A THOROUGH TRAINING FOR SPECIALISTS IN AGRONOMY.

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One of the commonplaces of our day is the assertion that this is distinctly an age of specialization and while there is no denying the advantages which have accrued to human society from such extreme division of labor, it appears to me that we have been too prone, in the attempt to achieve it, to overlook some of the factors concerned in an adequate general training for men and women which bear a vital relation to their welfare.

This statement is as true when applied to our system of training for specialists in soil fertility work as it is in general, and I believe that we should give serious consideration to supplying a more enlightening and broadening training for our teachers and investigators before it is too late to stem the tide of progress which is tending in the opposite direction. To this end I beg to submit for the consideration of my colleagues some statements on the subject which appear pertinent and which are based on observation and actual trial in the college curriculum. I shall speak on the subject from two points of view, viz., first, the value to the soil specialist of a good general education and what it should include; second, the value of a many-sided study of the subject of soils to the specialist in soil fertility, in crop production or both.

As to the first point, it must be said that it is no mere theoretical claim to assert that a thorough grounding in fundamental subjects and in those allied to a student’s proposed specialty are of distinct assistance to him. We have many examples among our colleagues in which clear thinking and the ability to correlate the results of several allied branches of investigation as well as the power to give them adequate expression in spoken or written language are the result of keenness of perception, deep insight, and a mastery of language which are inculcated by systematic and comprehensive training. Many of our present-day specialists have expressed themselves as being hampered in solving the broader problems which confront them by a lack of a more comprehensive training than is provided for in our modern methods of higher education. They feel, moreover, a deficiency in their training in the use of language which makes it difficult for them to report the results of their investigations or to deliver lectures in a clear, concise and interesting manner. In addi-