THE INTRODUCTORY COURSE IN SOILS.¹

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The content of the laboratory work usually forming a part of the introductory course in soils as given in our agricultural colleges has quite appropriately been questioned. Incidentally the content of the entire course and methods of presentation have come in for discussion, but the nature of the laboratory work seems to be the bone of contention.

From the papers³ presented in the JOURNAL of the Society, there appear to be at least two schools of thought on the subject; first, those who would limit the laboratory work to operations which the student will be using, or at least which will be of direct value, in post-graduation activities, and second, those who would have the laboratory work include, in addition to the utilitarian exercises, those which may enlarge the student’s vision and stimulate his interest. These remarks apply to the so-called average 4-year student who has only an average interest in soils and not to one who is specializing in the subject.

An analysis of the possible values of the laboratory study of soils indicates at least six possibilities. They are:

1. To acquaint the student with materials.
2. To teach soil science.
3. To teach principles involved in soil investigations and in soil management.
4. To ascertain definite information concerning specific soils.
5. Formal discipline.
6. To arouse and stimulate interest in soil science.

The first group of possibilities resides first in those exercises in which one studies materials such as soil classes and fertilizing materials with the obvious aim of becoming familiar with them and,

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