THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOIL SURVEY WORK IN THE
UNITED STATES WITH A BRIEF REFERENCE TO
FOREIGN COUNTRIES.

GEORGE N. COFFEY,
Ohio Experiment Station, Wooster, Ohio.

There is probably no line of agricultural work which has had a
more rapid development and extension within the last decade than the
classifying and mapping of soils. The work is changing the atti-
tude of investigators toward many problems relating to the soil and
is forcing a recognition of the fact that soils possess an individuality
just as well as plants and animals. Soil investigators are beginning
to realize that a study of the differences, which are observable in the
field, and of the numerous agencies and processes to which these owe
their existence, is just as essential to a proper understanding of the
various properties and characteristics of the soil as are laboratory
investigations, and that conclusions drawn from careful field obser-
vations are as justly entitled to scientific recognition. For although
the laboratory may be the only place where conditions are under
control things act differently when this control is removed. An ap-
preciation of this fact is causing greater and greater interest in field
studies.

While the soil survey proper has developed in this country prac-
tically within the last 15 years much valuable work upon the soils had
been done previously and a brief review of some of the more im-
portant earlier publications in this as well as foreign countries should
be of considerable interest to all soil workers.

The first work upon the soils of this country was conducted prin-
cipally by geologists. As the soil is composed very largely of mineral
matter and has been formed by the breaking down of the rocks, it is
but natural that its study, owing to its great economic importance,
should have early attracted their attention. Nearly all of the earlier
and, in fact, many of the present geological surveys have devoted
much of their energies to its study.

1 This paper was practically all written more than four years ago as part of
a thesis for a degree of Master of Science at the George Washington Univer-
sity. The author had hoped to make it more complete and up to date but this
would now necessitate an entire rewriting. As several have expressed a desire
for its publication it is here submitted, hoping that it will prove of interest to
the members of the Society and stimulate someone else to a better presentation
of the subject.—Author. Received for publication Feb. 2, 1912.—Editor.