishing lease on a portion of this land would [find it would] be to their interest to write me for full particulars in regard to it.

A. J. Cotton  
Treherne

Please call attention to this advertisement in the Local Column. These are the same terms that I began farming in Manitoba on Colonel McLean's farm at Treherne.

Put the ad in for say one month or two months and forward me bill of same and I will send you cheque for same and arrears on paper also. Wishing you every success with your paper (and many of them finds their way to Manitoba).

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

## THE WHEAT KING

### **To COLONEL WILLIAM McLEAN**

[PAM, CLB, I, p. 288]

Treherne  
October 25, 1899

["Stanley" doubtless refers to Lord Stanley, the former governor-general of Canada, after whom the Stanley Cup and Stanley Park were named.]

Dear Col,

Your letter of the 21st instant to hand. Enclosed please find cheque for rent for 1899. I am always glad to hear from you. I see by the papers that Stanley has gone to British Columbia. I don't get any news from the East, only from you and through the Guide. Frank Little was up and is delighted with the country and a great number that was up have gone east again.

You spoke about tax sale lands. Those will be redeemed that are any good. It is the habit of this country to allow taxes to go unpaid for two years. Then if not paid the third year are advertised for taxes. There is nothing any good that will be left. Last year I saw the clerk about them and he explained it this way: that if one party bought all that was left he might possibly sell one lot the first year that would pay him and then let the remainder go back again. That seemed to be the only way to get even. Thanking you for compliments on my prosperity and giving you credit for the same. It was a happy day for me when I struck your farm. There is nothing would [have] given me more pleasure than to see you in Manitoba this fall. All's well.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

### **To COLONEL WILLIAM McLEAN**

[PAM, CLB, I, 341-3]

Treherne  
December 13, 1899

[The Liberal administration of Thomas Greenway, who had been premier since 1886, was defeated in the provincial election by the Conservatives led by Hugh John Macdonald. J. K. McLennan was the secretary of the Dominion Alliance for the Total Suppression of the Liquor Traffic. Ontario held a number of provincial by-elections on 12 December 1899. J. Dryden, a Liberal, had held the South Ontario seat since 1879, and took it again in 1898. The Brant (South) seat was also won by the Liberals, while both Elgin East and West were taken by the Tories. Part of the British army under General Gatacre had been defeated in an encounter with the Boers at Stornberg on December 9, 1899. The defeat had resulted in 600 British soldiers being taken prisoner, and was a crushing propaganda loss for the British. The first Canadian

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

contingent had left Quebec on October 30, 1899. Field Marshal Paul Methuen was defeated at Magersfontein, and Ladysmith was finally relieved by Sir Redvers Buller on February 27, 1900.]

Dear Col,

Your letter dated November 18th now before me, containing receipt for rent. The elections are over and looks like Hon. Thomas is out. I think it is a big mistake as he was a fine man for this new country. However, the chances are Hugh John will have a chance. Our Independent - McLennan at Treherne - did not do much. There were 1,008 votes polled and McLennan received 151 and lost his deposit. Treherne stood about as follows: Conservatives 96, Grits 72 and Independent 55. I see by tonight's paper that South Ontario has gone Dryden 302 and Brant 420, but the government lost both Elgins.

Excitement runs high here on the Boer War. Great comment on Gatacres tremendous blunder. Too bad that the flower of the British Army is biting the dust. I think our Canadians are with the smartest general and I have no doubt they will soon know what fighting is under Methune when he puts them on a march. They will have to go and I think he will be the first in Ladysmith. It will be a pretty hard struggle before its ended and leave a good many fatherless homes. I am glad to hear that a heavy immigration is looking toward this country next spring. There is plenty of room for them. I am trying to get some settlers on my land in Swan River if possible. I will give them the same chance that you gave me. I will let suitable tenants have either a quarter or a half section and bring one half under cultivation, pay taxes, put up what buildings they require at their own expense, and enclose with two wire fence and have five years. And this is first-class wheat land 8 and 10 miles from town and railway station now, and expect railway close by inside of two years. Now, this is a good chance. I advertized it in the *Guide* but have not received many applicants.

Robert Moore in Hope Township, he says he is nearer to Sion than Port Hope, has wrote me in regard to leasing one of my places. Says he refers me to you as he is well acquainted with you. If you would just drop me a line in reference to him as to his ability as a farmer. He claims he has two sons can do a man's work and another can drive a team, is a renter and can't make anything and poor. Has wrote me for particulars and terms and asked what help I could give him. Any man that is poor and industrious and willing, I will help him if he tries to get along.

I wrote to Sid. Knight out by Kendell. He was talking about this country. I offered him one of my places. I also offered William Triggs on

## THE WHEAT KING

George Elliott's farm a chance as Frank Little of Wesleyville told me about him trying to get along and could no more than live. If you see either Knight or Triggs speak your views about this country and it might be the means of putting them on their feet as it did me. I thank you many times for the kindness and assistance you gave me in starting and after I got to this country, which was the means of putting me on my feet. And now I am ready to tender the same assistance to others. We are having beautiful weather, just a little snow but all wheeling. Did not freeze up until the night of November 30th and up to that time not five minutes lost in plowing from frost, which is the finest fall the oldest settler has seen. I finished plowing on November 7th. I plowed 630 acres stubble. Could [have] plowed over one thousand as regards weather. I have 730 acres ready for wheat next spring and 80 acres for oats. Of course I do not plow oat ground in the fall, always leave that for spring. We are all well. Sam Henderson is still with me and likes this country. I have no man but him for the winter. Nelson is a man and Herschel pretty near it, so I have good help. I and Mrs. Cotton will now close. Wishing you and Mrs. McLean and family a Merry Xmas and happy New Year.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

### **To A. E. HAMILTON**

[PAM, CLB, I, 378-80]

Treherne  
January 9, 1900

Dear Sir,

Your letter of the 7th instant to hand and also a sample of wheat and although I was not favorably impressed with the sample, still by your report it could be improved and which proves that the land is rich and as you say Mr. Harley has some good samples grown in the valley. But I thought your piece of wheat looked good and as you say if it had been put in earlier and drilled it probably would come out No. 1 Hard. Now I think that land requires working a little different than what we have been accustomed to. In the first place I would say break the land for backsetting about the depth you were breaking at the time I was there and backset good and in the spring harrow about eight to ten times and put in with a drill and then roll about when covering the ground and I think it would grow an immense crop. I think that land requires more backsetting than most land because there is such an extra growth of

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

weeds and no stock to keep it down. But I think deep breaking would answer after 12 to 15th of July allright. I noticed that land has a deep mould on top which is loose and requires some deeper soil to be brought up to mix with it, and this soil is very loose and requires to be harrowed extra or rolled to make it firm. I think by this process would produce the best returns and land made firm ripens earlier which would be a direct gain. I noticed you had a fine garden but I think you had a harder frost than at Thunder Hill, as Mr. Ford's garden was allright and his wheat was not touched with that frost. In fact, nothing hurt until September 16th, but he is exposed up there and more in the open and not sheltered the same as you are. I think when the country is cleared up it will make a big difference with frost and we must not be discouraged if we get frozen in the beginning a little. Thorough cultivation will go a long way to overcome it. Now in regard to hay and breaking it is this way: I am trying to get parties to settle on some of this land for a term of 5 years just for breaking and pay taxes and fence and put up what buildings they require for their own use and make all they can, and if I can I will let out section 21. I will reserve section 19 for myself and the 1/4 of 13 south of 24 and the S.E. 1/4 of 25 joining you. As far as I can tell at the present I will build on S.E. 1/4 25 and break it up and part of 19 so you will be my neighbour. I will not do any breaking on it this year. I have two crops to take off here yet, and expect to move up in the fall after the last crop, I will let you cut hay for your own use on the S. W. 1/4 section 31, Township 35, range 27. I have not yet seen this 1/4 section but think it is all hay. This has been a fine fall out here. No frost to stop the plow until 30 November. We finished our plowing on November 7th. We have 735 acres ready for wheat in the spring and will have 80 acres to plow for oats, making a little over 800 acres for crop. Last year I finished cutting wheat on September 1st and oats on the 2nd. Began to cut wheat on 17 August, began to thrash on September 6th and finished thrashing on September 25th. We thrashed 19,000 bushels wheat and about 4,000 bushels of oats, to give you an idea of our farming operations.

How many acres did you get broke and how many acres oats and wheat do you intend to put in this year? Did Crosby's wheat amount to anything? I feel interested in all that goes on in the valley and I would like to see you all prosper and do well. Again thanking you for the sample of wheat, and wishing you and wife and family (if you have them moved out) the compliments of the season.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

THE WHEAT KING



The Cotton family, ca. 1899.

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

**To COLONEL WILLIAM McLEAN**

[PAM, CLB, I, 454-56]

Treherne  
March 1, 1900

[H. M. Arnold had gone to South Africa with the First Canadian Regiment. Company "A" of that regiment had been raised in Manitoba and British Columbia. Sergeant George Henderson was with "D Field Battery" of the Royal Canadian Artillery, which went as part of the second Canadian contingent. They left Halifax on January 21, 1900, arriving in Capt Town on February 17.]

Dear Col,

I have not heard from you for some time and drop a few lines to see how you are getting along. I hope it will find you all well and having a fine winter. War seems to be the principal topic here and is coming close to home, as a good many westerners have gone to the front and some to stay. Major Arnold of Winnipeg, a fine fellow, everyone is sorry he was killed. Sam Henderson's brother George, from Kingston, has gone to Africa with the second contingent. Our winter here is fine. Had no sleighing this winter yet - can go with empty sleighs but all loads are drawn on wagons. We got up our firewood on sleighs but had to put two teams on some places where there was no snow. But today we are having a blizzard from the north and snow with it, a good beginning for March. We are beginning to look forward to spring and making preparations for it in the way of cutting up wood and cleaning up seed grain. There will be a large acreage sown this year as ground is ready, being such a fine fall, no snow until December 1st for ploughing. Everyone had the work finished. I see the spring excursions are to start on next Tuesday. We are expecting a big immigration this year from the east. This is the country for them - plenty of room. I will send you a Swan River paper next week so you will see how the valley is prospering. They have three towns there now and Swan River has sixty-five buildings up already and a school started with thirty-eight to begin with. They paid \$500.00 for the school lot alone. They are still busy building the railway, such as clearing the right-of-way, getting out ties, forwarding supplies, building bridges, &c. I enclose a statement of expenditure of improvement put on farm the last seven years. I was expecting you up last fall so you could see the improvements. Then you would [have] had a better idea how the money had been expended and would have been better satisfaction to both of us. So I thought I would write out a statement and send you so you could see what I had done. I have just given the figures of the money I have paid out, not mentioning logs, hauling, or expense connected with putting them up. I have kept the

## THE WHEAT KING

expenditure down as low as I possibly could, and bought nothing but was really necessary, and up to the end of 1899 I have expended over the appropriations \$32.34. You will see the expense was light in 1898 and 1899, and I don't see any extra for 1900 except insurance, which will have to be renewed in the fall. We are badly in need of a floor in the kitchen also, but if there is a possibility of doing with the same for another year we will do so. The two first log buildings we put up are about finished now and I expect in the summer will have to be pulled down. Log buildings do not last very long with sod roofs on them. The house is standing fairly well for the time it has been up, but the foundations are giving way some and settling a good deal. The last granary and addition is standing well. I put oak foundation under it set on stones and all oak blocks under floor and [it] will stand for a good while. The last stables I put up are standing well and good logs, but sod roofs are bad for them. Fences are in good shape. I renewed about 50 posts last year and no doubt will require a good few more this year as the first posts put in have been there some time. The farm west of us has been sold and part brought under cultivation, and I had them furnish half of the line fence, so I took the south half and they put up their half last fall. I will have enough wire to put the third wire on south end by road and also enough to put the third wire on the north end. I have three wires most all the way on the east side now. So the place will be well fenced when the other is on. Of course there are only two wires on the line fence to the west, but that will be sufficient. But road fences must



The farm at Treherne, ca. 1900.

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

be best, on account [of] stock as there [are] no commons for stock now, only on road. I am giving you a full statement of affairs and hope they will prove satisfactory. I would also like to hear from you in regard to the insurance, which expires on September 20 next, as to which company you would like to carry risk and amount of insurance you think necessary to carry. I would be glad to carry on any suggestions you propose. We are all well and join in sending you our best respects and [to] Mrs. McLean and family.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To JAMES SHERMAN**

[PAM, CLB, II, 22-3]

Treherne  
June 11, 1900

[James Sherman was an intending settler from Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire, Scotland.]

Dear Sir,

Your letter of no date to hand. Being away at the time on a trip it receives my attention at once on my return. I will try and answer your questions as they come. I will send you a few late papers with full market reports so you will see prices as they are. I will mark them for you. I will also send you a printed letter of my own Manitoba experience in farming. The way we manage our thrashing is as follows: for instance, I have 800 acres of grain. I put on five binders and seven stookers and as soon as my crop is cut, what I cut first is ready to thrash if the weather has been fine. Then I call in a thrashing outfit and [they] begin operations. We do not stack but thrash from the stook. There are thirteen men goes with the machine and two teams, and the farmer provides teams enough to draw the sheaves to the machine, which takes six teams, and provides horses and wagons to take away his grain from the machine. We thrash from twelve hundred to eighteen hundred bushels per day of wheat, and oats and barley more. We thrash very quickly from stook to machine and from machine to elevator or grainery and then all cleaned ready for sale. The cost of thrashing is four cents per bushel. We are two miles from market. In winter we generally tie in our cattle at night and feed straw and let them run out to the straw stack in the daytime, but some do not even tie them in as they can get shelter at stack. This is stock cattle. But to fat cattle, we keep them tied in and feed them hay or oat-sheaf and turnips or chopp oats and barley, as we grow coarse grains

## THE WHEAT KING

here very cheap, such as barley and oats. If you have an idea of coming to this country to farm your best method would be to come and engage with a farmer for a year and become acquainted with farming here before launching out for yourself, as before starting here you should have some experience to make a success and begin right, and your best plan would be to write to W. F. McCreary, Immigration Commissioner, Winnipeg, Manitoba, and he will get you a situation. Spring is a good time to come, say in March or July ready for harvest. I received your New Year's card with thanks. Any other information you would like regarding the country I would be glad to supply you with.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

### **To SAMUEL HENDERSON AND NELSON COTTON**

[PAM, CLB, It, 27-30]

Treherne  
June 13, 1900

[Samuel Henderson and Cotton's eldest son Nelson were in charge of a party of men breaking on Cotton's land in the Swan River Valley. Ezra Haskill was an Ontarian who had worked for Cotton in Port Hope and Treherne. He had latterly sublet some of Cotton's land. When Cotton moved to the Swan River Valley he attempted to persuade Haskill to take up one of the farms, but Haskill refused and remained at Treherne, subsequently buying land for himself. Jess was a dark bay mare foaled in 1887. Cotton had bought her in 1893 from Colonel McLean for \$128. Champ was a roan horse foaled in 1892, purchased by Cotton in 1895 from James Stanton for \$137. Tom Hamilton was the son of Cotton's neighbour A. E. Hamilton. Drowning deaths were relatively common during the early years of settlement in the Swan River Valley, before bridges were erected across the Swan River. Cotton was a prime mover in the construction of bridges.]

Dear Brother Sam and Son Nelson,

Well, Sam, I received your letter in Tuesday's mail on the 12th, soon after you had written it, and was anxious to hear from you and glad to hear you were all well. We arrived home safe on Tuesday but did not see Sam Lockhart. He lived so far out we thought it was too far to walk so we did not go. The morning we left the shack we were like drowned rats before we got to the Swan, and there we were surprised at the river and did not know if to cross or not, it being so high, and [it] was all right the day before when I crossed on 24. However I made the attempt, first with a stick and caution and came back again and told Ezra we could make it. So we packed up our cloths and valises and crossed safely and stuck up our sticks on the other side so you would see them and know we were safe. As I told Ezra probably you might feel anxious when you came



Cotton's first bridge over the Swan River, completed 1904.

down at night and seen our wet clothes on the bank and river high. We struck Swan River about 2 o'clock tired and hungry, and my shoulder sore with carrying the valise. The last three miles seemed long and tiresome and a long wait until Monday morning. When we arrived home found everything all O.K. Jess pulled through fine and has a fine smart colt - a mare - and it will be a bay. 2 white hind feet scarcely up to the fetlock and a white star in the forehead, and smart and full of ginger. Yes, I heard of Tom Hamilton's drowning at Swan Town late Sunday evening and [it] was a shock, I tell you. Boy, you cannot be too careful of that treacherous river. I gave you all many warnings about it as some-times it looks harmless, but I tell you it is dangerous. The current is so swift and you must use great caution. It has claimed several victims already and waiting for more. I tell you I was thankful it was none of you and more than glad none of you was mixed up in the affair. Now be very careful. It must [have] been a sad shock to Mrs. Hamilton. I am glad you went to the funeral and hope you all done and gave as much assistance as possible. Time counts nothing in a case of that kind. Who buried him? I am glad you got another man. I think Mr. Hamilton will make a good man for the season and close by and handy for him, and I guess Mrs. Hamilton will be glad to have him at home. Now I would like for you, Nelson, to take a binder cord and measure the breaking on it. Just give me the length on an average and also the break in yards so I can figure out how much there is in it. You say you have twelve acres broken on that land [illegible] will be better after the first one. Tell me how many rounds you are averaging a day each on 19. I think you should make about 6 rounds each at least. However I will leave it with you to do the best you can and hope you will do it well and be sure and keep the furrows well turned over and break 19 a little deeper and do not mind

## THE WHEAT KING

how wide your furrows are if well turned over. And be careful of your horses when Geeuping. It was a good thing to get a wheel from Hamilton's plow. Am glad Champ is allright again. If you get some good hay it will be better for the horses, but I have no doubt it will be difficult to draw as you will have some bad places to cross. But by carefulness you will get along. Well, we have not had rain enough since you left for the Swan to wet the ground down an inch. So you may imagine how the crops are. Ours is looking as well or better than any, but if we don't get rain soon it will be a goner. It looks tough, and can't stand up much longer. Some place[s] they have had good thunder showers, but we have missed it so far and no prospects of rain at the present. Outlook is the worst I have seen since I came to the country. The oats are doing fairly well but not good. I have stopped selling oats as soon as I came home. The colts are doing well and growing and [illegible] is all O.K. and getting fat. And tell Rant old Charlie is fine and gay and as soon as he comes back I will lend him the buggy to take Lizzie for a drive. We have had no word about George's friend, of course. Fronia has written to you several times and you had a letter from her before I left, but I think other Hendersons in the valley might have got it. And so soon as I came home she wrote again and directed to section 25, so no doubt you will have had it by this time. All well. Muriel well and all. Marks and Miss Rook to be married in McCreery Church on June 27 cards out. Say, boys, there was one thing I did not want mentioned and that was Jimmy at the Portage, but it is in Treherne some way I don't know how it got there. I will enclose you a cheque for \$10.00 so you can pay for hay. Now I hope everything is going allright, and all working together harmoniously and pleasantly and doing the best you can. I wrote a line last mail in a hurry. Tell Loucks about that section and if he wants it to see about it at once and not delay, for going fast and more going all the time for land. You might see Thom Lee from Indian Ford up there soon on lookout for land soon. I mean Vine Thompsons Tom.) The bridge won't get filled up until it freezes up, not working half the time. Herschel got all the scrubb cut on the new breaking and expresses have changed time and cross down here about 12 and the down train takes dinner here. Tell Rant that Lizzie sends him her best respects and hopes he is well and wonders he don't write and thinks the times is long while he is away. Remember me to Rant and tell him to keep the Boy living and the first cup of tea we had in Swan was GOOD. Has Jimmie seen any deer since? Tell him to keep the Snider primed. How is Jimmie's onions coming on - soon be fit to pull. On that Thursday night we have had 4 degrees of frost. Cut the

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

potatoes all down and all garden [illegible] that was not covered. The [illegible] covered the tomatoes all and were all safe. But it was a heavy frost for this time of the year. The potatoes were all black. We have had terrible hard winds here this spring nearly every day and some land not stopped drifting yet. You might get this before the 25th and possibly I will drop you a line again, for that mail. Remember me to all

Your loving brother and Father,

Almon

**To J. G. RUTHERFORD, M.P.**

[PAM, CLB, II, 55-56]

Treherne  
June 27, 1900

Dear Sir,

I wish to bring before your notice a case deserving your attention. I will explain the matter as simple as possible. It is this. Mr. R. N. Staples, a respected farmer of Treherne District that I have been well acquainted with, in the spring of 1898 took up a homestead in the Swan River Valley, being northeast 114 section 28, township 35, range 29W. And on the said homestead he only had six months more to obtain his patent, having 60 acres broke and 20 acres under crop, a well dug, house and stable erected and still has a team breaking, when the following unfortunate circumstances occurred. He called on a neighbor in the valley on the 19th instant, and fell into a well, and a second man also lost his life in trying to save Mr. Staples, and a third one had a narrow escape. Now his wife and three small children (and another on the way) are mourning a husband and father at Treherne and unable to perform the balance of the homestead duties in the Swan River Valley, on account of her condition and circumstances. This may be outside of the regular routine of business but is deserving of special attention for the sake of the widow and small children. If you can do anything that will assist Mrs. Staples to obtain her patent for this homestead it will be a case of charity, and the friends of Mr. and Mrs. Staples will be grateful for any assistance you may render of their behalf. Hoping you will do all you possibly can in this deserving case.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

## THE WHEAT KING

**To E. BURRIDGE**

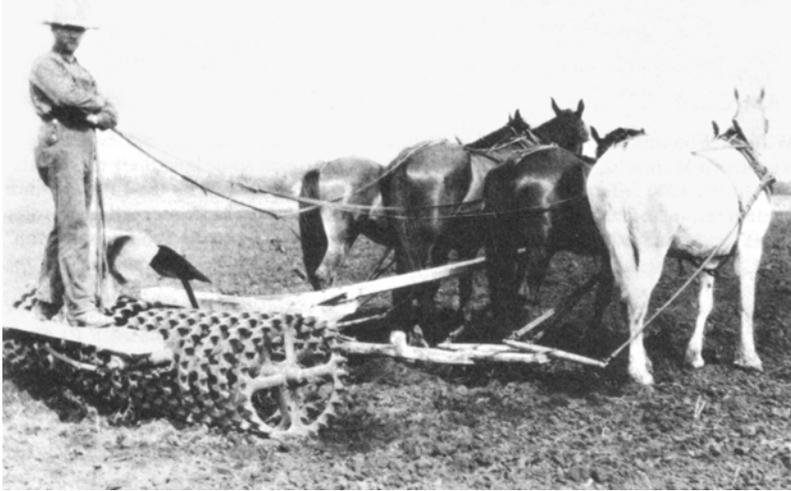
[PAM, C:LB, II, 220-22]

Treherne  
November 30, 1900

[E. Burrige was a farmer at Cypress River, Manitoba. Summer fallowing was the practice of leaving an acreage without crop, although the land was broken and kept free of weeds.]

Dear Sir,

Yours of November 3rd to hand re information on farming. My time has been taken up so much lately. Hence the delay in answering. In regard to yields that was published in the Farmer, they were correct. I have grown as high as 55 and 60 bushels of wheat per acre on 25 acres. In 1894 on a 25 acre patch I cut 55 bushels per acre, and it stood up straight and stiff, and the following year I cut 50 bushels per acre of the same piece, and all lodged and had to cut the one way. In summer fallowing I prefer plowing only once in the latter part of June, then disk and harrow after to keep clean. It can be kept clean quite easily by not allowing thistles to get a start and so much harrowing make a good firm bottom and seed bed, and a good seed bed and firm is one of the chief points in grain raising. A great deal of the land is put in too loose and a good deal, I must say, too early in the spring. Now, in looking over my record you will see from a few days to a week between when I begin to harrow and begin to sow. I do not advocate sowing as soon as the frost is out two inches as by doing so when the frost goes out it leaves your seed bed very loose and allows the drought to enter. To get a good crop you must begin with a good plowing and a good seed bed and do it properly. I believe in fall plowing and plow deep and as early as possible after the grain is gone, then in the spring (ours being fairly heavy clay land) I begin to harrow as soon as the frost is out to do so, but do not finish up the first field or two for nearly a week until the frost is out more, then come back and harrow again. All my old land I harrow three times before I sow, then sow with the old Superior Press Drill with the wheels on and then harrow again with a light harrow to get my grain covered properly. As my land is all harrowed two times besides the Press Drill making a good firm seed bed and securing early germination and retaining moisture and by so much harrowing leaves a fine smooth surface and prevents evaporation taking place and still causing capillary attraction and bring the moisture to the grain roots, which is one of the chief results. I think harrowing fall plowing say once or twice is allright. I have done so when I had the choice and was satisfied that it was a help to the land in making it firm and a help toward the spring work. But I do not agree to harrow in the fall and not in the spring. I like one or two strokes in the



A seed packer, ca. 1912.

spring. It serves to renew the land, bring it in contact with the sun and air and warm it up, assisting in germination. I prefer fall plowing for wheat, although I have not had a poor crop from spring plowing. Still, the time is short for spring plowing if it can be done in the fall. My treatment for spring plowing for wheat, oats, and barley are the same, as follows: plow not less than 4 to 5 inches in depth. Do not allow any plowing to remain overnight without harrowing, and give it two strokes, and if you are plowing say 5 or 6 acres a day sow as soon as you have 10 acres ready, do not let dry out before sowing. As soon as sowed give a stroke with light harrow, then roll. Do oats the same way and only try it and I don't think you can improve on that method. I have found it to give good satisfaction and never failed once. It pays to work land good. Make a good seed bed, sow the very best clean seed free from all seeds well cleaned and a bushel and a half is sufficient for an acre of good seed, well covered and planted properly. This is the method I have followed in farming and I have met with good success, but am still willing and anxious to learn toward improvement, for farming is something we cannot learn too much about, and I think a good many of us should study it up more and profit by the experience of others. Any further information I can supply you with or exchange of view, I will be glad to do, as hoping you will overlook my delay in answering.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

## THE WHEAT KING

### **To WILLIAM WILLIAMS**

[PAM, CLB, II, 244-5]

Treherne  
December 12, 1900

[William Williams was an old friend of Cotton from Bowmanville, Ontario. Greenway is in southern Manitoba, and Williams appears to have bought some land there on speculation. In the 1900 federal election, the Durham West seat - held by the Liberals since Confederation, for many years by Edward Blake - was lost to the Conservatives by forty votes. The "young chieftain" refers to Hugh John Macdonald, and the "young Napoleon" was Clifford Sifton. Sifton defeated Macdonald and retained the Brandon seat for the Liberals.]

Dear Friend,

Your postcard to hand. Was pleased to hear from you and that you were well. I could not tell why you had not written as I wrote you a long letter on the 19th February last, answering questions regarding your farm at Greenway and in answer to inquiries about the Swan River Valley. And not receiving any answer I sometimes wondered if you had received it or not. We had a very poor season in Manitoba this season. At one time in the summer we thought we would have no crop at all, so very dry. Then in harvest and fall too much rain, could not save what crop we had. My wheat only averaged 8 bushels. I thrashed 6,000 of wheat and 2,000 of oats, a very poor yield. I sold as soon as I thrashed for 55¢ and 58¢. It was a hard looking sample for Manitoba, but very thankful for it. I have two men and two teams in the Swan Valley on my farm. We broke 250 acres there last summer and will have that into crop this spring. Wheat there this year turned out 40 and 45 bushels per acre of the highest quality. There has been somewhere about 10,000 acres broken there this summer. This poor crop in some parts of Manitoba will not check immigration though, settlers are coming in as usual. I hear crops in Ontario are good and fall wheat good. How was your crop this year and how was your apple crop and did you ship to the old Country? How was it you lost your man in the election? Sifton was all right, and so is the west. But the young chieftain got lost when he met the young Napoleon on Brandon Battle Ground. Sifton's policy is all right and he will make the Great West prosper and the western prairie will blossom as the rose. Then you will have a grand market for your apples.

Wish you all a Merry Xmas and Happy New Year.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To WILLIAM B. STIRRIT**

[PAM, C.I.B, 11, 348-50]

Treherne  
February 4, 1901

[William B. Stirrit was a farmer in Warren, Ohio]

Dear Sir,

Your letter postmarked at Warren January 28 received. Re seed wheat: I have only some 1,400 bushels wheat on hand for my own seed. But by writing Thompson, Sons & Co., grain exporters, Winnipeg, they are in a position to furnish you with any quantity you might require of No. 1 Manitoba Hard. The price would be about .75¢ or .80¢. Our wheat got damaged to a certain extent last fall with the excessive rains and is not as good a sample as general. But our hard wheat would not do well with you, or at least I don't think so, as it must be grown in a colder climate. It wants the long sunshine in the daytime and cool nights, and the closer to the frost line it is grown the finer sample. It will sometimes weigh 65 pounds to the bushel and if you cut a kernel in two with a knife and hold it to the light it is almost transparent, nearly as clear as glass and very hard. It makes a white flour but no whiter than fall wheat will make, but a strong flour, as one hundred pounds of that flour will make a great many more loaves of bread, more than can be made out of other flour. It takes more water to mix it and raises more. In fact, it is the finest flour on the market and in great demand, and seems the farther north-west it is grown the better and still if sown in a warmer climate it will not grow hard but will turn soft. It is known as the scotch fife or old Red River formerly brought from Scotland by way of the Hudson Bay. It does the best with us of any, but any class of wheat sown here for a few years will turn hard. We have the soil here and the climate for growing fine grain. Still, the only kinds we generally grow is wheat, barley and oats. My wheat has averaged for the past 13 years over 26 bushels per acre. I will send you a record of my yields so you can compare them. I have grown as high as 55 and 60 bushels occasionally of wheat and 55 of barley, the 6 rowed variety, and oats as high as 108 bushels per acre and weigh 44 pounds per bushel. But wheat is our principal crop and the land is well adapted for wheat and is easily grown and generally a good yield. We have a large stretch of magnificent country here still unsettled, although settlers are coming in by the thousands every year and can't scarcely be noticed. We have over one Hundred Million acres of splendid agricultural land besides large tracts of fine grazing lands and well watered with rivers and streams and wood in abundance and plenty of

## THE WHEAT KING

timber for lumber. I will answer your questions as they come. (1) I don't think your land and climate suitable for one Hard. (2) We just plow once in the fall then in spring harrow and saw with Shoe and Disk drill. (3) We sow 1 1/2 bushels per acre. (4) Generally from 20 to 40. (5) From 61 to 64 pounds per bushel. (6) Price now here at my farm is .73¢ per bushel. (7) We do not value straw here at all; after thrashing we burn what we do not require. I burn hundreds of tons every fall after thrashing as we have no use for it. We thrash in the open field and get the ground clear for the next crop as soon as possible. (8) the wheat makes a fine flour. We have no barns here for to store our sheaves. It is buildings enough to keep our grain. We have mile after mile in wheat as far as the eye can see but we do not farm on a very large scale, farmers in general having say from 200 to 400 acres in wheat. I am farming here this season some 850 acres into wheat, and I have 3,000 acres in the Swan River Valley but only 250 there under cultivation. Yet I will have under crop here and in the valley about 1,100 acres. We have 4 drills and sow about 60 acres per day, 7 harrows and harrow about 250 acres per day, 10 plows and plow about 25 to 30, and 6 binders cutting 80 to 90 per day. Our furrows are from one half to a mile long, our fields are large and so is our great west, and plenty of room to turn in. Now any questions you would like to ask regarding our country, I would gladly answer them and give you any information you desire. I will now close.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

### *To* ASHDOWN AND BOSSONS

[PAM, CLB, 11, 472-3]

Treherne  
April 1, 1901

[Alfred J. Ashdown was a relative of James H. Ashdown, Winnipeg hardware merchant, who ran a branch of Ashdown's retail business in Portage la Prairie until 1900, when he moved to the town of Swan River. A. Ashdown remained in business there until retiring to Vancouver in 1915. The "party in Philadelphia" was probably W. L. Cook, who was married to Mrs. Cotton's sister Annie.]

Dear Sirs,

My man Mr. Henderson got a cheque cashed at your store on either 8th or 9th of March before I left Swan River. You endorsed it and sent it to the Atlantic Refining company. They sent it to the State National Bank Cleveland, Ohio, who sent it to the First National Bank, Chicago. They forwarded it to the Imperial Bank Winnipeg who presented it to

the Canadian Bank of Commerce on the 26th of March and was pro-tested in this way. In November last I sent a cheque for loan to a party in Philadelphia and after receiving cheque back again I had a suspicion that my signature had been copied and notified bank not to honour any cheque coming from the States so as to be on guard. But I fully expected they would notify me and hold it for my instructions if it should occur. At the same time I did not think about any being sent from here to the States. As soon as the bank notified me as to number of cheque and endorsement I wrote at once stating it was all right to honor it and they replied it had been protested and returned to the last endorsement. I hope you will have no trouble over this cheque. I felt annoyed over this affair and wrote the bank that they should [have] held cheque. They said they were going under my instructions and protecting my interest and would honor cheque as soon as presented again. I will enclose you copy of letter I sent to bank on 4 December last respecting any cheque coming from the States, and it did not cost me a thought that cheques I issued here might be sent to the States and returned. I would like to hear from you if this has caused you any inconvenience and a case like this will not occur again. It is a convenience for parties like myself to get cheques cashed by reliable parties like your firm and they also want to deal with reliable parties. I am sorry that a case of this kind has happened, not for lack of funds but through a misunderstanding. If you would kindly return letter copy I enclose and oblige.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To J. McADAM**

[PAM, CLB, III, 179-180]

Thunder Hill  
November 5. 1901

[J. McAdam was a Treherne businessman who later moved to Winnipeg.]

Dear McAdam:

Enclosed please find two cheques as follows: one for Milton Staples for \$35.00 and one for John Walker who lives in town near Mr. House for \$16.00 for two days cutting with his binder. When you see them please hand them the cheques. We left Treherne on Thursday and held for pretty near a day at Portage on account of a railway wreck near Westbourne. I thought at first our own cars were in it but was not and glad of it. We got through to Swan River 12 o'clock Saturday night, all well. And Mrs. Cotton,

## THE WHEAT KING



The Cotton farm at Swan River, ca. 1903.

myself, and three children drove out to the farm on Sunday. We are just finishing stacking, have had fine weather for it, froze hard for three nights and plow stopped a little skiff of snow last night, for the first since we came up - about an inch. We are getting settled but only brought in from the town what we barely required, having stored the remainder in a shed beside the railway which I had prepared in advance. Mr. Gable came up to Swan River on the train with us. He said his intentions were to build the mill at once and came up in connection with the site. His grain is all stacked and has thrashed his oats last week and does not intend to thrash the remainder until later, as the machine did not give satisfaction. We expect W. D. Staples outfit in on every train and the settlers are waiting for him and we hope he will hurry up. Swan River is advancing in the Hotel line as they have the second licence now. The Rev. Mr. Gregg called on last Sunday and was unable to cross the river to take Thunder Hill appointment. He seems a nice young man. We received the *Treherne Times* and thank you very much for the kind remarks on our behalf, and thanking the friends for their kindness at the station in seeing us off and our memories will go back to Treherne often in the future when we think of the happy and sociable times we enjoyed with our friends there. And although we have removed to our new home in the valley we will not forget the Master the Giver of all to whom we owe all things. Wishing you success at your anniversary.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To J. W. ROBSON**

[PAM, CLB, III, p. 195]

Thunder Hill  
November 12, 1901

[James Wells Robson was the son of a Scottish medical missionary, educated at Edinburgh and Guelph Agricultural College. He was a farmer in the Swan River Valley and at this time reeve of Swan River. He would subsequently be Cotton's opponent in the provincial election of 1903. Cotton became chairman and later Secretary-Treasurer of the Harlington School Board when it was established, serving until 1918.]

Dear Sir,

I write you in regard to our school district and send you plan of same, as we wanted it formed. I understand a petition has been sent in signed by the residents of this district that they want the district formed this way according to this plan, and we are anxious to have this carried into effect at the next council meeting as we are in need of a school as soon as possible. There are children here who should [have] been at school a year ago. A petition was sent to the Inspector last May. Then, as the council was in formation, it was returned, then forwarded to the council, but did not put in an appearance until lately, being delayed in some way. We want some from Square Plain School and are willing for Section 21



The Square Plains School, ca. 1901.

## THE WHEAT KING

to come into our district, and as are others there also. I ask you to work for us in getting this formed according to enclosed plan which can be easily done. Wishing you success.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

### **To J. K. McLENNAN**

[PAM, CLB, III, p. 316]

Thunder Hill  
February 17, 1902

[The year 1902 saw the Great Grain Blockade, when a larger harvest than anticipated made it impossible to ship grain from the prairies. Mr. Coulter was the manager of the Treherne Farmer's Elevator.]

Dear Sir,

I hear you have a great blockade in wheat at Treherne. It seems to be general over the province. I hope the Farmers Elevator will get a good pull this season and about pull off the debt. Have you my wheat shipped out yet? I have not received any outturns since I left from Mr. Coulter and thought probably you had not shipped all yet. Since I came up I had the misfortune to lose my fur coat in a fire. You got it for me and I would like for you to order another one for next winter for me when the traveller comes around. Dark wombat, no white, heavy fur, large rolling collar. Size 50 inches bust, 54 inches long, a good heavy lining and well finished. I was highly pleased with my other coat and sorry to lose it and hope you will get me one as good. I don't require it until next season and write you in time to catch traveller. Wishing you success.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

### **To JAMES T. RICHARDSON**

[PAM, CLR, III, 321-3]

Thunder Hill  
February 18, 1902

[James T. Richardson was a farmer from Peterborough, Ontario.]

Dear Sir,

Your letter reached me was forwarded from Treherne. Now, the Northwest is the best farming country that can be found today, where

more money can be made with the least outlay, where any man who is willing to roll up his sleeves and go to work can find work to do that will repay him for his labor. Farming here is easy as compared with Ontario. You can get 160 acres of this choice first-class land for \$10.00 and any one who wishes to get along who wishes to make a home for themselves, if they can't make a living off that chance should never have another. We have one of the finest valleys under the sun, a good climate, good soil, good first-class water, plenty of firewood, plenty of cheap lumber. Grows good grain and big yields, fine vegetables, small fruits. Good for stock. Everything a farmer requires. Now don't think for one moment you can have all this luxury and come here and settle down beside a city. These chances are 10 to 15 miles from railway and for a year or two a few miles from Post Office and stores and village. But you must understand the settlers make these themselves and if you want in a few years to become independent and have a good home and railway, village, church, school, Post Office, and all the other necessities close at hand and enjoy all without capital to start with, you must begin with a homestead and put up with a little inconvenience to begin with. I have heard some say the chances are all gone. In Manitoba the best land is taken up. Such is not the case. This North West is larger than anyone thinks and the best districts are yet to open up. New railways are pushing through. Immigration is pouring in. New settlements are becoming settled. The chances are the best that has ever been for the settler. A choice of land. New settlements fill up so



The Swan River Valley after settlement.

## THE WHEAT KING

fast. New school districts formed, post offices established, towns and villages started, and the new settler has the advantages of reduced freight rates. This will prove to you that the chances for the new settler with limited capital are better now than ever before. These are great inducements for the settler and he should take advantage of them and immigrate to our North West and become a contented settler. We have the finest country today, only a few years since settlement began and today the railways are all congested, cannot begin to handle the business of our country. The C. P. R. with all its financial backing, enormous mileage. farsighted managers, could not see in advance the prosperity of this country. The developments that are taking place are rapid. With these large terminal elevators at Fort William holding millions of bushels of wheat, and with hundreds of elevators planted throughout the North West, these are all full to the eves with wheat and every town and village that has an empty shed is piled with farmers' bags. The C. P. R. cars are all full and the farmers' graineries are full, and all the railway companys here have ordered with every locomotive and car shop in America all the rolling stock they can buy until next October 1st for their use here. This is testimony enough as to the resources of this fine country, as one can understand the magnitude and enormous volume of business that will be done this side of Lake Superior in the near future. I have had 14 years experience in this West and am writing from that. I have seen the growth begin and have tried the resources of our west and they have proved beyond my anticipation. I have given you a little idea of our country and I would like to see you planted here as a settler and become a prosperous one, and you would say that half has not been told you. You had better come to the valley and see if you do not like it. You can go up to a thousand miles west and get suited. This valley is new and no farms to lease as yet as you ask. Railway land \$2.00 up to \$6.00 per acre from McKenzie and Mann. Any further information you ask I will gladly answer.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To HON. R. P. ROBLIN**

[PAM, CLB, IV, 59-60]

Swan River  
December 29, 1902

[Rodmond P. Roblin was at this time premier of Manitoba, holding the Agriculture and Immigration portfolio as well as serving as Railway Commissioner.]

Honorable Sir,

I wish to call your attention to the great necessity of a branch line of railway to run in a southwesterly direction through the Swan River Valley, to start from the town of Swan River and go to the boundary line in direction to Fort Pelley and can still continue to some convenient point on the Grand View Branch of the Canadian Northern Railway. And the same to connect with and start from the same railway and be run by that railway. We only ask for this branch to run as far as the boundary line of the province at present, which goes through one of the finest valleys in the province. The branch would run through a fine farming country and thickly settled and [the settlers] are in sore need of railway facilities. The valley has made as much progress as it can make without railway connection and we would not like to see progress checked for want of a railway. We ask you to aid us in securing this branch line for the public good and welfare of this valley. This branch will pay from the start, as it is all well settled through which it will run. About twenty miles is all that would be required to build next season.



Cotton's first full crop at Swan River, 1902.

## THE WHEAT KING

We hope we will bring pressure to bear on the Canadian Northern to build this branch and guarantee their bonds. This branch will pay from the start, so you will have no risk to run. By all means help the settlers with this branch as they are in urgent need of it and keep pace with the growing west.

Wishing you the compliments of the season.  
I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

### **To MR. AND MRS. JOHN HISLOP**

[PAM, CLB, IV, R9-93]

Thunder Hill  
January 28, 1903

[Sarah Hislop was Mrs. Cotton's sister. This letter not only offers a start in Manitoba to the Hislops, but also epitomizes Cotton's own experiences as a farmer in the west. After the Cottons had moved to the Valley, Mrs. Ford had begun to alternate her time between the Cottons and the Will Fords]

Dear Sister and Brother,

Your letter of January 12th is hand. I will try and go through your questions as plain as possible. I enclose assets and liabilities covering the four years, each year separately, and if you followed this out I am sure you would do even better. I have estimated the wheat at .50¢ per bushel which is below the general average and also at 20 bushels per acre which is an exceptionally low average. Mine has averaged me about 26, so I have not exaggerated in the least. I have also allowed for a certain amount of hired help, as your man must be an extra good one if you expect him to do all the work for the four years. I have allowed him the privilege to earn \$100.00 the first season through the harvest and thrashing when the breaking season is over, and break 60 acres for himself, which he will accomplish with three good horses and the feed I have figured on. You can go over it year after year and if Providence favors you as it has the general man in the North West, at the end of the four years you will have all your chattel to the good and near \$700.00 in cash. To accomplish this it means industry and good management, and doing the proper thing at the proper time. You cannot be promised ease or luxury. There will be a certain amount of hardship to endure, obstacles to contend with, and privations to overcome. Your first four years would be your greatest worry. After that you would be into shape to go ahead. Of course, the more capital you can put into it, the easier you can get through. Pioneering now is not what it used to be.

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

Yes, you furnish wire for two strands and tamarack posts one rod apart to enclose the 320 acres. I have mentioned the cost, part of the wire the first year for you to use for pasture purposes and later to place it in enclosing the farm and the balance you need not buy until the last year.

Taxes this year amounts to about \$35.00 on the 320 acres, but taxes here does not increase with improvements like Ontario. For instance, I have a thousand dollars worth of buildings on my 320 acres and all under cultivation. I don't have any more taxes to pay than the 320 acres adjoining me lying idle & wild (so much for our West). No doubt those taxes will get higher later on, but not a great deal, because the school taxes are added to them now.

I will furnish you rough lumber for your house and stable free and you furnish shingles, nails, windows, tar paper, etc. And the first winter you can get out lumber from the saw mill to put up a grainery for the next fall yourselves. Of course you put up the building at your expense and they remain on the farm. This is the manner in which you pay the rent. I don't ask you what size to build. You can put up log buildings if you choose as long as they will accommodate you.

One man would be pretty busy but could change works or hire a few days now and again as occasion demanded. It often times pays to hire, as the more breaking you do the first and second seasons, the more use of it you will have.

I have given you an estimate of cost of starting on enclosure.

If you come you had better buy the horses, cows, binder, mower, wagon, sulky rake, harrows, down there, as horses here are from 350 to 400 per span.

Buy your seeder and plows up here as we use different ones here. Now you will find this different to living in town, and you will have to run the same risks as we do as to hailstorms, drought, frost and everything else [that] comes along. Now I have figured out the cost and you will have to figure out the daylight. In the assets and liabilities, I have allowed for wear and tear and use of chattels. There will still be some small things you would require that I have omitted, such as forks, shovels, hoes, chains, and also you should have another breaking plow in 1905 to break with - two plows and a pair of sleighs not mentioned and some bags. I think this includes all but the clothes line. Now, in taking a summary view of the situation it is quite likely you can make a better showing at the end of the four years as I have figured the yield and price very low. But then there are certain risks to run that we can't figure on, risks that are not in our hands to turn aside, such as hail, frost, drouth. We cannot avoid these and everyone who farms either in the North West

## THE WHEAT KING

or Ontario have their risks to run or others that take their place. All we can do is to do *our* part and trust in *Providence* for the rest, and if we do that, we have nothing to fear. I have sowed as much as 1,700 bushels of seed in one spring and after completion I could not guarantee the harvesting of a single bushel. But seed time and harvest are promised us, and if we do not sow, we cannot reap. We have to spend money to make money, but money is not everything we require - but a little comes in very useful sometimes. The thoughts of every thrifty man and woman is how are we to save enough for old age and a little for our children? Every one of us wishes to become independent and our thoughts are how are we to accomplish it. Some try one way and some another, but each of us must decide for ourselves. I will not urge you to come to Manitoba and tell you you are sure of success, that your pathway will be strewn with roses, for there may be thorns also. Neither would I urge you to stay where you are, for I cannot look into the future. If you remain where you are or if you come to Manitoba, you have my best wishes for luck, prosperity and happiness and your whole family gathered around you in plenty in old age. I have placed the matter before you in all its different phases, so you can stand back and take a good square look at it and choose for yourself. I am not acquainted with your financial standing or if you have strength and health to farm in Manitoba. You are certainly no worse off in the former than we were when we came to Manitoba and I should think as good in the latter. Many a one have come to Manitoba with no capital and today are in easy circumstances. Farmers all over Manitoba say they are prospering and they look it, and if one prospers, can't another try, and where one meets with success, why can't another? This is true that Manitoba has advantages to offer the farmer that no other country has and there is no other country under the sun where farmers have and can do so well as in our Canadian North West. Prosperity reigns throughout and I like to see everyone come and take a share in it. Now, think over the matter thoroughly and look at it from all its different lights, then decide. In the meantime, if there is anything in this letter you don't understand or any more information you require or questions you would like to ask, write and inquire and I will answer you as fully as I can. I have this half section left to lease and offer you the first chance. Mother went back to Will's last week again. We are all well and am glad to hear your children are growing so well. Allan came to me today and wanted me to measure him. He measures 41 inches in his sock feet. Almon and Frances are to school. Nelson, Herschel and Sam are

hauling hay from this farm with three teams. All sends their love to you all.

As ever your big brother,

Almon

## **THE PRESENT ELEVATOR SYSTEM IN OUR CANADIAN NORTHWEST**

[PAM, CLB, IV, 144-47]

[This piece was written by Cotton in March 1903, and was probably delivered by him at a farm meeting in Brandon that same month.]

In speaking of our Canadian North West Elevator system we must state, without any exception, that we have the best equipment for handling and storing grain of any grain producing country in the world. If you travel over Manitoba and the North West, and take any of the main lines or branches of the two great railways, at any individual shipping point you will see great elevators standing there, two or three, up to eight in number, placed there to receive the farmer's grain. At the two great railway terminals, Fort William and Port Arthur, there rise mammoth elevators, with a capacity from two to four million bushels each, equipped with the fastest and most modern machinery for unloading the grain from cars and cleaning and weighing and shipping into vessels. With such a perfect system of elevators throughout our northwest, we as a country, each of us as individual farmers, each of us who are producers of the finest class of wheat - wheat that commands a premium on the Liverpool market in open competition with the world - we who are the producers of that high class of wheat, it was for the handling of this grain that this great elevator system was established. If this great system was controlled and operated as it should be - what an accommodation - what a boon it would be to the farmers! But I am sorry to say that this fine equipment of elevators is not operated for the benefit and advancement of the farmer. If he hauls a load of wheat to one of those elevators, often he does not get justice. In many cases he is not offered the market value for his wheat, and frequently [it is] impossible to get cars for his accommodation. And having payments to meet and in need of ready money, he has no other alternative but to accept whatever price those elevator companies offer him. He must put up with the insinuation that his grain is a low grade, unclean, and not up to standard. He must be docked a large percentage for such careless farming,

## THE WHEAT KING

and generally he is offered from two to ten cents per bushel below the market value, and must accept one or two grades below its actual standing -so taking the price below market value, a lower grade, excessive cleaning, excessive dockage and often times short weight into the bargain, is it not a fact, is it not true, that many times the farmer turns away from one of those fine elevators with a light pocket book, disgusted [and] discouraged, and goes home with the uppermost thought in his mind: does it pay to grow wheat and accept such treatment? Is this the way to encourage the farmer? Who is the pioneer, the producer, the backbone, the sinew, and the builder of our country. I say, is this treatment for the farmers' benefit: [Is it] for the improvement and advancement of our fair Canadian North West? Is such treatment in accord with the public opinion of the day? I say not. The farmers say not. The public say not. If this treatment is obnoxious to the farmer, let us wake up out of our Rip Van Winkle sleep. Let us stand on our feet. Let us as farmers co-operate and find a remedy. Although we are producers of the soil (a noble occupation) let us not get down on our knees and be slaves to any combine. Let us stand up for our rights and let us as producers command the market value for our productions, according to their merit, in open competition with the world. That is the treatment we ask. That is all we are seeking. That is the treatment we deserve. That is all we require. If this elevator system will not give us justice, let us as farmers unite and build an elevator system of our own. Let us handle and ship our own grain through our own system. Let us as farmers get up off our knees, co-operate, and become independent. I am glad and proud to say that at different points, throughout the province and North West, the farmers have already formed joint-stock companies, erected and equipped their own elevators, handle their own grain, and have received entire satisfaction, full market value for their grain, just weights, just dockage, and graded according to government grades. At each one of those points that farmers' elevators are erected, market prices are paid. Their elevator serves as a regulator and other elevators at the same point must pay the same price or higher market value for whatever grain they buy, and must give the same treatment as the farmers' elevator offers. Let the farmers of Manitoba and the North West, at every station or shipping point where grain growing is carried on, organize a farmers joint-stock company and build their own elevator, with a capacity from 50,000 to 80,000 bushel capacity. Let them equip it with the best and latest up to date machinery, the best cleaners that can be purchased, and elect a board of directors of the ablest farmers in their vicinity. Let them choose a manager who is straightforward, honest, just,

who will show justice to all and favors to none, and place from two to four independent buyers to buy grain [for] their elevator. Then the farmer who hauls a load of grain to market will get full market value for his grain. The farmer who raises one or more carloads can have a bin at his disposal and keep his wheat separate, and, if not satisfied with the prices the local buyers are paying, can ship his own grain, have it graded by the Government Inspector and then sell to any buyer, commission, or grain company, and get the full market value to which he is entitled. Let every farmer here think over the matter seriously. Let him come to the conclusion that, until he organizes and builds his own elevators and superintends the handling and selling of his own grain, then and only then will he get justice. With this additional elevator capacity added to the present system and regulated by the farmer, the grain producers of the Canadian North West will have the most complete elevator system that can be organized, and will rest contented that we, as producers, are receiving justice and full market value for our grain.

**To HENRY C. MARSHALL**

Thunder Hill [PAM. CLB. IV, p. 1531

Swan River Valley

March 30, 1903

[Henry C. Marshall was an interesting settler from Fort Erie, Ontario. "Ogilvie" refers to the leading milling company in Manitoba.]

Dear Sir,

Your letter dated February 23rd to hand. My time has been pretty well taken up, hence the delay in answering. I will now answer your questions as they appear.

Horses are very high. A good span brings from \$400 to \$450. Cows from \$35.00 to \$40.00. Horses are scarce and have to be brought in from Ontario and British Columbia. Flour here best Ogilvie \$2.20 and \$2.10 per hundred. Salt 16¢. All groceries are a little higher with freight added. Potatoes are 40¢. Bring your vinegar as you can sell it. Also bring some apples, green ones if you have good ones, and if you have dried ones you can get ready sale for them here. I can't say what vinegar is a gallon, as we make our own and have not bought any. We do not burn [illegible] here. Now you had better bring three horses with you and effects. Get your breaking plow and implements here, and if you do not get a place to suit you I will let you have a half section (320 acres)

## THE WHEAT KING



Cotton horses at \$400 a span.

first-class land for four years and you pay no rent, but break 200 acres and fence with two wires, and pay taxes and put up what buildings you require for your own use. And I will furnish you free also the rough lumber and dimensions you require for building. This is a good chance in a good settlement, 8 miles from the town of Swan River and a first-class wheat farm and from here all you can make of it. One mile from school and neighbours all around.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

### **To REDFORD MULLOCK**

[PAM, CLB, IV, 154-55]

Swan River  
April 4, 1903

[William Redford Mulock was a Winnipeg lawyer and President of the Dominion Alliance for the Total Suppression of the Liquor Traffic, founded in 1876. The convention to choose a Prohibition candidate for the new provincial seat of Swan River was held in Swan River on March 28, 1903. The Liberal convention was held on April 11, 1903. Cotton was unable to attend the Liberal gathering because of the roads in the region.]

Dear Sir,

Your letter dated Swan River March 30th to hand. I am much surprised at the different stand you have taken since I saw you at the

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

Convention. I brought the matter up before the Convention and you sat in the seat beside me and said it was quite in order for me to accept the Liberal nomination and it would be a source of strength to the Prohibitionists and all you required was that I would be Prohibition in the House. I then told you I was satisfied with that course. Now I was offered the Liberal nomination before the Prohibitionists asked me to accept theirs and those that asked me I told them it must be subject to the Liberal nomination also. So I brought the matter up in the Convention as you are aware of and there was nothing said against it. That is why I am surprised at your letter. Now if you think for one moment there will be any dissatisfaction and if you think the temperance cause will suffer in any way by me accepting the Liberal nomination I will resign at once. I am a Prohibitionist, and I want to be straightforward and honest and aboveboard. I do not want to do anything in the corner. I want the Prohibitionists to win and if you cannot trust me with your vote, tell me so and I will step down and out before I go any further. I do not want to be the cause of any dissatisfaction or any split in the vote. If there are three candidates in the field the Prohibitionists lose. If you expect the Liberals to endorse the Prohibitionist nomination you cannot hold them all independent. Then the Conservatives will be elected. This is the way the matter stands and if you can keep the Prohibitionists and Liberals united and keep the alliance intact, then we will win, and I have given my promise that I will do all in my power to further the temperance cause. I don't doubt for one moment but the Conservatives will do all they possibly can to cause a split in the vote as they think they are losing a few votes by me accepting the Prohibition nomination. If they can do this they will accomplish the defeat of the Prohibition candidate and they have gained their point and defeated the temperance cause as they always have done. Write me by return mail and if the step I am about to take is not satisfactory to you and the Prohibitionists of Swan River I will drop out at once. On the other hand, if you and the Prohibitionists of Swan River are satisfied with the alliance of the Prohibitionists and Liberals and I to take the stand as a Liberal Prohibitionist or Liberal Independent, and if the Prohibition and the Liberals unite and work hand in hand and gain the victory, I will use my influence and use every opportunity to further the cause of temperance and prohibition while in the house and out of it. This is as fair as I can do.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

## THE WHEAT KING

**To HON. THOMAS GREENWAY**

[PAM, CI\_B. IV, 158-9]

Swan River  
April 4, 1903

[Thomas Greenway was at this time the leader of the Liberal opposition in Manitoba. He had been premier at the time of the Manitoba Schools Question. Robert Watson had been a Liberal M.P. for the riding of Marquette (Manitoba) from 1882 to 1892. He had left federal politics to become minister of public works in the Greenway administration, and was defeated at the provincial general election in 1899 along with the Liberal government. He was appointed to the Canadian Senate on January 29, 1900. Colin H. Campbell was Manitoba's attorney-general under Roblin.]

Dear Sir,

Your letter to hand dated March 25th re representation of our new constituency Swan River. I have been pressed and persuaded by my friends and also by the Independents and Prohibitionists, and by T. A. Burrows and Honorable Robert Watson and yourself to stand as a candidate. I have decided to do so. I have accepted the nomination for the Prohibitionists with the understanding from the Liberals that it would strengthen them also and they have also offered me their nomination and the stand I will have to take will be a Liberal Independent, or Liberal Prohibitionist. The alliance between these two parties here must be kept intact, as only by doing so the Liberal can be elected. I have a strong opponent and the leaning here is strong Conservative, and it will be a tight pull. No doubt the Conservatives will do all in their power to break up the alliance and split the vote. What we want to do is to hold the Prohibitionists with the Liberals or the Liberals with the Prohibitionists, either way as long as we can succeed. If we do not do this the Conservatives will be elected. I would like to have some help to stump the constituency, as I am no speaker and my opponent is a good speaker, and if I can get help this way and to keep the alliance formed, I think we can win, as I can get a pretty good Conservative Prohibitionist vote and unless we use tact to hold these we will lose, and if we win I must satisfy the Prohibitionists. And then after that I am an out and out Liberal. This is the way the matter stands, and if you have any suggestions to make or advice to offer I would be glad to hear from you, as I want to go into this fight with a determination to win and help turn the Roblin-Campbell Government out. If you have anything in way of figures, papers, or something that would assist me in getting up a speech it would be a help to me. If I have the Liberal nomination we must have thorough organization and work the constituency for all it is worth and win. The Conservatives here are well organized and will do the utmost.

Hoping to hear or see you soon.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton



A. J. Cotton, "the man of affairs."

## THE WHEAT KING

**To T. A. BURROWS**

[PAM, CLB, IV, p. 169]

Swan River  
April 11, 1903

[E. A. James had succeeded D. B. Hanna as superintendant of the Canadian Northern Railway.]

Dear Burrows,

Your letter dated March 31st to hand. I had already written to you in the meantime and I thought I would wait until after the nomination before answering your letter. I have received the nomination from the Liberals and am now in a position to go ahead to win, and I think the prospects are not bad if I can keep the two parties consolidated. But no doubt the Conservatives will do their utmost to cause friction. I would like to get the assistance of the Canadian Northern as well to back me, as the Conservatives will leave no stone unturned to cause my defeat, and one point they will try to gain is to get the C. N. R. to put up a special train to bring in electors from the outside. I would like to have this prevented in some way. I am well acquainted with E. A. James and always found him a decent little fellow, and I want to keep him on my side if possible. I thought you the Chief Officer in the Land Department - could use your influence with him on my behalf, as I want to gain every possible point.

And I also thank you for your influence on my behalf around Pine River and your mill as no doubt I will require it as Robson is going to make the stand and will be hard to run up against. Send me what political literature you have handy and oblige.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To J. McADAM**

[PAM. CLB, IV, p. 178]

Swan River  
April 29, 1903

Dear McAdam,

I have just launched out in a new undertaking and am now "kissing babies," a pretty difficult position to hold. No doubt you have been informed before this that I have been offered and have accepted both the Prohibition and Liberal nomination and my reputation is at stake and I have a hard fight to put up, as Robson is taking a stand and I must work hard to win. And I am asking all my Friends to put in a good word on my behalf on every opportunity. I was thinking you would have a vote at Minitonas, but according to the act you are not a resident. However, you can put in a good word for me and will meet people who have friends here in the valley and might use influence that way. I am into the fight now and I want to win. You are acquainted with parties in the valley that I am not, and if you had time to drop them a few lines on my behalf it might be the means of my election, and any person you are acquainted with that has interests in the valley, ask them to use their influence. Remember us kindly to Mrs. McAdam and ask her to work for me also, and thanking you in advance for your kindness.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To COLONEL WILLIAM McLEAN**

[PAM, CLB, IV, 298-302]

Thunder Hill  
October 22, 1903

[The Fort Garry Hotel was a prominent Winnipeg landmark, located a short distance from the C.N.R. station on Main Street. The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway was incorporated in 1903, and began construction in 1907. The Hudson Bay Railway had been continually projected as another outlet for Manitoba to the sea.]

Dear Col,

Your letter dated August 11th to hand and pleased to hear your wife and family were well. I still take the Guide but don't hear much report how crops are and business in general. I was expecting you to take a trip up to see us again this summer and about the time I received your letter I was thinking about the time we had a year ago while at Winnipeg. Well, accommodation will be improved soon. The C.N.R. contemplate erecting

## THE WHEAT KING

a fine hotel and station combined at a cost about \$2,000,000 and now are erecting workshops and laying out yards west of the Exhibition Grounds. They are putting up a mile and a quarter of brick work, and those yards and shops will be the best laid out and equipped in Canada. The C.N.R. also intend making improvements as to yard accommodations at Winnipeg and other extensive improvements as to warehouses and machine shops are proposed. I think that the Grand Trunk Pacific will be a boon to the West, although when we look at it with a side light as being opposed to the C.P.R. which the government practically built, yet that C.P.R. must have a strong opposition to cut rates to and from the East, which at the present time we are at their mercy and if any road in existence should and could give reduced rates it is the C.P. R. It was a great mistake the C.P.R. was not made a government road in the beginning. We want the Grand Trunk Pacific, but five years is too long to wait for it, for the development that will take place in the next five years in the West will astonish the people of the East and when we take into consideration the wonderful increase in immigration this last three years, and yet the railways of the present have actually doubled their capacity this side of Fort William, and with the immigration on the increase it is hard to understand the volume of business that will be transacted via the railways in the next five years. The immigration we are receiving at the present from the United States are farmers of experience similar to our own who come here with capital and not only invest but get down to practical farming on improved methods and who are producers at once. And some have large areas under crop. This is the kind of immigration that improves the country and with this kind and large influx doubling up each year, is it not speaking mild and inside the mark to say the railway capacity is short? The managers are short-sighted. The implement manufacturing companies will be short in capacity. Wholesale warehouses are behind the times and even the Dominion Government will have to wake up to the fact that they have a Canadian North West and that North West will soon be the most important part of Canada. The East has got to wake up and see to it that Canada retains her trade and not allow it to pass through the United States and be taken out and in from United States ports. We not only want the G.T.P. but we must have that Hudson Bay Railway and very soon or else we will yet experience the greatest blockade the West has yet seen. We cannot retard development and we must place the railways in a position to handle the trade. And I will venture to say that in five years that the C.P.R. and Grand Trunk Pacific combined cannot handle the North West trade. Therefore it rests with the government to do some special work in connection with the

West to relieve the outflow of prosperity. Winnipeg is the connecting link between the East and the West and as compared with the future that city has only begun to do business, has only begun to build substantial buildings, and yet the bank clearings are third in Canada. The crops throughout the West will be below the average. The "dry weather" in the forepart of the season was the cause of it, but the Swan River Valley has harvested a very heavy crop. The straw was extra heavy, the wheat took 3 pounds of cord per acre and oats  $3\frac{1}{4}$  to 4, but did not yield to the straw, but a better yield than outside. We finished thrashing on the 20th out of stook. Had very bad weather and delay. Our wheat averaged 24, oats 60 and barley 40. We had 7,000 wheat and 3,000 oats and 400 barley. We had about 1,000 bushels touched with frost and balance will grade about one northern. Our crop was extra late this season and harvesting very late here. We had too much rain and too heavy growth and even rain up to now. Last night some snow and rain. I think the town of Swan River will take in about 200,000 bushels of wheat this season. The Thunder Hill Branch building, but will not be completed until next fall. Will cross east on my section 13 and I should think a station and town about six miles east called Harlington. I have been the means of locating three new post offices in the valley, also having Thunder Hill changed from a two week to a weekly mail. The three new post offices are Harlington, our new post office, and Pretoria and Abetts. So in the valley we have the following post offices: Minitonas, Swan River, Bowsman, Lidstone, Durban, Pretoria, Abetts, Harlington, and Thunder Hill. The lowest railway land that can now be bought is \$7.00 per acre. A half section cornering my section 13 was offered [at] \$4,000 cash about 4 miles east on this road. \$10.00 land now is cheap. The section of Gables, they have broke 200 acres on it this season, and bought another quarter adjoining it and adjoining me to the north and badly cut by the river and they gave \$10.00 [per acre] for it. I have been breaking on section 21 this summer and broke about 125 to 150 acres on it. I have put up a nice little frame house on it, same size S. Henderson lived in and also a horse stable 26 x 40, hip roof with a fine loft in it. I have it to rent. I expect a man up from Whitby to take it, but not sure yet. It is a splendid section and I will break on it again next summer. If this man don't take it, perhaps you would know someone down there who could handle a place like that. How is your man coming on at Treherne? I have not heard how the crops are down there. Only Haskill, and his crop wheat averaged 18. In regard to the election I got badly snowed under. The reason: our constituency was treated more as a by-election and the overwhelming majority for

## THE WHEAT KING

Roblin knocked me out. If this election had come off at the same time as the others I was sure of it. However, I am perfectly satisfied and so is Mrs. Cotton, and I have had all the politics I want. If I was offered the Dominion nomination I would not accept it. After I got started into it I wished myself home a good many times. I was three weeks on the platform every night, and only missed one night, and some nights it would be 2 and 3 and 5 o'clock in the morning before I would get home - and bad roads and a hard constituency to work. But I had the experience and paid for it too. Mr. Ford is well and Mrs. Ford and S. R. Henderson and wife. Sam has a half section now. Our family are all well and us all wish to be remembered to Mrs. McLean and yourself and family.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To ROBERT G. MCKAY**

[PAM, CLB, IV, 304-5]

Thunder Hill  
October 22, 1903

[The Reverend Robert G. McKay was a Methodist minister at Sheho, Assiniboia. He had previously been in charge of the Thunder Hill mission. Robert Rogers was Rodmond Roblin's political lieutenant and manager of patronage, a position he later assumed on a federal level.]

Dear Friend,

Your kind and welcome letter came to hand dated May 11th last and no doubt you will conclude that it has not reached its destination or has not been appreciated enough to deserve an answer. I hope you will pardon me for the delay. I was indeed pleased to receive such a recommendation and was not aware I was worthy of the same, but in reading over your letter it made my heart bigger and I braced up and determined to carry out a clean campaign and one that I would not feel ashamed of. I was defeated but not on fair and just grounds. Our election was postponed for two weeks and received the same treatment as a by-election, and I had to fight all combines and free whisky. The last week a private car containing the Hon. Robert Rogers and party was sidetracked at Swan River and he had eleven with him and whisky was the order of the day. The government worked boot and nail to win here. They did not want a man elected. They knew perfectly well if I was elected and went down there things would be pretty hot for the whisky and they gained

their point. There was nothing honorable about the election. Still things are improving in the valley, although I think we have had more wet this fall than last, but not so wet in June. Our crops were good last fall and are also good this fall. We just finished thrashing: wheat 7,000, oats 3,000, barley 400. Average wheat 24, oats 60, barley 40. We have a post office two miles east, kept by Mr. Rumohr, also one at Pretoria and one near Robsons called Abetts. And Thunder Hill is a weekly mail. We have also a great deal of grading down this road and our new bridge completed, so now your successor Mr. Robinson can go over with dry feet. Mr. Robinson is not liked. He has a B.A. too, and is an excellent speaker, but they do not like him. I think it is because they were so well pleased with you. I have thought of you often before I got your letter, and concluded you had had some new experience in Manitoba, and no doubt they seemed strange uses to you, but like myself a little pioneering would do you no harm and sharpen you up and give you an idea how some of the world jogs along and at some future day when you pay us a visit, it might be hard to find where we portaged the boat. School is up and running. Swan River is improving and branch line is building from Swan River through by my land and Durban and Thomases and through J. W. Robson's yard and through his stable on to the boundary. Are busy grading it now expect it finished next fall 1904. It will be a boost to the valley, two new towns will be started. How do you like that part and hoping this will find you well.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To WILLIAM WILLIAMS**

[PAM, CLB, IV, 340-3]

Swan River  
December 10, 1903

Friend,

Your kind letter under date of November 23 at hand. Was indeed glad to again hear from you that you are again settled. I have no doubt it is quite a relief to get away from the farm bustle after so many years. I am glad to hear that crops are good in Ontario the past season and the apple crop extra good. I must say I have seen some of the finest snow apples I have ever had the pleasure to eat. There was 35 car loads froze in transit from Fort William to Winnipeg last week, which will come hard either on the C.P.R. or the Winnipeg merchants. We thank you very much for

## THE WHEAT KING

your hearty invitation to go down and spend Xmas with you and I know we would have an enjoyable time but cannot get away together at present. I was wanting Mrs. Cotton to go down in November and spend the winter as her sister was up here from Toronto but did not like to go without I went with her. I might take a trip down next summer. I would like that better than winter. Our crops were good although they did not grade high, but considerable poor crop in southern Manitoba but a better average in northern Manitoba. Our own crops did very well. Wheat averaged 24, oats 60, and barley 40, about ten thousand bushel altogether. Have not sold any yet. The strain was a very heavy crop, took 3 pounds of 600 feet cord per acre and oats 4 pounds. We had all cut before the snow storm except a half day's cutting of oats and they were left in a narrow strip a mile long and laid the one way. Of course we had to cut them the one way they were 24 feet long. We thrashed all out of the stook. The snowstorm was not bad here, about 3 inches and soon went away, and in the Swan River Valley we are sheltered and don't get the heavy winds they have outside. I have all my wheat ground plowed. It froze up on November 13 and although we have good sleighing now there is not much frost in the ground yet. I just put on the storm windows today. The storm I think was heavier about Brandon but the grade of wheat is not hurt as bad as was expected, although it grades lower than usual. But the reason is the grades have been raised. We have about 550



Stacking hay with a sweep.

acres of land here now under cultivation, not all in one place. This year we broke on another section and put up two more buildings on it - a small house 16 x 20 and a stable 26 x 40. Hip roof and will hold 20 horses or head of stock. Our valley is growing fast. Now there 22 new school-houses put up and running and two more building and two more new school districts organizing. There is a branch line of railway building through the valley and two more new towns will be laid out. This line will run about six miles from where we live. It runs through some of our land and perhaps the next town may be on a part of it, or not far from it at any rate. We have a main road running past our house and a bridge across the Swan River 160 feet wide in two spans. We have school on the corner of one of our sections and school all year. Our teacher has cost this year \$426.00 and I expect this year [will] have to pay more. This fall there will be about 200,000 bushels of wheat marketed at Swan River. This summer about 20 carloads of horses came in and sold at Swan River. The town is growing nicely but the new town on the new branch will hurt it a good deal. I could write you a great deal that would be of interest to you but would make my letter too long for you. I have to say a few words about the election. I was beaten by 232 and of course I could not expect anything better after they held my election back for two weeks on purpose to pay their attention to me. If my constituency had come off the same time as the province had I would [have] won, but the ministers of the opposition came up and sidetracked their private car at Swan River and brought 9 with them and money galore and whisky by the barrel, and left three men off at each station in the constituency with whisky and made a good job of it for themselves. You see, my constituency was some 96 miles wide and 106 long and the C.N. R. railway ran through it on an angle for 150 miles and [illegible] of stations on the way. I did not have time to get half over it. I was on the platform for three weeks steady and met my opponent every time, and sometimes leave home on Monday morning and not get home until Saturday night. And my opponent was out three weeks away from home at once. I kept him one night at my house when speaking near here. He was a very decent fellow, had always been a Liberal [until] lately but he had been working for this for last 5 years and such a thing as politics never entered my head until I was forced into it and as you told me in your letter it is a hard thing to be a politician and a Christian at same time and I have found such to be the case. And the farther I got into it the more I thought so and many a time I felt like throwing up the sponge. I tell you I have seen enough of politics. I never felt once discouraged but actually disgusted. I ran a clean campaign, but I saw so much debauching of the electorate I felt disgusted at the low mean degrading methods the Tories

## THE WHEAT KING

would pursue to gain a point. They had not a spark of shame or decency in the whole campaign. The hotels spent \$10,000 to carry this constituency. They would not have a decent man go down. The bigger rascal a man was the bigger majority he got. But I must say I was respected at every meeting and never had any interruption, but I was in some of the hottest meetings I ever was and my opponent was very badly abused and sometimes he had to sit dawn. And I have seen his colleague hooted off the platform. But the election was won in the last three days by money and whisky. Money was as free as water. Mrs. Cotton is heartily glad I am at home. She did not like the idea of me going into politics and being away from home as much. If I had won I would certainly did [have done] my best for my country and my constituency and would [have] upheld the temperance cause at whatever cost and would [have] used my utmost endeavor to have clean politics and not debauch and demoralize the electorate. If ever this country wants level heads it is now when prosperity reigns. I will now close and we all thank you for your hearty and kind invitation and wish you and your wife a Merry Christmas and happy New Year and hope you may live to enjoy many of them.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

### **To MISS V. L. McKAY**

[PAM, CL.B, IV, p. 367]

Harlington  
December 28, 1903

[Vida Lenore McKay was the daughter of an Ontario farmer who had settled in the Swan River Valley, and had trained as a teacher in Ontario. On October 17, 1906, she married Cotton's eldest son Nelson.]

Dear Madam,

Your application under date of December 11th was received by the Trustee Board. We also received three applications lower than yours, viz. one 420 and two others @ 450.00 each and six others at your figure. We did not get a reply from the 420.00, therefore decided if you would accept the 450.00 as you were in the valley, we would give the preference. My son when at Swan River received word sent by you that you would accept the 450.00. Therefore we have decided to engage you at that figure and would be pleased to have you begin Harlington school on morning January 4. I think you can get board at Mrs. Rumohrs and will be handy to the school and a good word. We hope that you will not disappoint us.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton



Miss Vida L. McKay, later Mrs. Nelson Cotton.

## THE WHEAT KING

**To J. OBED. SMITH**

[PAM, CLB, IV, 431-3]

Swan River  
February 3, 1904

[J. Obediah Smith had succeeded W. F. McCreary as commissioner of immigration in Winnipeg.]

Dear Sir,

I received box by express containing stationery and letter book and supplies for immigration purposes (I paid express charges of \$1.50 on same). I am always willing to do all I can toward filling up the West, and since I immigrated to this country in the spring of 1888 I have never lost an opportunity to speak well and put in a good word. I have also written frequently through the press, both in Manitoba and Ontario, and every time it was in the interest of immigration, pointing out the wonderful advantages to the interest of the new settler in seeking a home for himself and family in Western Canada, showing forth the natural resources that is ever present to assist him on to prosperity. And it has done me good to see the results of the vigorous immigration policy of the Liberal Government and see the Fertile Garden of Canada being peopled by such a good class of settlers, and such a class cannot help but prosper and are laying the foundation of the best farming country that lays under the sun today, and well may the Liberal Government be proud of their achievements in the past. And as that immigration policy has been along the right lines and has accomplished what was intended, let that policy be pushed in the future with renewed energy and activity, and any new opportunity that presents itself toward making better progress along that line should be taken advantage of, and soon this grand farming country that now has not yet reached the million bushel export of wheat will in the near future export four hundred millions and become Great Britain's national granary in reality. Then and not till then should we stand and take our breath and view with pride what has been accomplished.

The new step that was taken last year in sending delegates to the old country (who had settled in the west and become prosperous) to speak of

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

their prosperity and the prosperity of this new country and induce their neighbors to immigrate to make new homes for their children was a good idea and I believe has brought out good results. And I do think that a continuation of that policy is to the best interests of immigration, and I am looking forward to this year as the banner year for new settlers coming in. I received last mail a registered letter from your department enclosing a cheque for \$33.16 in full account up to January 19, 1904, as expenses for postage and stationery in connection with immigration matters and I enclose a receipt for same with thanks.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To HARRY HADDON**

[PAM, CLB, IV, 446-7]

Swan River  
February 15, 1904

[Harry Haddon was at this time living in Spring Hill Mines, Nova Scotia, and did later this year come to the west as a Methodist missionary. *The Christian Guardian* was a Methodist family magazine that had been publishing since 1829, continuing until 1925 when it became *New Outlook*. Since 1939 it has been part of the *United Church Observer*.]

Dear Sir,

Your letter under date of February 2nd to hand, and I thank you very much for the kind manner in which you have offered your services for the good of your fellow man, and the West is the place where your work will be appreciated, as here is where you have a field to choose from. I will not repeat my letter in the *Guardian*, as the editorial in that issue dwelt principally upon it and covered the ground pretty fully, and you can see how fast men are wanted. I could give you many examples of districts that have been hard up for men and how soon they became self-sustaining and sent aid to others. I might give you an example of our valley and it will be a mild comparison as compared with other districts that have settled faster. Five years ago there was not a single house or white settler in our valley. Today there is about 6,000 souls and 25 school houses built and services are required at each of those school houses once each Sunday, and there are three small towns and we have four Methodist preachers to attend to their spiritual wants, where we ought to have about ten. Now you see this one place or small district five years ago required none and inside of five years should have ten. This is a fair comparison of the whole west and with the ever-increasing immigration the ministers should come accordingly.

## THE WHEAT KING

Therefore you can see the pressing need for the gospel for the west. I have sent your letter to the superintendant of missions far the North West, Reverend O. Darwin, Moose Jaw, N. W.T. He will correspond with you at once and he is going east the last of this month to look up men. He wrote to me thanking me for my letter and said it would be a source of help to him while in the east. He was to my place this winter. He will invite you to the west and I hope you will come and be one of the labourers for the great harvest fields of this ever growing west. Thanking you again for your kind letter, and I would be pleased to hear from you again after you hear from Mr. Darwin.

And wishing you every success in your labor for Christ.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

To GEORGE F. WRIGHT

[PAM, CLB, IV, 470-473]

Swan River  
February 26, 1904

[George F. Wright was at this time farming in Wolseley, Ontario. He subsequently became Cotton's first tenant on section 21.]

Dear Sir,

Your letter under date of February 13th to hand making inquiries about my farm. Since I wrote you I have lowered the rent to one third. The reason I have done so is some say one half is too high. The reason I asked one half was on account of it being all new land, and I have rented for 13 years myself, and gave a third clear of expense put into the elevator and furnish everything and summer fallow as much each year. I have rented over a thousand acres that way. However, I want to give a man a chance and I want him to work the farm well. So the terms I will rent this farm on: I will accept one third free of all expense placed in the granary and the tenant to furnish all seed and chattels and do the statute labor. I will pay the taxes. I will sell the tenant all the seed he requires at market price. The tenant has to plow back all the land after harvest in a workmanlike manner. These terms are moderate and any farmer should do well on this farm. I might say there are great variations in renting farms. I am honest in all my dealings and straightforward. I have been in Manitoba 16 years on the 23 of March next. Came from near Port Hope very heavy in debt, and I bless the day I seen Manitoba. You certainly are well fixed in Ontario as regards

buildings, and you must not expect to see such buildings and conveniences in Manitoba as the country is new and nearly everyone came in poor. But their chances are good and in a few years Manitoba will show as fine buildings as Ontario and farmers with a good bank account to their credit. This farm is in a good neighborhood and good neighbors and a moral class of people. There is a spring about 10 rods from the stable. Just a square box put down and reach down and dip up with a pail good water. I have no well at the house but water can be got less than 10 feet as water came in the cellar when we dug it last summer, and it is on the top of a hill and we dug a drain from the cellar. The ground on top is dry and nothing but - water is plenty and good. The house is 16 x 20 and upstairs. And I will put up a leanto for the summer kitchen and bedroom. The stable is 26 x 40 and will hold 20 head of stock, hip roof and big loft. Those buildings are new, put up last summer. It is located beside of the main road 1/4 mile to post office, one mile from school and church and Sunday school is held in the school house (Methodist), and we have a splendid preacher. Our teacher in the school last year [was] fine and taught music and singing. But the teacher we have this year just came from Ontario and she does not know anything about music. But we had to get a permit for her to teach and she must write again in July for a Manitoba certificate or we must get a new teacher as all Manitoba teachers must teach music. We have an organ in the school. The town of Swan River is 10 miles from this farm and is only 4 years old. [It] has 5 general stores, 2 banks, 2 hardware and dry stores, 4 implements warehouses, 2 blacksmiths, 3 large liverys, post office, land office, photographer, lawyer, tailor, 4 churches (Methodist, Presbyterian, English, Baptist), school with 2 rooms, flour mill, hospital, agricultural building, shoemaker, station, elevator, loading plat-form, bakers, dressmaker, milliner, flour and feed stores, 3 doctors and 2 hotels and boarding house, sash and door factory and planing mill. There is also a branch line of railway building and there will be a new town about 4 miles from this farm. This line is partly graded last fall and is expected to be finished this fall to take the grain out. At Swan River this last season about 200,000 bushels of wheat was sold. This is a new valley. 5 years ago last June not a single house up in this valley. I drove 800 miles to take up land here and now about 6,000 people in here. Railway, three towns, 9 post offices, 26 school houses up, and more building, branch line building and now look at the wheat going out last season. This will give you an idea how settlement is progressing in the West. Those are actual facts. Plenty of dry firewood on the farm. I will let you have all you can burn free. I might here state the farm is 640 acres or one mile square and I intend breaking

## THE WHEAT KING

another 200 on it this year, so you see there is plenty of room on it and in reference to the road work I only ask that portion to be done that would cross the land that is under cultivation, amounting to perhaps 2 days with a man and team. The creek is about 30 rods from the stables, called Cotton Creek. Only a small creek except in spring. Homestead land can be got 10 to 12 miles from this farm but a good deal of bush on it, but level and a good soil and good water, and a few fires over it would make it ready for the plow, and you could get your homesteads for your two boys all together. We are as free from frost as other parts of Manitoba and we raise splendid vegetables, such as cabbage, cauliflower, onion, potatoes, turnips, beets, car-rots, parsnips, radishes, rhubarb, squash, and we had a fine flower garden last summer. Tomatoes, cucumbers, and citrons and melons did not do well last summer. This is a splendid soil for a garden. If you come leave your seeders down there. Here we use a different kind, and our harrows here are 18 to 21 feet wide and put on three horses. I thank you for your references and I will not write for them. I will enclose my own reference written by the Methodist minister of Swan River last winter. In closing I might say spring is drawing near and others are anxious to get the place but are not married and I will give the preference to a family (and Methodist) and I will want a reasonable time to hear from you, as according to your letter it depends if you sell or not. Therefore I must not delay too long and hope to hear from you as soon as possible. If you come you would have to bill your car to Swan River station on the Canadian Northern Railway. I think I have answered your questions as full as possible (we are Methodists ourselves), have 4 boys and 1 girl. Two oldest boys 22 and 20. The boys are members of the Methodist Church and one of them on the Board.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

### **To SMITH SISTERS**

[PAM, CLB, IV, 478-80]

Swan River  
March 10, 1904

[The Smith sisters operated a nursery in Swansea, Ontario.]

Dear Ladies,

We received your seed catalogue and have looked it over carefully. We concluded that we should give you a trial order, hoping you will send flower and vegetable seeds true to name and of good quality. And if they

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

prove to be so and, are satisfactory, you may receive our order again next spring. The two orders are as follows:

Flower Seeds	63 packages	=	80¢
Bulb Order		=	25¢
Vegetable Seeds	30 packages	=	50¢
Other Seeds		=	\$1.67
		Total =	\$3.22

I enclose cheque for \$3.35.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**FLOWER SEEDS**

	Packages		Packages
Acroclinium (Everlasting Flower)	3	Gomphrena (Globe Amaranth)	1
Finest Mixed		Double Hollyhock	1
Antirrhinum (Snapdragon)	2	Lobelia	1
Sweet Alussum	1	Marigold	1
Aster (Comet)	1	Dwarf Nasturtium	1
Aster (Victoria)	2	Portulacca	1
Aster (Perfection)	2	Mignonette	1
Double Daisy	2	Giant Trimardeau Pansy	1
Anchusa	2	Royal Show Pansies	1
California Poppies	1	Mixed Poppies	1
Chrysanthemum	1	Ragged Sailors (Poppies)	1
Begonia	1	Phlox t)rummondii	1
Carnation	2	Fringed Phlox Drummondii	1
Calceolarie	1	Chinese Primrose	1
Canterbury Bells	1	Double Petunias	1
Dahlia	1	California Giants (Petunias)	1
Delphinium (Larkspur)	1	Petunias (mixed)	1
China Pinks (Dianthus)	3	English Primrose	1
Calliopsis	2	Perennial Phlox (Morning Bride)	1
Double Carnation Pinks	2	10 week stocks	1
Gaillardia	1	White Perpetual stocks	1
Cosmos	1	Wallflower (Double)	1
Fuchsia	1	Verbena (Mammoth)	1
Cineraria	1	Zinnia (Mixed)	1
Forget-me-nots	1	Sweet William	1
Heilchrusum	1		63

Also please send 25¢ bulbs collection and leaflet with order How to grow Bulbs

Bulb Order	=	25¢	
Flower Seed Order	=	80¢	
Total	=	\$1.05	

Please send these seeds to Miss F. L. Cotton, Swan River, Man.

This is our first order for flower seeds from you and we ask you to send us good reliable seeds and if they prove to be so you may get our order again next spring.

## THE WHEAT KING



The results of the 1904 seed order.

### VEGETABLE SEEDS

Vegetable	Variety	Ozs.	Pint	Price Packages
Beans	Dwarf Flageolet Wax		½	10¢
	Golden Wax (Butter)		½	10¢
	Lima Bush		½	10¢
Beets	Early Eclipse			1
	Early Dark Egyptian			1
Cabbage	Long Dark Blood	1		5¢
	Early Express (Try and get me this cabbage)			1
	Flat Dutch			1
	Red Rock (Mammoth)			1
Carrots	Earliest English Horn			1
	Half Long Danvers			1
	Long White Belgian	1		5¢
Cauliflower	Henderson's Early Snowball			1
Cucumber	White Spine			1
Lettuce	Grand Rapids			1
	Iceburg			1
Melons	Coles Early			1
Onions	Large Red Wetherfield	1		7¢
	Large White Portugal	1		10¢
	Extra Early Barletta (Try and get this onion seed)	1		10¢

Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton

Pumpkins	Large Cheese			1
Squash	Vegetable Marrow			1
	Orange Marrow			1
Radish	White Tipped Scarlet Turnip			1
	French Breakfast			1
	Long Scarlet			1
	China Rose (Winter)			1
Tomato	Atlantic Prize			1
	Sparks' Earliana			1
Turnip	Yellow Swede (Field Variety)	1/4 lb.	10¢	
Citron	Citron (for preserving) <i>send</i>	1/4 lb.	10¢	
	<i>good seed</i>			
Mangel	Giant Mammoth Red (for field)	1/4 lb.	10¢	
	Globe	1/4 lb.	10¢	
Herbs	Sage			1
	Summer Savoy			1
	Thyme			1
	Lavender			1
	Catnip			1
	Tarragon			1
	Sweet Basil			1
Parsley	Moss Curled			1
Parsnips	Hollow Curled	1/2	10¢	
Peas	First & Best	1/2	10¢	
	American Wonder	1/2	10¢	
	Market Garden	1/2	8¢	
Corn	Mammoth White Cory	1/2	9¢	
	First of All	1/2	8¢	
Rhubarb	Strawberry		<u>15¢</u>	
			\$1.67	29

Please send these seeds to A. J. Cotton, Swan River, Manitoba

This is the first order we have placed with you and we hope you will send us reliable seeds. If you do we might order from you again next spring.

## THE WHEAT KING

**To E. A. JAMES**

[PAM, CLB, V, p. 57]

Swan River  
August 18, 1904

[Cotton owned the whole of section 13.35.28W. The townsite referred to in this letter later became known as Kenville.]

Dear Sir,

As the first townsite on the Thunder Hill Branch now under construction running out from Swan River has been selected and agreement signed by Hugh Boyd on behalf of the Mackenzie Mann and Company and myself (A. J. Cotton), said townsite to be on southeast quarter of 13.35.28W. Would it not be advisable to survey a small portion into town lots as soon as [possible] and, say, have an auction sale early in October? Building could make progress before winter sets in. This will be an important point and if started right will within five years market a million bushels of wheat, as this particular site will be backed by a first class agricultural district. I would like to hear from you in connection with this matter and what can be done this fall.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton



Main Street, Kenville.

## **THUNDER HILL DISTRICT**

[PAM, CLB, V, 118-20]

[This article was written by Cotton for the *Swan River Star*. There was a companion piece called "Harlington" which has not been reprinted here.]

The district of Thunder Hill is called after Thunder Hill, an elevation of considerable height at the south west of the district. The hill itself is of some importance, about two miles wide by seven miles in length, and is a land mark that can be seen from almost any part of the valley and has been a guide to many a new settler. The Thunder Hill District comprises that portion of the valley lying between the Swan River and the boundary line at the west in Township 35, range 29, and a portion of Township 36. The land is undulating and drained by numerous spring coulies and Thunder Hill Creek, being well watered. The southern portion is mostly open rolling prairie and the remainder being partly open and light scrub land with an occasional bluff. Taking the district as a whole, no better wheat land can be found, and crops have always made good yields and a high quality of grain. Settlement has progressed rapidly and has now a large acreage under cultivation, there being in the neighborhood of about 50,000 bushels of grain of all kinds thrashed this season. There are two first class thrashing outfits in the district, one owned by Wes. Staples, which is a large traction, and the other a portable owned by Singer Brothers. The both of these are new outfits this season. This is settled by a thrifty and industrious lot of settlers and the district is sometimes called "New Treherne" from the large number of settlers who came from that place in southern Manitoba. There are also quite a number of Icelanders who are prospering and making fine settlers. The district has a post office called Thunder Hill, and [is] noted for being the first post office in Swan River Valley outside of Swan River. It is much to be regretted that Charles Goodman moved his store away to locate near Durban as he did a good business while here and a good opening is left for another store.

Improvements have made rapid strides and we might notice a few buildings that have been erected this year. Thomas Lee: a fine new house finished and painted inside and out. Robert Emmond: a fine new residence situated on a fine location with a bluff in the background and overlooking the Swan River. John Stewart has also erected a fine house, lath and plastered and cistern in connection. M r. Stewart also had great success in raising fall wheat this year and intends going into it heavy. Dan Haw has also contributed his part toward improvement with a well finished house

## THE WHEAT KING



Will Ford and twin sons at work, Thunder Hill.

with all modern equipments, including cistern and furnace on a fine stone foundation. T. C. Silverthorn of Bowsman was the architect and contractor. Richard Lyons Jr. has erected a fine two story cottage-roof mansion, which will be, when completed, one of the finest farm houses in the valley. He is one of the pioneers of the valley who immigrated here from Ireland with a large family, and has sheltered many a new settler under his hospitable roof, and [he] may well enjoy the change from his pioneer log shanty to his commodious new residence. We cannot leave the district without bringing to notice a few other improvements. Charles Banks has put up a new grainery, Harry Stewart a new barn, R. McIntyre a new house, W. Bloxsidge a new stable, John Sigurdson a new house, Alex Muir an addition to his house, while John Stewart as councillor, and who no doubt will be the coming reeve, has made great improvements in road making and new bridge this season.

The district also supports a fine school of the same name and enjoys school the year round with Miss Carmichael as teacher from Swan River. Church services of the different denominations are held here weekly - Methodist, Presbyterian, English Church. The lumber business has been carried on quite extensively and has been a boon to the new settler for the last three winters. One season two mills was busy cutting all winter, and the settlers know the value of this timber and appreciate it very much and hope the government will reserve the balance for the use of the settlers in the valley.

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

We will mention a few of the largest farmers in this district: W. J. Stewart with a crop acreage of about 400 acres, Thomas Lee, Robert Edmond, W. I. Ford, H. Munson, Charles Banks, W. Woodward, R. Lyons, James Lyons, Goodman Brothers, John Sigurdson, W. Bloxsidge, R. McIntyre, W. Grover, Harry Stewart, J. Shell, D. Haw, James Hogg, W. Staples, W. Pritchard, R. Mathews, A. Field, F. Abaigail, George Haw, D. Waters, W. Shay, George Waters, Alex Muir, Alexander Robertson. Those who go through the district now, who went through previously, note the wonderful change that is taking place and Thunder Hill District will be known as one of the most prosperous and fertile districts in the Swan River Valley.

**To EZRA HASKILL**

[PAM, CLB, V, 157-60]

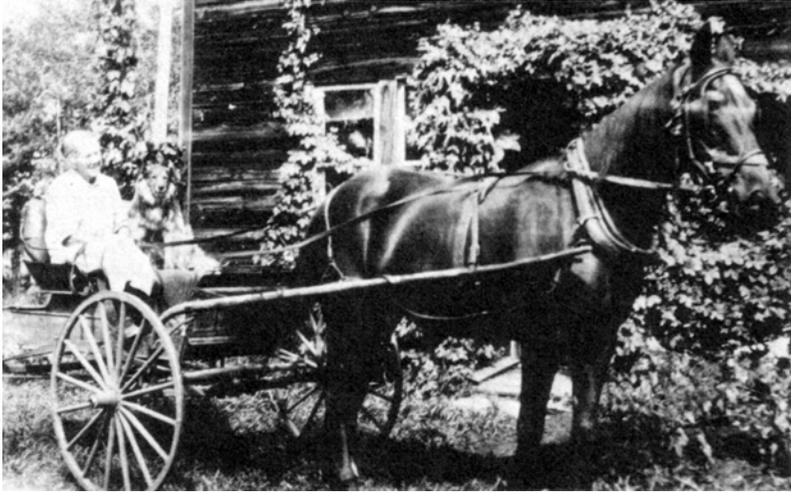
Harlington  
December 10, 1904

[George Wright had initially taken on section 21 for one year, and subsequently extended his lease to five years. Cotton never found a tenant for section 13. It was farmed by his son Nelson. Section 13 is currently farmed by Nelson's sons and grandson. The Loat brothers - Hubert and Warner - were pioneer settlers in the Swan River Valley. The 1904 Christmas edition of *The Nor'West Farmer* contained an article by Cotton called "The Farmer's Vegetable Garden."]

Dear Ezra,

Your letter to hand and pleased to hear you and all the family were well, as it leaves us just the same. I was glad to hear you got along so well with your fall work. I believe you must have lived with that man Cotton sometime to get on so well with your work. We have all our wheat ground plowed and harrowed three and four times. It was such a fine open fall and no lost time. Here we did not have rain enough to wet down plow deep and was pretty dry plowing. We bought two 14 inch Verity Horse lift Gangs, the LD. Gang, and they do fine work and we were well pleased with them. We had fine weather thrashing but our yield was disappointing. Wheat averaged 16, and some poor. I think one carload will go feed and the rest No. 1 and No. 3, although we had no smut. Something seemed wrong. Some that we had cut after the frost does not show it, but is lean and thin. Loats had some went 36 and Charlie Banks averaged 26. Of course mine was on old land. Our oats averaged 65 and goes about thirty bushels to the bag, and our barley averaged 40 and very heavy. We have not sold any wheat yet, but will soon haul out. We have been doing road work too. We have graded 6 miles this summer ourselves with the Grader. Nelson runs it.

## THE WHEAT KING



Mrs. W. Loat visits Cotton Farm.

We have put in our next year's roadwork in advance this fall. You should stand for councillor down there in your ward. I was offered the reeveship here again the other day and I have to fight hard to keep out of it. I have had the chance of it every year since I came up here by acclamation if I would take it, but not fond enough of the job (You know politics is my hobby now). I wish I was down there to help MacLennan. I suppose he is stirring things in the council. Last summer I think you was getting a pretty good price for your wheat if you only had a good yield. So Dave is keeping things on the move down there. He seems to have a hobby for moving buildings.

I have rented section 21 for five years to the same man. There is 250 acres under cultivation on it, and he is to break 200 more for two crops. Of that he breaks he is to break 100 next year and 100 the next year. I have now got that section into shape and intend devoting my attention to section 13 next summer. I will try to get a house up about 18 x 24 and stable 26 x 40. I will not finish the stable, that is, not side it next summer and will try to break 100 acres on it and get it ready to lease. There is over 100 tons of hay cut on it this summer and all high land hay. I have not yet picked out the building site but will have it on the east side, not far from the station. So if you take a notion to come up next fall or the following spring you can have the first chance on it. You remember that other

quarter section away to the north that you and I intended to go and see. Well, I never bothered going to see that until about a month ago, when Nelson and I was coming from Swan River. We drove in and over a portion of it to have a look at it. I let out hay to cut on shares on it this summer. The steel is not laid on the branch line yet and [we] are looking forward to it this winter, as if it is, will shorten the haul considerable. We are having an entertainment in our school on December 21st in aid of the Sunday school, a tea in connection and no charge. Only a free will offering will be taken up. There is one at Davisons on 16th, at Pretoria on the 20, one at Swan River 22, one at Durban on 23rd, one at Robson on 27, one at Death Hill on 26. They have a good time at those entertainments. About 3 weeks ago our pastor got married (called Rev. George Elmitt) and he live[s] in one of our houses, the one that Sam used to live in. And a surprise party gathered at our place and there was 55, and marched up to his house and spent a very enjoyable evening. You know Sam has two quarters now, one that he bought that Bob Crukhers had, and his homestead down opposite 21. He has a splendid homestead and to about 14 acres broke on it. So he built a nice frame house on the quarter he bought, size 16 x 20. You can see Mrs. Henderson in that school picture, away back of the flag beside his clothesline. He worked for me since spring, and will work out again next summer. Will Ford is well and has his farmed rented out, and no doubt will make as much as if he was working it himself. I think the reason he rented was he lost that mare he bought from Flik Dix, and his other ones were sick, but they pulled around. He was doing all right. Of course not making much ready money but making it in stock and implements, and his farm is worth \$2,000 today and his mother's the same. He has been going out carpentering all summer and had all he could do at \$2.00 per day. No doubt you would be greatly surprized in the look of this country now than when you seen it last. We have bought the other quarter of 25 to the west of where we live, so we have now over 3,000 acres. Now, Mrs. Cotton and myself extend you and Mrs. Haskill and family a hearty invitation to come up and spend Xmas with us, and let us renew old times. Mrs. Ford is staying with us most of the time. She takes a while at Mrs. Hendersons occasionally and up to Will's once in a while, then back to our place, and is hale and hearty and smart and looks well. She goes to church and Sunday school and walks down. Sam lives near the school and she will start off early and walk down and have her dinner. She will wash dishes and sew and wash and make quilts, just the same as ever, and must always be busy and smart on her feet and scarcely gets a cold ever. Keep an eye on the Xmas *Nor'West Farmer*. All join in

## THE WHEAT KING

loving regards to you all. Hoping to see *some of you for Xmas*.

Your Truly,  
A. J. Cotton

We have about 10,000 bushel of crop this year altogether.

## THE FARMER'S VEGETABLE GARDEN

[PAM, CLB, V, 153-6]

[This article was written for the 1904 Christmas edition of The Nor'West Farmer]

One of the most profitable and useful pieces of ground the farmer has in his possession is the vegetable garden plot. If properly cultivated and tilled [it is] the source from which he draws his supply to crown his table with choice vegetables fresh from the garden. How many farmers neglect this piece of ground, sow a few seeds in the spring, allow them to overrun with weeds from neglect, then come to the conclusion that a garden is a nuisance and not worth its room and time. Try again, and this time try the right way. The main thing is to make good use of the hoe and nine times out of ten the garden will be a success. Spend a little time morning and evening and keep down the weeds, and when fall comes you will think the time was well spent. Now choose a piece of ground near the house and where the poultry will not find it. A piece of summer fallow would be better and will be ready to sow and plant in the spring. And sow the following variety of seeds, and if you do your part and nature smiles on it you will have a very good garden.

Onions. The Early Barletta is a very early onion, a white variety, also makes a good pickier and has a very mild flavor. Also sow the Red Wethersfield, a large variety and a good winter keeper. Sow early as soon as the frost is out of the ground enough to sow. Plant a pound or two of Dutch sets - those come in for early use - and plant a pound or two of English Multipliers, a good winter onion.

Parsnips. Sow the Hollow Crowned. They come in good for late in the fall and leave a portion of those in the ground all winter. They need no protection, are fit for use the next spring as soon as the frost is out deep enough to pull. (Do not use after they begin to grow the second spring.) They have a sweet and wholesome flavor and are cooked the same as a carrot.

Carrots. Sow early. Two of the best kinds are first half long Danvers



A. J. Cotton's vegetable garden, Cotton Farm.

and English Horn for garden use, and the White Belgian is a very good variety. All these do well in Manitoba.

Beets. Sow at least two kinds. The Early Eclipse is one of the earliest and fit for pickles when the size of a thimble, and the Early Dark Egyptian comes later, and the long Dark Blood is a winter variety and will keep well on into the winter.

Radishes. Are quick to grow. Plant about fifteen feet of a row once a week for five or six weeks and you will have crisp radishes right along. They are fit to pull for use when about the size of marbles and are a fine relish with a little salt to bread and butter. Sow the mixed variety and for winter use sow the China Rose.

Turnips. Sow the field variety of Yellow Swedes. These are firmer and sweeter than the garden varieties and more palatable. Sow them about the same time you sow beets.

Beans. The Golden Wax and Black Butter Bean are two good varieties. Sow as soon as danger from frost is past.

Parsley. Sow a small package of the Moss Curled, and is fine for table use in garnishing meat and fowl, also for flavoring soups and stews.

Corn. Sow Mitchell Early, a good early kind with larger size cobs and sweet. Also plant some of the native corn called Squaw Corn, which is the earliest but small cobs.

Cucumbers. The White Spine gives very good returns and [is] one of the earliest and best and most prolific.

## THE WHEAT KING

Citron. Plant a few seeds for preserving and keep well hoed, and if signs of frost at nights in early fall keep vines covered at nights with old sacks. Squash. The Orange Marrow and the Vegetable Marrow are two of the best kinds to sow.

Cabbage, Cauliflower and Tomatoes should be sowed in the house (if there is no hotbed) in shallow boxes or tomato cans about last of March. Place those cans in the windows to get the sunlight and keep them from growing to stalks. Keep watered and [they] will be ready to transplant about the last of May or first of June. Sow for cabbage. Early Express for early cabbage will be fit for use in about six weeks from transplanting. This is a splendid variety of early cabbage. For Fall and Winter use sow Flat Dutch - they grow to a large size and are good keepers. Sow a few seeds of Red Rock Cabbage, a red variety for pickling.

Cauliflower. Henderson's Early Snow Bell are a good kind and sure head - they are delicious.

Peas. Sow First and Best, one of the earliest kinds. Then the American Wonder comes second a few days later, and the Market Garden sown for late use, and you have a good selection and [it] will come in rotation. About a pint of each will make several meals for ten or twelve of a family.

Lettuce. Sow Grand Rapids and Iceburg and sow early.

Herbs. Sow a package of Thyme and one of Summer Savory and some Sage, which will come in handy in the fall and winter for flavoring and dressing for fowls.

Rhubarb. As this is one of the most important plants in the garden and is easy to grow and cultivate, sow the seed of the Strawberry variety not earlier than last week in June or first week in July. Its greatest enemy is the Turnip Fly, and if sowed earlier [it] will attack the young tender plants and destroy them. Keep well cultivated and do not pull the first season. Cover in the fall with a little mulch of strawey manure and rake off in the spring, and keep the rows well cultivated with a garden rake. Do not pull until harvest in the second summer. Then your rhubarb will have good root and will do you for two years, when it may require transplanting. This is an important plant for Manitoba, as it comes in handy for early use and is a fast grower, and even on in the fall is still tender and crisp. Any kind of land will do, but a clay land gives good results.

If the above mentioned seeds are sown and well cultivated and well looked after, the usefulness of the garden will not be forgotten. And in planting a garden in Manitoba the best method to pursue is flat culture

in planting. Drills and beds in general do not give as good satisfaction. Plant in long rows, say ten or twelve rods if possible, and about two feet wide; they are more easily hoed and cultivated. The best method in transplanting cabbage is to make a hole with a hoe same as planting potatoes, then place in the young plant with a hand and press the dirt around the root firmly and stem. Plant when raining or just after a rain. As the plant grows, hoe a little dirt around. This makes the cabbage grow a better head and keeps a short stalk.

**To J. OBED. SMITH**

[PAM. CLB, V, I65-6J

Swan River  
December 12, 1904

[Fall wheat is now commonly called winter wheat.)

Dear Sir,

I wish to bring before your attention the growing of fall wheat in the Swan River Valley. This has passed the experimental stage, having been carried on for the past three years and has proved successful. The farmers in the valley are now prepared to go extensively into the raising of fall wheat. Tests that have been made prove that the situation of our valley is favourable to the growing of that grain. Being sheltered at the north by the Porcupine Mountains, at the south by the Duck Mountains and west by Thunder Hill. Our land being mainly scrub land. We do not have the high winds they have in southern Manitoba. We have very little drifting snow in the winter. Our land keeps its covering or blanket of snow until spring. In comparing our valley with other districts, I have noted their plowed fields were mostly bare of snow, and returning to our valley found the land covered with snow. The absence of wind being the cause, allowing the snow to remain where it fell, leaving our fall wheat protected. The mountains surrounding our valley being covered with evergreens insures sufficient rainfall to mature a magnificent crop. Both varieties of fall wheat do well here. Turkey Red being a number one hard variety makes a capital milling wheat and the Oregon White fall wheat a strong grower, heavy straw and fine large heads and a very heavy yielder. I am negotiating to import a car load of the Turkey Red for seed. I intend getting it in this winter before it all passes out of the grower's hands. And the farmers of the valley are prepared to take it, soon as it arrives, and have it on hand for seeding next season. And another importation next year will leave every farmer with seed of his own or can

## THE WHEAT KING



Sowing "Turkey Red" fall wheat, 1910.

get it from his neighbor. Mr. W. Daliks of Minnetonas District has 10 acres in this season and looks well, also Mr. W. G. Abraham of the same place has 10 acres sown. I am informed these farmers are satisfied that fall wheat growing will be a success in their district. Mr. John Metcalfe of the Bowsman District has been experimenting for the last three years and Mr. G. McNabb of Bowsman has been sowing it and has proved successful.

In the Thunder Hill District, Mr. W. J. Stewart had a fine crop last season and will save every bushel for his own seeding. The variety he has grown is the Oregon White, and [it] grows hard, similar to the White Fife, and [he] finished cutting it on August 15th. Mr. Stewart is satisfied it will be the coming crop. Mr. I. Becker of Square Plains District has been growing it for some three years and met with complete success each year. He has been experimenting as to the right quantity of seed to the acre and proper time to sow for best results, and will prefer in the future to sow the bulk of his crop to fall wheat. He has been growing the Turkey Red variety and considers it the finest wheat. I have personally inspected Mr. Stewart's crop at different stages of growth, from the time it was planted last fall until harvested, and was thrifty from sowing to harvesting. I have also taken note of Mr. Becker's wheat since he began sowing three years ago and never found a vestige of winter killed and always turned out heavy plump wheat. This season I pulled one root on the border of Mr. Becker's crop and counted 55 heads from the one root, and every head matured, showing the great propensity for stooling out, and summing up all the experiments the farmers have carried out for a number of years in the

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

different districts of the Swan River Valley, I have come to the conclusion that the fall wheat crop will be the coming crop of our valley. The farmers are enthusiastic of the prospects and look forward to heavy yields. The milling qualities of the wheat are excellent. I have corresponded with Messrs. Walker and Hansen of Claresholm, who were the exporters of the first cars of fall wheat that came into Winnipeg. It was the Oregon White variety and they stated it brought them 80¢ clear at Claresholm, but the British Columbia millers offered them more for it, on account of its fine milling qualities and grade of flour, and they shipped the balance of their crop west for the premium. Mr. Harley of Swan River is forwarding you samples of fall wheat grown in different districts of the valley.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

P.S. Perhaps this may be useful to you for immigration purposes. I think the *Nor'West Farmer* would be glad to get this article and perhaps might be useful in drawing more settlers to our Valley. A.J.C.

**To JOHN W. YOUNG**

[PAM, CLB, V, 213-4]

Swan River  
February 15, 1905

[John W. Young was at this time living, like Harry Haddon, in Spring Hill Mines, Nova Scotia. Cotton had undertaken the journey to Philadelphia to bring his widowed sister-in law, Annie Cook, and her son Frank Ford Cook, back to Manitoba. Mrs. Cook was a dressmaker by profession and later moved to Winnipeg. Frank Ford Cook (b. 1902) remained at Harlington with his uncle's family, and was later settled on Cotton land in the Swan River Valley.]

Dear Sir,

Your letter under date of January 20th to hand. I have been away and just returned from St. Paul, Chicago, Toronto, Montreal, New York, and Philadelphia, and found your letter awaiting my return. I now think more of our North West than ever. Now, in regard to the information you require, I have thought it over carefully and would not suggest anything but what I thought would benefit you. I suggest your best plan under the circumstances would be to come west in the spring and get a job on the Grand Trunk Pacific, say west of Winnipeg. Then, as you say, you would be in a better position to locate a homestead to your liking. Also could get cheap transportation if not free trip. Men will be scarce and wages good. The homesteads we have left here are mostly heavy

## THE WHEAT KING

scrub and not much prairie. Now, perhaps if you would again write to Mr. Haddon he might get you a more minute description of his district, but by coming in the spring and get[ting] on the railway you could then see for yourself as to a suitable location. The chances here in the west are just as good as ever and all a young man requires is backbone, muscle, pluck, and try and stay with it. And in branching out at a farm, don't forget to hoe as you pray. It makes a stiffer straw, a fuller head, and keeps down the weeds. I have seen new men come west [who] remember to pray but neglect to hoe, and the result was old age, want, and the poor house. Remember the Canadian West is a land toward the setting sun and as you journey westward you seem to be drawing near to the Land of Promise. This land is overflowing with possibilities and is anxiously awaiting the man with an earnest desire to better his condition. Let the new settler come with that determination, take advantage of what nature has provided for him, use it to his best interest, and [it will] draw him closer to his master. He will make a settler that Canada will be proud of, and he will be proud of his new country. The banner colony under the British flag. The best men we have in our west today are men who came without capital but were endowed with other chief points that benefit a new settler.

Come west in the spring, keep your eyes and ears open. Your chance will come. Write me when you get settled. Wishing you every success.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

### *To* PETER VERIGIN

[PAM, CLB, V, 2556]

Swan River  
March 15, 1905

[Peter Verigin was at this time the leader of the Doukhobors. He later died in a train explosion in British Columbia. Joseph Elkinton was a Philadelphia Quaker, whose father had been part of the campaign to get the Doukhobors out of Russia and who had greeted the first party of Doukhobours when they arrived in Halifax harbour. The younger Elkinton had visited the Doukhobours in 1902, and in 1904 published a book entitled *The Doukhobors*. One of Elkinton's concerns while visiting the colony had been the lack of schools. In 1903 the Philadelphia Quakers had offered to build and staff a school at a cost of \$15,000, partly from the royalties of Elkinton's book. The offer was refused.]

Dear Sir,

I have received word from Little Britain, Ontario, from R. F. Whiteside, stating he had a carding machine for sale, for carding wool, and [he] asked me to see some of the Doukhobors if they wanted to buy



Doukhobors haying, west of Thunder Hill.

one. So I write to you as you would know. He says this machine cost him \$400.00 and he has given up the business and will sell it for \$40.00. He says it is cheap. He says you could run it by water power or by a thrashing engine. If you would please let me know and I would write him, or you could write to him yourself. His address is: R. W. Whiteside, Little Britain, Ont. I have just come home from Philadelphia and while there I visited Joseph Elkinton and he inquired how the Doukhobors were prospering and how they were improving. I told him you people were doing well and getting along well. I told him about your thrashing machines, binders, mowers, saw mills, flour mills, steam plows. And he was glad to hear the Doukhobors were prospering. He also said you ought to have English schools for your children. I think it would be a great improvement to have your children learn English and learn to write English and do sums and do general business on the English methods.

When you come down to Swan River I would be pleased to have you call on me. I live near Thunder Hill and am a farmer, and have had Doukhobors in my employment a good deal, and give them a lot of work.

Wishing you success.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

## THE WHEAT KING

**To K. TH. EINERSON**

[PAM, CLB, V, 299-301]

Swan River  
April 12, 1905

[Einerson was an intending settler from Trondheim, Norway.]

Dear Sir,

Your letter under date of February 14th last to hand. It went to Treherne, my former place of residence, and was then forwarded to Swan River where I carry on my farming operations at the present time, hence the delay. I also had to send your letter to the Department of Immigration to get it translated and they have written you before this. I will answer your questions. You had better come out before harvest. Be in the Canadian West about August 1st, say at Winnipeg, and call on J. Obed Smith, Commissioner of Immigration, and he will be in a position to place you with some good farmer where you can learn farming. Of course you will have to accept small wages to begin with until you become acquainted with our method of farming and do your utmost to learn the trade so you can farm with success when you begin for yourself. You reach Canada either at Halifax or Montreal, then come by the Canadian Pacific Railway to Winnipeg. Perhaps from your country you had better go to Liverpool and then to Canada. Yes, you will have no difficulty in getting work on a farm. J. Obed Smith of Winnipeg could not arrange a position for you so long in advance, but do not fear, you will have work as soon as you get to Winnipeg, as before harvest the farmers write to Mr. Smith of Winnipeg to send them help for harvest. So don't think you will have trouble to get work as you will get lots of it. Cattle and sheep are alright, only it takes capital to get a start along that line.

You had better not bring your dog to Canada, as you will have to hire out with a farmer when you get here, and your dog would only be a hindrance to you and waste your time that you ought to spend profitably. I would therefore advise you to leave your dog at home. Yes, land is plenty and easily obtained. You can ranch cattle or sheep and lease the land from the government at a low rental, and if you are willing to work and anxious to get along, you could soon have a home of your own. In coming it would be advisable to bring some clothes with you, as perhaps they might cost you more here and all the money you have. If you have money you had better send it by draft to the Canadian Bank of Commerce at Winnipeg to your credit, and you would not have the risk of carrying it with you and it will be safe for you there and you can draw on it when you feel inclined.

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Now, in coming to this country, come with all your good intentions and leave all your bad faults behind, and when you come here gather all the information you can about our country and all the good you can and reject all the bad. Come with a determination to succeed. Come with your sleeves rolled up ready for work, and don't be afraid of any work you have to do. You no doubt will find everything with a new look about it and you will have to do your share of pioneering. We have the finest country for farming under the sun, but it wants backbone and muscle and determination to make a success, and you must be ready to take your share of the hardships as they come. And if you are willing and ready to do this you are on the way to success. If, on the other hand, your intention in coming out is to have an easy time and always looking for an easy job and try[ing] to get through the world as easy as you can, Canada is not the place for you. Canada wants men who are willing to take their share in building up a new country and in return offers them a good home. Therefore we hope you will come and come with that earnestness and desire to make a success. I would be glad to hear from you again if you have time before you come, and write in English and I can answer you more quickly.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To BAIN ENGEEVERE**

[PAM, CLB, V, p. 311]

Swan River  
April, 1905

[Although there is no date on this letter, from its place in the letter-book it was written in mid-April, 1905. Bain Engelveere was at this time living in Montpellier, France.]

Dear Sir,

I saw your address in the *Treherne Times* and that you was thinking about returning to Manitoba again. If so, I think we have a good place for you to start a hardware [store] in the Swan River Valley. There is a new town just going to start this fall, and will be about the size of Treherne in a short time and has a good farming country surrounding it. And I think [it] will be a good town for business. This town will be on my farm and will be our town for business. I think it would be to your interest to take a look up this way and see what you think of it, and perhaps you might do well here. I hope this reaches you before you leave. I will enclose the piece I cut out for you to see that is how I got your address.

## THE WHEAT KING

You are a smart man and could soon work up a good trade and gain custom. Write and let me know what you think about it. Hoping your health is better.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

To DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR, OTTAWA

[PAM, CLB, V, 312-3J

Swan River  
April 15, 1905

[W. L. Kinsman was probably an uncle of Cotton; his mother's sister Harriet had married a Mr. Kinsman. "Their son Charles did move to the Swan River Valley but remained only a short time before returning to the United States. It is not clear what sort of position Cotton is seeking in this letter, but he is either looking for an informal and unpaid one similar to Cotton's own or a more formal arrangement involving remuneration. A formal position would probably have been as a sub-agent, but the Department of Interior had since 1903 been phasing out these appointments. Sub-agents received financial bonuses based on the number of settlers they could prove to have sent to Canada.]

Dear Sir,

I have just come home from a trip to Chicago and down through the state of Illinois and I find a great desire for information about Canada, the North West, and a great number are anxious to come and if excursions are worked up at a cheap rate and someone who are acquainted with the people to go among them and come up with them, I think it would be the means of bringing in a large number of well-to-do farmers with capital. While at Loda, which is on the Illinois River about 100 miles south of Chicago, I sat talking with an old settler who formerly came from Canada, but has been settled at Loda for the last 45 years and is well acquainted with the state. [He] is now a store keeper there and buys grain and does A general business. He is a wide awake intelligent man and he has already made one trip to the North West and was favorably impressed with the prospects here and thinks it is a fine farming country. I had an interview with this man and asked him if he could do something for Canadian immigration. He told me if the Department of the Interior wrote him he would see what could be done. If you think it advisable to write him (and I would suggest that plan) I think he would use his influence to bring settlers in, and his long residence and acquaintance through that state would carry weight

among the farmers and a class if induced to immigrate here would do well.

His address is

W. L. Kinsman Esq.

Loda

Iroquois County

Illinois

I have also been to Hamilton, Toronto, Montreal, New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia, and Camden. And while at those places have been bringing the Canadian North West to the front, and doing my utmost to induce settlers to come here. I have been living in Manitoba for the last 17 years and have been the means of inducing many a settler to settle here, and have seen them prosper and bless the day they came to the Canadian West.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To REVEREND GEORGE J. BOND**

[PAM, CLB, V, p. 423-6]

Swan River  
September 1, 1905

[The Reverend George Bond was the editor of the Christian Guardian.]

Dear Sir,

Your kind letter to hand under date August 16th. Also photos to hand safely and extracts, also two extra copies of The Christian Guardian, for which please accept my warmest thanks. Also for the reference you made in The Guardian regarding our Silver Wedding. My motive for sending it to you to publish was we have so many friends in Ontario that are Methodist, which The Guardian carries glad tidings to and may its usefulness spread.

In referring to your letter, you class me as a non-subscriber. Such is not the case. I have been a regular subscriber to The Guardian ever since the union of the Methodist and Bible Christians and most certainly that should bring me in as a subscriber. The Guardian is coming regularly to my home and my last year's subscription was paid to Rev. George Elmitt of Thunder Hill Mission who is our pastor, who supplanted Mr. Lucky at Treherne in southern Manitoba on the Glenboro Branch, my former home where I resided for 13 years. We were administered to by John Stewart, J. A. McClung, W. L. Armstrong (now at Portage la Prairie).

## THE WHEAT KING

M. C. Flatt (now of Kenora). These have been men who have trod the Christian path and have done pioneer labor, help[ed] to lay the foundation of our grand western country and Brother Stewart has gone to his reward. These men are men whose name will go down in history and the country where they have served will give them honor. It is not the man in Ontario who acts on his downy seat and reclines on his couch with his pocket filled with a fat salary with two services a day as a recreation that can sing the Doxology and more sweeter than the missionary in the Canadian west with his humble salary, with his chair uncushioned, cowhide boots, his route on his way to his three or four appointments on foot, following perhaps the Indian trail, crossing streams without any bridges, faring the repast of the bachelor, laying the foundation of a circuit. Those are God's own chosen people and their crowns will be a crown of gems. Such is the pathway of the pioneer missionaries who are casting the bread upon the water and their grandsons will occupy the downy seat. Reverend O. Darwin, superintendent of Missions in our west - no doubt you are acquainted with him - who is a friend of mine, I enclose a letter as a reference. I formerly lived on the Welcome Circuit on the Bay of Quinte Conference near the Trealawny Church. The requirements of the west are more ministers to go into the new districts that are continually opening up and there spread the gospel and share with the pioneers and lay the foundation of Methodism. But the Methodist Church today is sleeping or resting on their laurels and the Presbyterian and English Churches are passing them by and are covering new fields with smarter men, and the Methodist is not making the advance they should and are losing ground. It is time Ontario woke up to the fact of the importance of the west and send up some of their best men to work those missions. It requires the very best men have you. If you have a sleepy man, keep him at home. Send us the best. The best are required and if the Methodist must hold its own and open up new districts, those districts are peopled with some of the best educated men we have and would not be where they are if they had not sound intelligence. Therefore it takes men of good education, men of large brawn, and men filled with Christian fire to minister to them. Perhaps you have not been to our west. If you have not, come as soon as the opportunity occurs, and then we will get *The Christian Guardian* with a little western news in it. The time will soon be here when *The Guardian* will be printed in Winnipeg. It may seem at the present time that we are all pioneers in the west, that the west is unimportant, that we are only a log shack by the way, that you can pass us by unnoticed. But do not despise the log shack. The soil surrounding it

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is good. There is a *Man* inside it. The next time you pass you might glance sideways to notice it in a casual way, but it is gone and a mansion takes its place. You [are] surprised, yes surprised, and the east will wake up some day soon with a surprised look to find other Denominations have the field, have been active about watching the immigration, keeping prepared, covering the ground, and are abreast - laid the foundations of a mighty church. How can this be? *Looking for the log shack and caring for its occupants*, while the Methodists passed by on the other side.

I do not write this for publication but could give you an article later if you feel disposed to publish it.

I enclose one dollar for help to the poor brother who lost his all by fire. You can put it down as A Friend, Harlington, Man., \$1.00.

I enclose label on *Guardian*, but the address is not so full on paper as it should be: A. J. Cotton, Cotton Farm, Harlington, Man. Please return Mr. Darwin's letter and oblige, and thank you for your kindness re publication and for the advance of *The Guardian*.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

To HON. R. P. ROBLIN

[PAM, CLB, V, p. 431]

Swan River  
September 21, 1905

Dear Sir,

I wish to call your attention to the Swan River-Thunder Hill Branch Line of the C.N. R. that has been graded southwest of Swan River to the boundary line, about 26 miles. A portion of this has been graded two years and we fully expected the steel would [have] been laid on what had been graded last fall, but no, the farmers had to haul their grain to Swan River and the majority took two days to make a trip. Now on the expectations of this branch being graded the farmers have doubled their acreage and up to the present time no prospect of the steel being laid. You certainly should urge the completion of this branch this fall in time to take out the farmers' grain. The acreage is large and quality first class.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

## THE WHEAT KING

**To DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR, OTTAWA**

Swan River

[PAM, CLB, V, p. 5245]

[Smut, which had plagued farmers in the 1890s, emerged again in 1905. Smut was a tiny plant which showed as a black dusty mass which filled the kernels of wheat and replaced whole heads of oats and kernels of corn. The presence of even a small quantity of smut in wheat resulted in rejection. Bluestone was a solution of copper sulfate. During the 1905 outbreak of smut, seed was no longer merely soaked in bluestone, but after removal from bluestone solution it was washed in lime water for five to ten minutes, then dried in the sunlight on canvas sheets.]

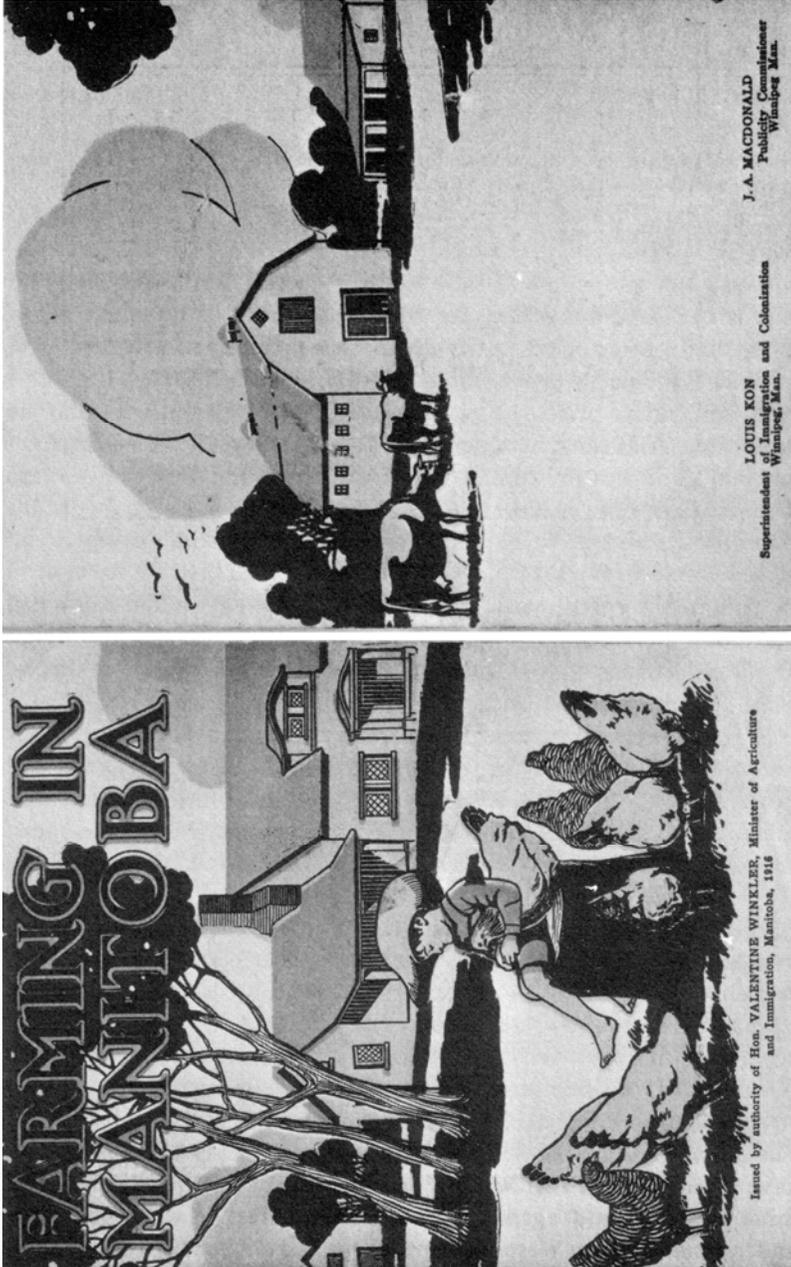
Dear Sir,

I feel very much interested in the development of the Great Canadian West and have been living here for the past eighteen years and have watched it with pride. And I am a farmer and have put on the market as much as 26,000 bushels of number one hard, grown off my own farm. Therefore I feel that I have grown up with the west and have taken an active part in its advancement. But when I read over the market report of December 21st and found that 25% of our western wheat was graded rejected on that date and on December 22nd, I do feel that there is neglect somewhere, for such a state of things should not exist. Now, a number of years ago we had smutty wheat and the government undertook to analyse the bluestone and found it adulterated and after that we found a government inspection certificate in each batch. And the consequence was for a number of years we had no smut to injure the quality of wheat that had been properly treated, and note these last few years how the smut is again making headway. Don't you think it would be in the interest of the country to again inspect the bluestone and see that the farmers get the right quality. For if the fault lies with a poor quality of bluestone (which I think it does largely), it certain is a serious loss to the farmer and country, and it is the duty of the government to attend to it.

I have some bluestone left over that I intend to have inspected as to its quality, for I believe this smut trouble is due to a large extent to its poor quality. Hoping you will take this matter up as it is serious and a great financial loss to the farmer and country.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton



One of the pamphlets in which Cotton letters appeared.

## THE WHEAT KING

To HENRY GALARUEAS

[PAM. CLB, V, 589-92]

Swan River  
February 8, 1906

[Henry Galarueas was an intending settler from Lewis County, New York. A letter by Cotton had appeared in the Manitoba government publication, *What Farmers Say About Manitoba*.]

Dear Sir,

Your letter under date of January 29th to hand. I fully expected you were in the Canadian West somewhere before this as I had not heard from you. I wrote you on April 14th last regarding the renting of a farm, however I am glad you are still inclined to settle in the West because I think you will do better. I have been here since 1888 and have had the experience. And came here poor and have made a good honest living, raised a good healthy family. [I] was advised not to come here on account of my poor health, that this was a hard climate, and my health has improved and my weight increased up to 2051bs. And I have worked hard the first seven years and exposed myself to all the cold we have in the winter going to the bush and coming from it day in and day out. I have neither had toe, finger, ear or nose frozen yet, and this morning it was 36 below zero and you would not think it was zero if there was no thermometer to look at. My boys are hauling grain every day. We have 19 quarter sections of land in the valley and over 800 acres under cultivation. But [we] are only working 400 ourselves, having the rest rented out. Where we live we have a comfortable farmhouse 18 x 26 and a kitchen 16 x 20, shop 14 x 20, stable 30 x 60, grainery 36 x 50. On one of our other farms, that we have rented out, is a house 16 x 20, kitchen 14 x 26, grainery 24 x 40, stable 26 x 40. And on another farm we have up a grainery 24 x 40 and cellar dug out for a house this summer. These are all frame buildings put up and furnished in first class shape. We are breaking and building each year on different farms. Now I am only telling you this to show you how satisfied I am with the country. I do not do very much work myself only attend to my garden and that letter in the Government pamphlet brings in hundreds of letters each year which I answer out of my time, telling intending settlers what this country is like. The government supplies me with free paper and I answer those letters. I have often thought that writing on government paper, settlers might think I was a paid agent to blow up our West. I want people to understand what the West has done for me and it is ready to do the same for them. I don't think there is any country under the sun can offer such encouraging inducements to intending

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A. J. Cotton "on the job."

## THE WHEAT KING

settlers, in the way of free homesteads, cheap land, good water, timber, firewood and building material, good soil, quality of grain, average yield, growth of stock and healthy climate. I am stating facts that I have had from experience. When I go east in Ontario and Quebec and in the States and see farmers that are using up the best part of their lives renting land and making nothing but a bare living, and working hard to do that and a time coming when age will not allow them to work as hard and still no bank account to help them out. This increased worry added on shortens their life. Now by coming to the West perhaps you will have to put up with hardship in the beginning and many inconveniences and very likely meet many discouragements at the beginning. But a little backbone and sand with sleeves rolled up will soon chase that away and before you are aware of it you will find yourselves comfortable and on the way to prosperity. I will guarantee that if you come up here and take up a homestead and buy a quarter of railway land and work and manage as hard as you do now on a rented farm that you will soon have a comfortable house of your own. I will now answer your questions. Our winter has been the same in comparison with yours, mild and not even good sleighing yet. The farmers are busy loading cars at our new siding, the steel having been laid this fall, and they are loading 22 cars in one day with wheat. [There are] over 50 teams there at once and a lot of grain to haul out yet. We have loaded 4 cars of wheat and sold 1,500 bushels of wheat for seed @ 98¢ per bushel at the grainery and we have 5,000 bushels of oats yet to haul out and load for sale. Horses here are worth \$400 per span, cattle are cheap here. I would say bring your horses with you. It will pay, but implements, your plows would not answer here and it would not do to bring machinery here that you could not get repairs here for them. Harrows would do and rollers and either a Deering, or McCormick binder or mower would do, as no other American firms are represented here. Bring your roller, harrow, fanningmill, wagons, sleighs, racks and put in some oak or rock elm or some good hardwood planks to make doubletrees out of if you have it handy and cheap as it is dear here. Don't bring any seeders, plows or cultivators, a disk is alright, and don't bring any binders if not the above make or mower either. Sulky rake would be alright. Forks, shovels, chains, whippletrees, pickforks are alright to bring. I think the fare would be about 525.00 from Buffalo here. Of course you can get a cheap settlers rate. You write to Thomas Duncan, Syracuse, New York, who is the Canadian agent and ask him for the settlers rate from where you are to Swan River. on the Canadian Northern Railway. I was not to the Worlds Fair but

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just taking a trip down through Canada and the States. I would like to hear from you again and write to Mr. Duncan about the rate and tell me if you get any reply from him as I think he is still government agent there. If not I will write and see that you get settlers rates.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To THE "FREE PRESS"**

[PAM, CLB, V, 629-631]

Swan River  
March 6, 1906

[Cotton had hoped to persuade his own bank, the Canadian Bank of Commerce, to locate in Kenville. However, it was the Bank of Toronto that finally opened a branch in Kenville in 1918.]

Dear Sir,

I enclose \$3.00 for subscription to *Daily Free Press*. My subscription has expired but don't you stop my paper just notify me and I will send along the necessary.

We must have a correspondent from our valley and any items you can pick up regarding the prosperity of our valley - publish them. Our *Swan River Star* don't gather much news for our area. I will give you a few items. In the first place I will explain that on the new branch of the Canadian Northern called the Swan River-Thunder Hill branch the first new town, 10 miles south west from Swan River was called "Square Plains", but the railway company have changed it for a name of their own and called it *Kenville*. This new town is situated mostly on my farm and partly on Mr. McCormick's. So this new town of *Kenville* is the one I will be most interested in and I will drop you a few lines occasionally to bring it before the public. It is situated in the heart of the finest wheat district in the Swan River Valley. There are two other points on this branch as follows, first *Kenville*, second Durban, third Benito.

*Kenville*

*Kenville* will be the name of a new town that will come before the reader of the *Free Press* and the general public in the future. This new town is situated in the wheat centre of the Swan River Valley. This district has been known since the valley was settled as the Square Plains District but the railway company decided to give it a new name. It is situated ten miles south west of Swan River on the Thunder Hill branch of the Canadian Northern and has a great wheat district to draw from and well

## THE WHEAT KING



Main Street, Kenville, with post office on right.

settled. Kenville is just starting out on the road to success, the steel just having been laid in December last. The new town has an up to date General Store kept by Charles McMornick, livery barn and feed stable by Mr. N. Jameson, butcher's shop by Mr. Jameson. A fine big hardware [store], 60 x 60, is in the course of erection by the Morse Hardware Co. of Winnipeg. This will be a fine building. The Massey-Harris Co. will erect a large warehouse for the display of their stock and repairs. Having gone over the ground and sized up the farming district [they] concluded that this point was an important for their trade. Mr. Jameson keeps an up to date restaurant. Messrs. Pilkington and Spiers contemplate the erection of a blacksmith shop and [illegible]. The town will put up a hall for public use. The farmers are agitating for a farmer's elevator of 80,000 bushel capacity. This is a necessity as this will be a great wheat shipping centre in the near future. This district already this year has shipped 100,000 bushels of wheat and a large increase in acreage for 1906. The Canadian Branch of Commerce will establish a branch here. There is a vacancy for a drug store, Doctor, Vet., Lawyer, machine shop, photographer, milliner and dressmaker.

If you will put in the above regarding our new town of Kenville I will drop you a line again occasionally or get someone who will.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To JAMES H. FULTON, M.D.**

[PAM, CLB, V, 677-8]

Swan River  
March 22, 1906

[Preston was a new wheat variety being introduced into Canada at this time.]

Dear Sir,

Your letter under date of March 2nd to hand. I thank you very much for your kind letter and [the] interest you are taking in the western crops. I enclose a revised pamphlet for 1905. My wheat crop was way below average and was rejected on account of smut. I sowed the Preston wheat (a new variety we have) on the 5,6,7,8 of April and it averaged 25 bushels to the acre and was on ground that had grown wheat three and four years in succession. I was pleased with the yield and quality which I got first prize for at the Swan River Seed Fair, but the other wheat, a good deal only went 16 bushels per acre and very smutty. The smut, I think, was what diminished the yield. It was prevalent over the whole of the West but the Preston had smut only noticeable. We finished sowing the Preston at noon on the eighth and in the afternoon sowed Red Fife and there was the greatest differences that we had in the crop. [On] some land our field was a mile long and a half a mile wide and we were sowing across the plowing and all worked the same and the difference would be from 25 for the Preston best to 16 for the Fife.



Will Ford's crop of Preston wheat, 1908.

## THE WHEAT KING

Well I sow[ed] wheat after the Preston on the 8,18,19,20,21,22,24,27 and finished wheat. Sowed oats on the 1,2,5,6,8,10,17,18 and finished oats. Sowed barley on the 18th. Sowed fall wheat on 9,10,11,12 and right on all the next week and it looked fine. Last fall wheat we sowed first we had to pasture and now all covered with snow except a little patch here and there. We will sow all Preston this year and am selling 1200 bushels for seed to neighbours. Now about smut. I think a bluestone of poor quality was used together with a poor quality seed. There was wheat in the valley that averaged 45 per acre on new breaking. Altogether [it] was a very prosperous season for the west. Last night was 26 below zero, had a very high wind from S. W. on the 20th and at night veered round to the north and snowed and blowed and 21 very hard north wind and very cold about 10 below all day, a little sleighing so I guess no sowing on 23 March. In fact I am of the opinion we will have a late spring and as for the summer we will have rainfall in our valley when they are in drouth in the west and south. Plowing was not nearly finished last fall so farmers will have a lot to do this spring. How are your boys coming along at Moose Jaw? Will they have a crop in this year? I would send you a Winnipeg Free Press but suppose your boys send you papers. Again thanking you and hoping to hear from you again.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

### **To T. A. BURROWS**

[PAM, CLB, V, p. 712]

Swan River  
April 16, 1906

[Cotton had imported a carload of Turkey Red fall wheat seed from the United States in the late summer of 1905, and was arguing with the Customs Department about the duty payable.]

Dear Mr. Burrows,

There should be something done to establish a post office at the new town of Kenville. This is urgent as the business places are in need of it and there need be no delay as to a right man to keep it, as there is a Mr. John Jameson just come from Meaford, Ont., who is a real Grit. He will keep it. He asked me to write you about it. He has been Secretary-Treasurer of the Liberal Association at Meaford for the last three years. [He] said you could ask and make enquiries from William P. Telford, M.P. for South Grey as to his standing. He worked in his interest in the last election. He says if you

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

will place a post office here at once he will take it. I was talking to Mr. Harley the other day and he says Kenville can't do without one. And we cannot do without one at Harlington and Durban should be moved to Durban and Benito to Benito. Then the post offices in the valley will be settled for some time. Kenville is an important point and will be the best town of the three on the new branch. I have your last letter and may ask for your influence re duty on wheat, have not heard from Customs vet.

Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To DAVID HORN**

[PAM, CLB. V1, 94-SJ

Swan River  
January 7, 1908

[David Horn was the Chief Grain Inspector based in Winnipeg.]

Dear Sir,

Having made your acquaintance last June while in Winnipeg, and no doubt you will remember giving me samples of the grain you received from the Holy Land by Mr. Bawlf, which I very thankfully received, you will remember me by that incident. It was the first time I had the pleasure of meeting you and you made a favourable impression on me as a grain inspector, the one who will do the square deal between man and man.

Now, I wish to draw your attention to car No. 794 C.N.R. loaded at Kenville. Your date of inspection certificate is Winnipeg, January 2nd. Your grade said car Commercial Grade Feed tough. Now, I don't understand what you mean by tough in feed grade. Do you mean it has to go to the dryer plant and be treated before it is stored? I want to store it and hold it until say spring. This wheat should not be tough. It was thrashed out of stook, latter part of October and we had no rain here in our valley since the beginning of September and I never thrash grain tough. I always have it in good condition and I don't understand how this is tough. I wish you would see this sample you have personally and see if it really is tough. If it is I can't understand how it can be and whatever you say I will abide by it. I have sent you another car C.N.R. No. 40,426 out of the same bin and I would like you to test that for being tough.

I know the wheat is tough in quality and in my 20 years farming in the West, I never saw such stuff and feel ashamed to ship it. But it is all we

## THE WHEAT KING

have and must make the best of it. Let me hear from you about that wheat. I don't like to go to the expense of putting it through the dryer, as I don't think it requires it.

Wishing you a Happy New Year I remain Yours Truly.

A. J. Cotton

### **To WILLIAM WILLIAMS**

(PAM. CLB, VI, ISI-4)

Swan River  
January 31. 1908

Dear Friend,

Your kind and welcome letter under date of October 10th last to hand. It always does me good to get a letter from you, and it is the only news I receive from the East, except what I pick up from the Guide, which is a welcome visitor. The fall has passed away rapidly and the winter has been so mild that the end of January has come and the days have lengthened out another hour before we actually know where we are. I don't remember the time passing so swiftly. The Christmas holidays have come and gone and we are still blessed with good health, and although the year that has just passed and gone has not left the prosperity behind it the same as some would wish, still it left enjoyments that will not easily be forgotten. I was glad to hear you were all well and would like to have you come up and see us in the western wilds and have a taste of our ranch life. The trips are cheap all through the summer and being a good Grit your chances are good for reduced rates while the present administration is in power at Ottawa. As for myself, I have taken no active part in politics. At the last provincial election I was approached to take a stand on the Liberal ticket for this constituency, but declined the honor.

I had a splendid chance to be elected but concluded to drop out. I have a good chance for the Senate at Ottawa but will not accept that either. I prefer to be plain "Farmer John" and stay with the ranch, as the old farmer said when his son was playing football. He asked him which job he wanted, and the boy said football. The farmer said alright, he would have to stay with it, for he could not make a success of football and farming too. At the present time Canada is no backwoods country. She must be governed by the best brains that Canada can produce and the electorate of Canada has a great responsibility in putting such men

there: men of weight, men of sound judgment, men of moral standing, and men that will stand up for Canada's right irrespective of party. When men of this stamp goes down to Parliament, then there will be no [illegible] about the future of Canada. It would be a blessing for our country if that day had come, but many is corrupt. Well. I will drop politics. The past year had been an off year for the West, but I think the people outside has taken more notice of it than the western people. Although such a large number of new settlers came in and so many it was their first crop and now have to buy their seed. It seems hard but the western people don't call it hard times. it is only one miss[ed] crop and they know the future is good and the wholesale houses are not shutting down. There are fewer failures at this time than last year, and taken into consideration so many new merchants just started business on the poor crop. Of course business has been curtailed to a certain extent, and will be this year out, but they look beyond this year. The West has been making rapid progress. It is hard to realize the development that has taken place, the mileage of railway that has been added, new towns that have sprung up, vast areas of prairie that has been transformed into miles of grain, and still with the poor crop, cars are scarce and at Kenville, our nearest shipping point, the farmers are scrapping over cars. There seems to be a scarcity over the whole west. If the crop had been a yielder as it at one time promised, it would not [have] been moved before another one arrived. It seems with all the railway building, with all the extra rolling stock and equipment added year, it seems then the mileage cannot keep pace with the immigration and everything is behind. It seems impossible to catch up, let alone to keep abreast. It is a wonderful growing time for the West and indeed it does require men of brains to manage affairs that will work out for the best interest of the country, and even at the present time the wheels of commerce are becoming clogged as it were with an overproduction of business. And yet the poor farmer is only starting, as it were, works a few acres here and a few acres there, but the number is increasing at such a rapid rate that the spout will have to be enlarged to relieve the situation.

Our crop this year was poor. The season seemed to be turned around. Spring after one of the hardest winters I ever seen was exceptionally late. We did not finish sowing wheat until the 7th of June and was the 18th of June when we finished our barley and September 9th before we began to cut wheat. Everything was out of season, but it wound up with one of the finest falls I [have] ever seen, and so has the winter up to the present date. Our wheat averaged 14, oats 41, barley 31. Altogether on all of our farms was thrashed about 16,000 bushels of all kinds of grain. Of course what

## THE WHEAT KING

is rented out I only get a third share. Our best wheat is worth about 80¢, our poorest about 50, oats 40. We have loaded 4 cars and [are] on the 5th. On all our farms we have about 1,100 acres under cultivation for crops for this coming year. We will pull out with expenses and a little to the good this year and are very thankful to be so well pleased. We are all well and enjoying good health. I think I told you in my last letter, my oldest son is married, has been married a year, 17th last October. My daughter and two sons are away to a party tonight enjoying themselves. I was real glad to get a letter from you and the news from the East is always of so much interest to me from one who is as well acquainted. I must now close. Remember me kindly to Mrs. Williams and Miss Minnie Jones and Mrs. Patterson, and accept my kind regards and may the blessings fall on you in the future as they have in the past. And may the pathway of life that leads to the horizon on the decline toward the setting sun be made pleasant.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

### **To REVEREND W. L. ARMSTRONG**

[PAM. CLB, V1, 158-9)

Swan River  
February 7, 1905

[W. L. Armstrong was at this time pastor of St. Paul's Methodist Church in Toronto. The Metropolitan was one of the largest and most prestigious pulpits in Toronto.]

Dear Brother Armstrong,

My daughter Frances just received word from Toronto that you had received a call from the Metropolitan at the present expiry of your present term at St. Paul's. Allow me to congratulate you. A call from the Church having the highest standing in Canada places you on the pedestal, the highest office that as pastor of the church [you] can obtain. There is no one member of your past congregations who takes greater pleasure in congratulating you on your success. While you were at Treherne and Winnipeg and Portage la Prairie I told you the "Metropolitan" was yours and you deserve it, and that church has not had a pastor that had filled that position more worthy than yourself will do. And the same grace and meekness that accompanied you at Treherne, Winnipeg, and Portage will follow you in the pulpit of the "Metropolitan". I am so pleased to hear of your success. To give you a hearty shake of the hand at the present time would be a source of pleasure to me for past prophecy.

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

The success that is about to be yours is not a gift to any man and by some would be filled as such, but is yours rightfully, having been accomplished by years patient and faithful work in the past, and as each charge under your care has received more from your services than they had to offer. So will the members and congregation of the Metropolitan at the end of your pastorate be fully convinced, although they are the highest church, that services rendered cannot be repaid. As God has blessed you in the past so may his blessing accompany you in the future. My wife and family join with me in kind words to yourself, wife and family, and as we congratulate ourselves on our success, let us not forget that our wives have proved a very important part in assisting us to that success.

Sometime when you are taking your vacation in the west, don't forget to take a run up to Swan River and see your old friend.

Wishing you every success.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To WILLIAM WILLIAMS**

[PAM, CLB V1, 451-6]

Harlington  
December 18, 1909

[Jessie Emmond Ford had married William I. Ford at Treherne in 1900. They had twin sons. Almon Gay and James Truman, born in 1906. Mrs. Ford died in 1913. Strasbourg, Saskatchewan, is situated on the C.P.R. north of Regina, near Last Mountain Lake.]

Dear Mr. Williams.

I have your letter under date of October 3rd before me and I am always glad to get a letter from you. I had intended to have answered it before but the old saying "Time Flies" seems to be a true adage and the older we get the faster time seems to speed. The years roll around rapidly and man is as a vapor, as a mist of the morning and when the sun rises is gone. I was pleased to get your letter but it would have been a great pleasure to have seen you yourself. I remember as if it were only yesterday when you came across the fields at Treherne, where I was wrassling with the breaking plow. I am pleased that the past year has given you good health, one of the greatest blessings we can enjoy. Yes, I saw in the Guide where old Mr. Westaway passed away at a ripe old age. One who had seen Port Hope from the beginning up and certainly had a great interest there. I always liked Mr. Westaway. Your contract to judge horses at Port Hope fair seems to be a yearly one as you don't miss a season. I tell you horses are dear up here,

## THE WHEAT KING

can't get a good team under \$500 and the chances look good for an advance. So many new settlers coming in continually and all require horses although oxen are becoming plentiful and come in useful. But horses will yet be higher although they are beginning to raise a good few in the west. But they can't hardly be noticed and the class of horses here in the west are pretty good. Engines of all classes are being used to take the place of horses. One of my nearest neighbours used an engine all summer for breaking and it was very handy and surprising how he got along. They are beginning to use them for all kinds of work on the farm. At Winnipeg they have invented a new gas engine. A carburetor that has not come on the market yet. The wheels are extended some 30 feet apart and underneath there is a gang plow, a harrow, a seeder and packer, each one separate. And [they] are lifted up and lowered at the will of the engineer and no difficulty in turning at the ends. And she harrows, plows, rolls and packs at the same time and one man runs all. This machine will be controlled by the Farmers Grain Growers and will be put on the market at cost. And the engine will thresh also. It will be a complete machine for the farmer as he can put on all plows or harrows or seeders or take any off or leave some on at his pleasure. You see the high price of horses and scarcity of hired help is a problem for the Western farmer to face. We paid \$2.50 per day all through harvest and thrashing and men were



Winter work.

scarce at that. I had three Doukhobors hired all summer from the last of June. I gave them \$35 per month and board the first month, then \$45.00 for the next month, then \$50.00 per month after that until it froze up. In fact I kept them two weeks after freeze up to get some fencing done. They were fine fellows. They only had their meals at the house and had their own bedding and slept in the grainery. They were first class horsemen and splendid workers and good around men at any job. Good blacksmiths [they] fix their own plows, whippletrees or machinery of any kind. Always ready in the morning and any time would suit them to quit. They gave entire satisfaction and always do their work for the interest of the farmer. And work just the same by themselves as if any one were with them. This year we paid 4¢ for oats and barley and 5c for wheat for thrashing per bushel. Crops in general were good both as to yield and quality. As for our own crop it was not up to standard as we have been occupying our time breaking on other farms and have not been breaking any new land on the home farm. Our wheat averaged 16 bushels, oats 45 bushels and barley we had none. On my son's farm his wheat averaged 21, barley 35 and oats 55 and on one of the other farms not quite so good. But about as a whole the crops averaged very good and the prices are good. We have only loaded one car of wheat yet and expect another car in tonight at Kenville. That is the name of our new town and station situated on the Canadian Northern on the Thunder Hill branch. The station and part of the town is on one of my farms. There will be about one hundred and fifty thousand bushels of wheat shipped from there this season. There is only one elevator up there as yet but is surrounded by a fine wheat district. You speak of your interest in the different loan companies which are doing business in the west. They certainly are doing good business and they have a great hold on the west and the security is the very best. Your investments certainly are as good as the gold and dividends are sure. There is an enormous amount of British capital and now they are turning their attention to new developments in mining, lumbering, fisheries, industries of all kinds. In fact anything that will keep the railroads busy and bring in good dividends. Real estate is running up fast and changing hands. Farms in our district are increasing in value. A year ago last fall a quarter section changed hands, [ad]joining one of my farms, for \$5,040. And I helped to choose the farm for a neighbour of mine at \$4.00 per acre. This fall a half section of the same section sold for \$10,000 and it was bought for \$4.00 per acre. You see those farms are already getting valuable. I have no land to sell. I have 3,040 acres and \$ 100,000 would not tempt me to sell. I don't want the money. Just as you say something to eat and drink and

## THE WHEAT KING



Doukhobor labourers on Cotton farms.

something to wear and a little to spend, is all we want. I have it all for the family. They have been good faithful children and I will remember them. Mrs. Cotton has been in Winnipeg since December 10th. Her brother's wife who farms 9 miles from us had to go to the hospital to undergo an operation for a tumour and it has not been very successful. They expected her to pass away last week but have not heard yet. I have my doubts about her recovery. So we did not have Mrs. Cotton here for

Christmas and seemed dull without her. But she is doing her Christmas work for the master. My daughter Frances and myself were to be in Winnipeg and Southern Manitoba for a couple of weeks seeing old friends and renewing old acquaintances and Mrs. Cotton was contemplating a trip to Chicago this coming summer but this may prevent it. Now, you see it is not well for the both of us to leave the farm at once as Mrs. Cotton's mother who is eighty is staying here and someone must be with her. I am pleased that your little girl at Strassbug [sic] is getting along so well. She was a great little girl and when you write remember me kindly to her. No doubt you will be taking a trip up to see her soon, then don't forget to all on your old friend before you go home. I find my letter is already somewhat lengthy and yet I have not dropped a line about the prosperity, development and conditions of our west but you read the papers and get it all. Twenty one years ago I knew the West, knew all railways, every town and post office. I had a little map on the wall and could point out any part or town when any casualty happened. But now I am at sea. I don't know where half the towns are and actually seemed lost in our country. It has grown to be a big youngster. I must now close. I was pleased to hear of the good crops of all kinds and the general prosperity around the old home, old land and am glad to hear from you. Remember me kindly to Mrs. Williams and all inquiring friends. Wishing you all a Happy New Year and hope you will enjoy many of them is the wish of your old friend A. J. Cotton.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton



An engine-driven threshing machine.

## THE WHEAT KING

**To REV. JAMES D. GREGG**

[PAM, CIA VI, p. 725]

Harlington  
August 23, 1910

[The Reverend James D. Gregg was the minister at Elm Creek, Manitoba. He had been at the Thunder Hill mission when the Cottons first moved to Swan River.]

Dear Mr. Gregg,

Your letter under date of August 16th to hand, re thrashing outfit for our valley. I would not advise him to come as I think the season would be so short it would not pay him for the long trip. What I mean by short season is there are a number of new machines come in this season and will get through so much quicker than a few years ago. My son Nelson has had three machines offered to come to him first. Mr. Ostreen of Durban has a new one, a gasoline, and Dave Shaw has a new one and George Kennedy has a new one and Albert Avey has a new one and the man who engineered for Rutson last year has a new outfit. These are some that I know so you may have an idea that thrashing won't last long. The crop is the best the valley has had. Wheat cutting is about half done and no damage of any kind so far. Mr. Shafto from Minnionas preached here last Sunday and Mr. Nixon went to Minnionas. I am glad you like your new field and you are as handy to Winnipeg. Of course, the Prairie will seem so different to you. I am acquainted with Mr. R. G. Henders of Cullross. If I am on that line this fall I might see you at the station. I think your card is well got up. I wish you and Mrs. Gregg every success in your new field and you must call on us when you visit your old home. Mrs. Cotton and family join with kind regards to you and Mrs. Gregg.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To F. C. PATERSON**

[PAM, CLB, V1. 727-R]

Harlington  
August 31, 1910

[F. C. Paterson was chairman of Manitoba Government Telephone Commission.]

Dear Sir,

Your letter under date of August 27th to hand, re telephone for Swan River Valley. I have already communicated with the Hon. Robert

Rogers regarding the telephone. There is no reason why this telephone [line] should not be under construction. The first applications were sent in about a year ago and together with what names have since been subscribed and canvassed for by Mr. Harris, is sufficient to start the line and as soon as the line is on the way the remaining settlers will subscribe. There will be more than the required number [of] subscribers to make the line pay and make it a success. As regards the exchanges there will be one at Swan River another at Kenville and if Benito and Durban agree on one let it be at either place. If not one at Kenville will handle the business. That part can soon be settled. As far as the roads are concerned there are good roads enough to start the line and the municipality is already taking steps to take over any diverted roads on account of telephone construction. We are aware of the difficulties of long distance constructions into our valley but rest satisfied that that difficulty will later be overcome.

What the Swan River people want is the line constructed as soon as possible. They are in urgent need of it. It is a public necessity that at the present time the people cannot get along without.

There will be no difficulties to construct the line. The people will agree as to exchanges. When the line is underway the number of subscribers will be more than is required to make the line a success.

The people want the government to build it. Therefore the government should begin the line at once. On behalf of the people of Swan River Valley we urge its construction.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To T. A. BURROWS**

[PAM, CLB, VI, 752-3]

Harlington  
November 24, 1910

[Sidney Fisher, M. P. for Brome (in Ontario), had been minister of agriculture in the Laurier government since 1896. As a young man he had studied agriculture. In 1910 there was agitation for the establishment of another experimental farm. However, no farm was established in the Swan River Valley, although a new one was set up at Scott, Saskatchewan. Frank Oliver had become minister of the interior on the resignation of Clifford Sifton in April 1905. Dr. William Saunders was director of the experimental farms.]

Dear Mr. Burrows,

The Hon. Sidney Fisher sent up the inspector to go over the different

## THE WHEAT KING

locations in the valley looking to see if there was a suitable site to start an experimental farm. It was unfortunate that I was away at the time and did not have the pleasure to meet him. But I believe the impression he received while here pleased him greatly. In fact, he stated he had never expected to see such a fine agricultural country in the West. The Winter wheat and clover he seemed to be elated over. And as far as I hear the chances are good for the Kenville district. He was greatly taken up with it. Now, Mr. Burrows I wish to thank you for the earnest manner in which you have taken up this experimental farm question on behalf of the people of [the] Swan River Valley. The chances are we may get it and we must thank you for the vigorous push you have given it our way. When you called by attention to it I wrote the Hon. Sidney Fisher, Hon. Frank Oliver, Dr. Saunders and Senator Watson and I think it has done good. I hope it will bear fruit. It will be a grand thing for our valley to get that farm.

Say, Mr. Burrows there is another question I wish to bring before you and that is the lumber question regarding our valley. I don't think it is possible for the government to keep the settlers off your limit at Woody River. I wish there could be some arrangements made between you and the government so you could relinquish a portion of that limit. I would like to hear from you regarding it. I had a great deal of correspondence with the government over that limit a number of years ago, not knowing at the time [that] it was your limit. I was wanting it for the settlers. (Jimmy Robson is feeling pretty bad I hear. He is about selling out and moving to Pelly) Now, Mr. Burrows the experimental farm is not located yet and we hope you will still keep it before Mr. Fisher that it should be in the valley.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To W. H. BREWSTER**

[PAM, CLR, VI, 775-6)

Harlington  
December 13, 1910

[Cotton became an enthusiastic photographer in middle age, and many of the photographs reprinted in this volume were taken by him.]

Dear Friend,

Your letter and your pictures of your thrashing outfit to hand safely. I was so pleased to get those pictures. When I think of the 13 years that you thrashed

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

for me without one word of complaint and always a first class satisfactory job. It is something I always look back upon and especially since I came to the Swan River Valley as here I have already had four different outfits to do my thrashing. Yes indeed Mrs. Cotton was pleased to see your outfit and her remembrance of the mannerly conduct of your thrashing gang each year while at our other place is something she always remembers. Tom Hogg that you had on your gang at one time was on the thrashing gang that thrashed me two years ago and he said he never forgot the first afternoon he thrashed at our place at Treherne. He said the next morning that he could hardly turn out of bed he was so stiff. He was on the bagger at that time and over a thousand bags of wheat went through that afternoon. When thrashing on our farm up here he said "Say Cotton how did you come to get a farm just like the one you had at Treherne." Well it do[es] look something alike. Your pictures look well and I will always prize them. I only wish we had a man of your experience in the valley as a thrasher. I see by the paper that Dave Ross is dead. He never had good health. Our boys are busy hauling wheat. They loaded one on December 9th, one on the 2nd and another on the 12th, yesterday. We have 6 cars to load altogether. We had over 24,000 bushels by machine measure and will overrun quite a lot. We have good sleighing. The pictures I took of the machine, the camera was not working good and I did not know it until I got to Stocton and was taking some pictures there. I have not developed any yet so I can't say if there will be any. If they should be alright I will send you one but I don't think they are. Charlie Banks is doing well. He has a nice place and fine buildings and all painted up and is running for Councillor this year. He is doing well. Will Woodward is doing well but not married yet. Him and his father are batching it together ever since they came up. They have a half section of pretty good land but rolling. Sam Henderson is quite well. He is still doing a little teaming for me, yet one side is not quite strong acted as a slight stroke on him. One hand and foot will get colder than the other quicker. He has a half section all clear, I mean paid for. Will Ford is well. He has been on the council for two years and now has dropped out and Charlie Banks is running in his place. Nelson is well and all the family. Mrs. Cotton is well. I have been very busy since I came home. We would be only too pleased to see you and Mrs. Brewster come up and see us and make a visit. I see in the paper that old Mr. Mark had died. I must now close. Mrs. Cotton and family join in sending you our kind regards and wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

## THE WHEAT KING

**To HENRY B. ROWED**

[PAM, CLB, VI, 910-11

Harlington  
February 20, 1911

[Henry B. Rowed was a farmer in Wasaca, Saskatchewan]

Dear Sir,

Your letter under date of February 11th to hand re winter wheat. I think you are making a very good start with fall wheat. Keep right on and you will come out allright. Sometimes nature steps in and plays an important part. I don't know the Kharzow variety. We find the "Turkey Red" does the best here. But there may be a difference in conditions as regards the lay of the district, as here we are sheltered and don't have the drift that you have farther west on the open prairies. Our snowfall lays even on the ground and forms a natural blanket as protection. But the success you have already had proves that you can grow it. Don't get discouraged if you have a bad year once in a while. A bushel to the acre is about right for our Turkey Red as it stooles greatly. Some sow a thin peck of barley to the acre with the wheat. It helps to protect it. In the fall and spring I have found that breaking, well disked up, does the best and gives better results and does not winter kill as badly. In sowing summer fallow that has been well worked up it seems to crack along each drill in the fall, providing the snowfall is not early enough before the heavy frosts come and lets the frost down to the roots. Although a year ago I seen fine crops and yields off summer fallows, but they were packed after sowing both ways with a packer, which I think is a great help. In our valley last fall we scarcely had a yield under 40 and as high as 60, mostly all lodged. Our land here is a scrub land, not a prairie land, and water not far below the surface. Fall wheat likes a dampness in the spring. It needs rain in the spring to help it. We have also sown up to first week in September with good results, better than in July. You might try some at different times and note the differences. As long as it has a good root in the fall it seems allright. I have noticed in early sowing that sometimes it got too rank and heavy. One fall I turned the 50 head of cattle on 45 acres and they could make no impression on it. It grew so fast, and part of this was summer fallow and part was new breaking, and the summer fallow killed out and the breaking proved a success. Keep on trying and experimenting and you will meet with success. If it is at all possible to grow it and climate fitting, clovers do well with us and all kinds of grasses. I would like to hear from

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

you after your next experiment. Wishing you all success.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To C. D. FISHER**

[PAM, CLB, VI, R21-2]

Harlington  
March 3, 1911

[C. D. Fisher was superintendant of the Canadian Northern Railway at Dauphin.]

Dear Mr. Fisher,

I sent you a wire yesterday re shortage of cars for Kenville. It is unfortunate this should be so, and so many empties laying on the siding at Swan River. On Monday there were only two cars left at Kenville and on Wednesday she only left one car loaded with flour. At the same time she only had four cars on her train, so there was no excuse for not bringing up some from Swan River. The fact is the branch train should [have] brought up at least 30 cars to the foot of the grade before coming into Kenville and cut, and brought in 20 and left [them] at Kenville. "This would only take an hour longer and have relieved the situation. I have called your attention at three different times as to quantity of grain to be shipped from Kenville and



The siding at Kenville "en fete."

## THE WHEAT KING

asking for a supply of cars. But it appears that the branch line train crew runs this branch as they see fit, and bring cars up when they feel like it, regardless of demand. I wish to call your attention to this. I am also displeased that this siding was not put into shape for loading last fall, as the last car we loaded we had to load from one of those low places west of the elevator where the ground is two feet lower than the top of the ties. It is very inconvenient to put the grain over the grain door from sleighs in such a position. In fact, almost impossible. This siding should be placed in shape for loading another season, as it is impossible for all cars to be loaded from a loading platform.

As regards the car situation here, I hope you will see that we get a supply. I cannot get my grain all shipped now before the snow goes and will have to hold some over until another season. We could have been shipped, only for shortage of cars. For the last two trips that train made there was no excuse, as the road was good and empties at Swan River. I hope you will see that Kenville is supplied.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

### **To JOHN DOUGALL & SON**

[YAM, CLB, V1, 831-2]

Harlington  
March 10, 1911

[John Dougall & Son published the *Daily Witness* as well as the *Weekly Witness and Pictorial* in Montreal]

Dear Sir,

I enclose one dollar and a half in stamps for receipt to the *Weekly Witness and Pictorial*. Send to the same address as I have pinned on this letter.

I have taken the *Witness* for near thirty years. The length of time proves its worth, and having lived in the West some 23 years I notice the *Witness* must have a large circulation in Western Canada and note with pride the fairness it treats the people as a whole on the public questions of the day. The farmers of the West may have ideas that are not in accord with the eastern farmer along some lines, but the West has been settled under difficulties and a sturdy lot of farmers have done the pioneering and overcome the hardships, and having surmounted the difficulties may be in a better position to advocate policies that would be beneficial to the Dominion as a whole. The manufacturers should fall into line

with the farmers of the West, as the West creates the demand, and only [ie., except] for the West the manufacturers would not prosper as they do now, as immigration increases as western Canada expands. The farmer is the backbone, and the demand which he creates for implements, that demand has to be supplied from some source: his implements, his horses, his provisions along certain lines, his clothing. In fact his wants in general come from eastern Canada, therefore whatever policy is brought forth to make him prosper, eastern Canada receives the benefit. Therefore they should cooperate and uphold a western policy. By so doing they will make a prosperous Canada.

Wishing your paper every success. The *Witness* should be in every home in the west. Its value is above dollars and cents.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To REVEREND DR. [J.S.] WOODSWORTH**

[PAM, CLB, VI, 877-80]

Harlington  
June 12, 1911

[J. S. Woodsworth at this time was superintendant of missions for the Methodist Church on the prairies. He would later become the leader of the CCF in Canada.]

My Dear Dr. Woodsworth,

The Conference year has again rolled around and I hope you have not forgotten Thunder Hill Mission. I have not had the pleasure of meeting you lately as you have not called on me lately. I would be so pleased to meet you again. You will see that the Board has changed the name from Thunder Hill to *Kenville*, with the ideal to having Kenville the head of the Circuit, as we want to build a church and parsonage there and we want you to send us a man that has some push and energy to do it. Now, Mr. Nixon has been here for three years and our circuit has not improved in any way and we do not want him back again. We want you to send us a good man, one that will visit the people and visit the sick and do good in the Circuit. I am telling you this and I don't want you to bring my name before Mr. Nixon that I have been writing to you, as this is private for yourself, but Mr. Nixon does not suit here at all. He will not visit the people, he will not pay attention to the sick, he does not take any interest in his work. The first year he was not too bad, and last year things went at a low ebb, and Kenville was losing ground. In fact, the whole Circuit has been losing since he came here. I have one son on

## THE WHEAT KING



Cotton and the Reverend W. J. Lobb turning the first sod  
for the Methodist Church at Kenville, 1912.

the board at Kenville. He does the collecting for that point, and I have another son at Harlington that is here, and he does the collecting for here, and if you send Nixon back, he will not get support here at all. We have paid him up this year, but this Circuit should be self-supporting and not a mission at all, and would [have] been if we had a good man by this time. Years ago when a man here had to walk around and we had no roads and six appointments to attend to, the people were looked after better than now. Mr. Nixon has two horses and a covered buggy and good roads as compared with years ago, and will not look after the people. Now, Doctor, I am an old pioneer in the west and understand the situation. I have always taken a deep interest in church work and have been the means of helping to lay out the different Circuits in the Swan River Valley as well as other improvements, and it gives me great pleasure to see improvements take place. But when the church goes back and does not improve with the country there is something wrong. Myself and family give the bulk of funds that is raised at this appointment and when things does not go right I speak out, and who should know how things are going but you? I feel greatly interested as my two sons are on the board and my two brothers-in-law as well, although one of the latter died a short while ago. As I said before, I would like to see a church and a parsonage erected at Kenville, and the minister reside there and made that the head as it should be, and work this Circuit for self-supporting, say after another year. I have a \$300.00 lot ready at Kenville for building a church and a parsonage, one that I will give free for that purpose.

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Now, Doctor, I wish you would look into this matter of sending us a good man, a man that you can trust and know he will work for the good of the Circuit and built it up. I can't stand and see the church go back. Nixon can preach a good sermon if he will, but will pull through everything the easy way, anyway to get over it or past it. It makes the people tired. That man will have to do some pioneering yet, and learn he will never do for a front Circuit.

Now, Doctor, I will leave this matter with you. Send us a good man, a man that will work and push things along. Visit the people, go in and out among them, get them out to church, visit the sick and act the square man all the time. If possible send us a man that has no family or not many, as the parsonage is small to accommodate a big family. Say, Doctor, call on me whenever you are up this way, as I would be pleased to see you. I will meet you at Swan River at any time, and take you back, and wish you success and a good time at the Conference. Now, Doctor, Mr. Nixon does not know I am writing you, but you should know how things are going up here.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To T. A. BURROWS**

[PAM, CLB, VI, 899-900]

Harlington  
August 7, 1911

[Glenn Campbell was a Conservative who had won the Dauphin seat in 1908, beating T. A. Burrows by 217 votes. Sifton had left the Liberal party over the Reciprocity issue, and was leading the campaign against it. Many farmers in the West favoured reciprocity, as it would place their products on a list with the produce of forests, mines, and fisheries which would benefit from abolished or reduced duties by the United States. Also, many farmers would gain from imported articles of manufacture from the States at reduced rates. The Conservatives fought the 1911 general election on a platform that opposed reciprocity, and Sifton was rumoured to be advising the Tory board of strategy.]

Dear Mr. Burrows,

Your letter under date of July 31st to hand re political matters. The election has come suddenly and this part of the country is not organized for a fact. There has been no one to look after matters and a lot of names off that should [have] been on. The chances are good for a good Liberal, if there had been organization, but the Grain Growers are strong. Mr. W. I. Ford and Charles Banks will attend the Grain Growers for Thunder Hill. They are Grain Growers. I do not expect to be down myself, but putting up a good farmer will take, and Glenn would be left this time. A good many Tory

## THE WHEAT KING

farmers here who are Grain Growers will vote for a good farmer, [one better] than Glenn Campbell. My opinion is the Laurier Government will be returned as strong if not more so than before, or I am greatly mistaken. But say, what is the matter with Sifton? I don't understand him at all. He certainly will make followers after him. He must know better, he who was the Lion of the West, he who was one of the last informed men on Reciprocity, the one whom the whole Canadian West looked forward to that would gain that boon for them, the idol of the farmers, whose election had been the center of attraction, who many looked forward to as the coming premier of Canada. I can't understand his attitude. I believe in independence of politics, but can't see how one can be a believer and an unbeliever at the almost same time. That does seem strange actions. I hope the Liberals will win here and put in a good man, and you may be up this way soon. If so, don't forget where I live.

Say, I just wrote about that Experimental Farm again a short time ago. Am still looking for it.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

### **To E. H. WALKER**

[PAM, CLB, VI, p. 902]

Harlington  
August 11, 1911

[E. H. Walker was inspector of schools for the northwestern region of Manitoba, based in Dauphin.]

Dear Mr. Walker,

Your letter under date of July 29th to hand re Miss McConnell. We are now in order for permit for her, as Miss Gordon has Thunder Hill School and Miss Singer has Corbett School. I am glad they have school near, as they are both fine girls and we like them. Only we thought those boys of Vopni's and James Fawcett's are about the size to know where they belong, and if either Miss Gordon or Miss Singer were here, being so well acquainted, they might make trouble. I think Miss McConnell will make a good stern teacher and keep them in their place. We may be overrating her, but hope for the best. Now we would like for you to get us a permit for Miss McConnell. Make it for a year and if we do not like her will change at Christmas. If she proves to be a good teacher would like to keep her for a year. Hoping this will prove satisfactory. Send permit to me and oblige,

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and when you are in Swan come up and see how she is getting along.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton



Harlington School.

**To WILLIAM WILLIAMS**

[PAM, CLB, VI, 923-8]

Harlington  
December 7, 1911

[Robert Cruise was a local farmer and Liberal who had taken the Dauphin seat from the Tories, bucking the national swing. He polled 748 votes more than the Tory incumbent. Nelson Cotton's son Clarence Almon, the first Cotton grandchild, was born in 1910.]

Dear Mr. Williams,

Your kind and welcome letter under date of November 14th to hand. I was pleased to get a letter from you and hear about Old Ontario again, and that you were still blessed with good health and enjoying yourselves. This has been a peculiar season all around throughout the land, as the unexpected always happened. It seems that Old Ontario in its southern portion, which has been settled so long, has its extra share of railways building. As you say, some farms are being very much cut up. The West seems to make a big stir in the East. I am glad to hear that John's health

## THE WHEAT KING

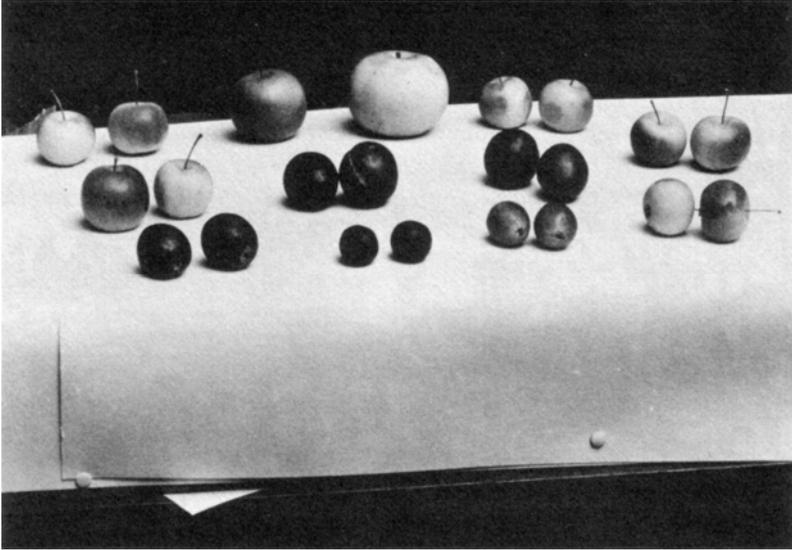
is good. I could not help but long to see Frank Sainsbury and his new bridge. I see by the census returns that Port Hope has grown a little and a few more than Cobourg, but Lindsay has gone back. I have received no word from the East since you wrote me last. There are quite a number of people from here going east to spend the winter. Our nearest neighbour, Mrs. Jackson, leaves on next Monday for Toronto and does not expect to return until perhaps the Harvest Excursion next year. Her husband's sister lives in [illegible] and was up here two years ago. She is called Mrs. Luxon. Her first husband was call[ed] Broad, who was Secretary-treasurer of the township of Clarke. So she will visit there for a while before she comes back. There are several going next Monday. You spoke about the crops up here. Well, that is about the situation. I will enclose a couple of reports that are pretty reliable and will give you the whole situation. We just finished thrashing on the 5th, but ours was all stacked. You see, we got all hailed out on June 30th, and what we thrashed came up the second time, but got froze as the frost came early. We had two farms hailed out: the Home Place (we had 263 acres of wheat, oats = 55, barley = 122 and we had 11 acres of feed oats, making 450 acres at Home) and on another farm I had rented the tenant had in crop wheat 230, barley = 90 and oats = 80 acres, making about 400 acres there on that farm. And I have it rented out on shares and each get half and I furnish all the seed and find half the binder cord, and the tenant pays all other expenses and I take my half of the grain from the machine. So I have lost that this year. I will have some barley and oats from that farm, and on the Home Farm I will have about 5,000 bushels of barley and oats that are a low grade that will make feed, but I will have to buy all my seed for the two farms for next spring. My son on another farm did not get hailed at all. He had about 6,000 bushels of wheat and 2,000 of oats and some barley. He came off pretty lucky. We just got enough out of it to pay expenses this year. It will mean a loss to me of about \$10,000, as I would [have] cleared that much if the crop came off alright, but we must give and take. And by being hailed early June 30 gave us lots of feed, as the barley came on not too bad, something over 35 bushels per acre but was touched with the frost and would only bring about 31¢ here. So we are very thankful for it might [have] been worse. Crops around here were excellent, some barley averaged 56 bushels and many farmers' wheat averaged some as high as 60. But we had a long wet harvest and late wet thrashing, and farmers scarcely got any stacking done on account of the wet, and could not thrash either, and now are still thrashing stooks. And we have a foot and a half of snow and we have had high winds and [on] one side of the stooks the snow has drifted near



Winter sleighing.

level with the top of them and thrashing is slow. The days are short. The sheaves have to be taken to shake off the snow. Since the snow came it has been cold and no thaw. If it was to thaw it would melt and make ice which would mix with the grain and buyers would not buy it. But it is surprising how the grain looks after it is thrashed. But the moving business is slow through the snow and machines and engines always breaking down. Ours was in stack and we always put 2 stacks to a place and we would thrash about 10 stacks a day and about 6 loads in a stack. We only thrashed about 500 bushels of wheat, as one corner of the farm where it was only partly hailed, and all the other wheat all grew again and headed, but did not get filled before the frost came, and we lost all our wheat. We did not plow down and stooked it and saved some of it for feed and burned the rest in the stook. And now you can see hundreds of acres still standing which will be burnt in the spring. This is only where it was hailed. The hail took a strip about two miles wide and came for about a hundred miles. It was a very severe storm. There was no glass left in its path, and the grain was all cut off level with the ground and came up again and headed out as high as if it had not been hailed. And no doubt if the frost had kept off for two weeks longer there would have been pretty fair crop of wheat. But the oats and barley were all cut and thrashed. We have about 300 acres of wheat ground that we plowed down and summer fallowed, and [it] is in good shape for crop next spring and we are blessed with all kinds of feed, as we saved about 10 stacks in the oats and lots of timothy hay as our hay was in

## THE WHEAT KING



The fruits of Cotton Farm.

another place and did not get failed. 10 years ago the first crop I had in the Swan River Valley was partly hailed on August 12th. The wheat was nearly ready for cutting and we thrashed 14 bushels per acre, and this year is the second time I have met with hail in 23 years. So we have nothing to complain about. Our boys are helping the neighbors to thrash now and will not get through until about 16 or 20 of this month. You know that - take the West as a whole - the plowing is not one quarter ready for wheat for another year, as the prospects are not any too good for another year. We have all kinds of sleighing at the present time and the farmers who was not hailed (of course a two mile strip only hit a few as compared with them all), they are busy hauling out their grain, some days 15 to 20 loads go by to Kenville to load on this road alone. The freeze up came the earliest I have ever known it this fall, and snow right after it. Makes it good for getting around. The election was a surprize all around. I did not take any active part in it, but we put our man in, Robert Cruise, a farmer and a good man. But I think it was about time for a change. Only I see that Laurier is alien yet and giving Borden all he wants. I have said so much about the crops and conditions that I have no room for politics in this letter. I am pleased your little girl is getting along well at Strasbourg and comes down and sees you often. You know my wife's sister married one of Henderson's

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

sons by his second wife. They lived near us and he took a growth in his head and died last April. I had him down to the hospital for 4 weeks last winter to Winnipeg and I stayed with him all the time and I was down for 3 weeks previous to that, making 7 weeks in Winnipeg last fall and winter, which had something to do with cutting out a trip to Ontario. I have nobody in Ontario now but you and Col. McLean and Josh and girl in Milbrook to go and see, but I must go down sometime and go to Newtonville to the cemetery and see about my dear grandfather's and grandmother's graves and Aunt Nora and get them fixed up, as there is no one to look after them now but me. We are all well and our health has been good. I have only one boy married yet, he has a fine wife. They have a little boy about 2 years old and are doing well. I have three boys home with me and our only girl and Mrs. Cotton's mother is living with us. She is over 80 years old and strong and healthy. My boys are a blessing to me. They are such good Christian boys. Our new minister is called Mr. Lobb. Him and I drove around a few days and got subscriptions for \$4,000 to build a church and parsonage at Kenville, and we have the parsonage enclosed and will build the church next summer. The parsonage will cost over \$2,000. We expect the minister to move into it about the middle of January. It will not be finished then, but enough to move in. Say, we pay a good price for apples up here. I bought 5 barrels the other day, 2 of spies, 1 Talmans Sweet, 1 Russell, 1 Peeks, and paid \$6.00 per barrel. There has [been] several car loads came in this fall. I must close. My kind regards to



The Methodist Church and Parsonage at Kenville.

## THE WHEAT KING

Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Cotton and all the family join in kind regards to you and your wife, and would be pleased to see you come up and see us at any time. I can't say at the present when I could come down. I want to go to Winnipeg for a while soon.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

To HUGH HARLEY

[PAM, CLB, VI, p. 942]

Harlington  
January 5, 1912

[The Conservative victory in the federal election of 1911 resulted in many Liberal appointees losing their patronage positions.]

Dear Mr. Harley.

The day I left Swan River for Winnipeg I met you at your office and said I had written Hon. Robert Rogers regarding the postmastership of Swan River. On my return I found the within letters awaiting me. I am pretty sure you will be retained and enclose a copy of the letter I wrote [to] Mr. Rogers. I also saw Mr. Bruce Walker while in Winnipeg and he said he could do something to help you retain the Immigration Agency. And I feel sure he will. I think you will be all O.K. for both offices against all causes. I know two of the postmasters are dismissed on the Glenboro branch already, at Treherne and Holland, and they are both good offices. If you hear anything more regarding Swan River let me know at once. Please return the enclosed letter and copy and oblige. I will call the next time I am in [Swan River]. [I] just came home on Friday night and out to Kenville on Saturday.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

**To W. D. STAPLES**

[PAM, CLB, VII, 43-44]

Harlington  
March 17, 1913

[W. D. Staples was Grain Commissioner at Fort William]

Dear Mr. Staples,

I am writing you calling your attention to this grading wheat "tough" at Winnipeg. I will not stand for it any longer. It is an abominable, rotten method, an insult to the farmer. One half of the grain from here is graded tough when it is not tough. My grain was all thrashed out of the stook dry. We were thrashing for a month steady and not had a drop of rain all that time. We did not have that snow storm that visited Winnipeg here. The weather was ideal for thrashing. Now we [illegible] up on this tough grading business. I have just written to George Serls, "acting chief", who is doing the dirty work and robbing the farmer right and left. Every time a car is graded tough down goes a hundred dollars in the grain men's pockets, robbed out of the farmer. This work has got to stop. I can't find cuss words enough to condemn this method of grading. Can't you do something to stop this business. The farmers are indignant. They say this treatment is the limit. They are condemning the government right and left. I have had four cars already graded tough and *they are not to tough*. Car after car is going out of Kenville tough, and a thrashing season all that could be desired. You have been in the West about as long as I have and know this is wrong and unjust and should be cut out. I wish you would write to George Serls "acting Chief Inspector" at Winnipeg and see what can be done. Bring the injustice of the whole thing before him. This is the worst I have ever seen.

I am writing to Ottawa to see what can be done. I wish you would write a straight letter to Serls of Winnipeg and let me hear from you. I was in Winnipeg and intended to call at your house while I was at Jack Mays' but you were not at home at that time. Wishing you every success.

I remain Yours Truly,

A. J. Cotton

# THE WHEAT KING

## COTTON GRAIN FIGURES, 1888-1920

[PAM, CAB]

[The following table was compiled by Cotton, showing dates of spring planting, harvesting, acres of grain planted, and yields, for the period 1888 to 1920.]

Table showing dates of spring work

Year	Began in Manitoba spring 1888	No. of Bushels thrashed each year			Average per acre					
		Acres Wheat	Bushels Wheat	Bushels Oats	Bushels Barley	Average Wheat	Average Bush Oats	Average Barley	Average Bush	
1888	None	None	25	356	None	"	10	"	16	"
1889	62	1,371	None	None	23	"	None	"	None	"
1890	120	2,566	320	None	21 1/3"	"	32	"	None	"
1891	140	3,920	1,100	510	28	"	55	"	51	"
1892	153	4,437	1,414	570	29	"	61 1/2"	"	57	"
1893	200	4,378	1,000	428	22	"	40	"	43	"
1894	280	8,400	2,140	460	30	"	61	"	38	"
1895	314	12,745	4,033	800	40	"	76	"	57	"
1896	320	4,536	2,930	542	14 1/4"	"	36 1/2"	"	43	"
1897	475	12,350	2,478	180	26	"	42	"	18	"
1898	515	16,026	7,788	585	31	"	59	"	45	"
1899	650	18,632	3,741	None	29	"	93	"	00	"
1900	730	6,205	2,800	"	8 1/2"	"	35	"	00	"
Part of the 1901 crop was raised in the Swan River Valley										
1901	764	17,954	654	719	23 1/2"	"	28	"	34	"
1902	175	4,550	5,063	495	26	"	61	"	45	"
1903	300	7,200	3,060	400	24	"	60	"	40	"
1904	261	3,915	5,655	560	15	"	65	"	40	"
1905	224	4,480	5,985	455	20	"	66 1/2"	"	35	"
1906	325	8,287	3,100	462	25 1/2"	"	61	"	33	"
1907	274	4,110	3,100	766	15	"	37	"	31	"
1908	200	2,000	7,452	255	10	"	36	"	17	"
1909	137	2,187	6,546	None	16	"	45	"	None	"
1910	238	6,873	5,829	1811	29	"	52	"	35	"
1911	263	531	1,328	2671	21	"	30	"	22	"
1912	514	5,579	1,475	2385	18	"	50	"	40	"
1913	392	10,540	6,624	8169	27	"	58	"	36	"
1914	309	5,387	5,975	5200	16 1/2"	"	40	"	18	"
1915	650	23,338	9,790	995	36	"	82	"	47	"
1916	547	9,325	7,642	2960	18	"	40	"	25	"
1917	431	9,820	12,425	4320	23	"	61	"	31	"
1918	302	4,492	5,300	2200	24	"	43	"	32	"
1919	260	4,250	6,200	2150	17	"	35	"	28	"
1920	284	6,200	7,200	2150	22	"	45	"	39	"

*Letters and Papers of A. J. Cotton*

harvesting, acres of grain and yield

Dates we began to sow each spring				Farming at Treherne, Manitoba on E. ½ 3.8.10 W. and Section 2.8.10 W.			
Began to Harrow	Began to Sow Wheat	Began to Sow Oats	Began to Sow Barley	Finished Sowing Wheat	Began Cutting Wheat	Finished Cutting Wheat	Froze Up
April 1	April 6	May 4	May 23	None 0	None 0	None 0	Nov. 14
March 22	March 25	None 0	None 0	April 11	Aug. 8	Aug. 17	Nov. 21
April 2	April 7	April 30	None 0	April 28	Aug. 20	Sept. 4	Nov. 5
April 6	April 15	May 19	May 23	May 12	Aug. 19	Sept. 10	Nov. 13
April 13	April 18	May 24	May 21	May 16	Aug. 24	Sept. 5	Nov. 12
May 1	May 2	May 24	May 31	May 29	Aug. 15	Aug. 30	Nov. 11
April 25	April 26	May 22	May 29	May 18	Aug. 6	Aug. 23	Nov. 15
April 1	April 8	April 29	May 10	April 24	Aug. 16	Aug. 31	Nov. 5
April 27	May 7	June 2	May 13	May 30	Aug. 22	Sept. 9	Nov. 1
April 12	April 19	May 15	May 20	May 11	Aug. 16	Aug. 30	Nov. 9
April 8	April 13	May 10	May 13	May 3	Aug. 13	Aug. 29	Nov. 7
April 12	April 24	May 25	None 0	May 19	Aug. 17	Sept. 1	Nov. 30
April 3	April 9	May 2	None 0	May 1	Aug. 6	Sept. 3	Nov. 10
and all after 1901							
April 1	April 8	May 16	June 21	May 16	Aug. 10	Aug. 19	Nov. 4
April 14	April 15	May 19	June 10	May 14	Aug. 25	Sept. 6	Nov. 9
April 15	April 20	May 15	May 22	May 9	Aug. 29	Sept. 11	Nov. 12
April 25	April 27	May 16	May 27	May 12	Aug. 25	Sept. 5	Nov. 22
April 3	April 5	May 1	May 18	April 27	Aug. 22	Sept. 5	Nov. 15
April 3	April 7	May 4	May 22	April 30	Aug. 16	Aug. 25	Nov. 14
May 1	May 15	June 5	June 15	June 4	Sept. 2	Sept. 25	Nov. 16
April 13	April 20	May 12	June 11	May 12	Aug. 15	Aug. 27	Oct. 30
May 8	May 11	May 24	None 0	May 22	Aug. 23	Sept. 1	Nov. 13
March 23	April 1	May 13	June 6	May 11	Aug. 17	Sept. 13	Nov. 2
April 17	April 22	May 24	June 3	May 18	Aug. 29	Aug. 30	Oct. 25
April 17	April 17	May 28	June 8	May 23			
April 13	April 17	May 19	June 4	May 19			
April 20	April 23	May 26	June 4	May 21	Aug. 8	Aug. 28	
April 7	April 20	May 3	May 7	May 3			
April 13	April 17	April 27	June 3	May 17	Aug. 18		
		May 3					
May 1	May 1	May 31	June 9	May 31		Sept. 10	
April 9	April 9	May 8	June 4	May 2			
April 19	April 19	May 19	June 2	May 17	Aug. 15	Aug. 15	
May 13	May 13	June 4	June 2	June 1			