How can our field methods be improved?

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To the question so frequently asked by farmers of soil survey field men—"What are you doing?"—it has been my custom to answer, "The work of the Soil Survey is primarily to prepare a map showing where different soils are located." Any improvement in methods must result in an improvement in the soil map and also in the report that goes with it. Since the subject of classification, and, to some extent, that of mapping has already been discussed in the report of another committee, the present report will be confined very largely to what might be called the mechanical side of the soil survey work.

In a consideration of means for the improvement of field methods, two subjects are of prime importance,—first, the field man; and second, his job.

The field man.

The quality of field work depends almost entirely on the kind of man who is doing the work, both as to his natural ability, and also as to his training or experience. A man's value as a field man increases rapidly with increased experience. The great demand for men in various lines of agricultural work during the last few years has resulted in many experienced soil survey men taking up other work. Nearly all Soil Survey organizations have had to face a shortage of field men, with a limited number of new men available to take up the work.

Ten years ago, an agricultural college graduate had about three or four possibilities as to the line of work to follow: first of all, he could return to the farm; then there were positions open in our agricultural colleges and experiment stations in teaching or research work; in addition, there were a few commercial positions. Under these conditions, there were always a few good men available for soil survey work.

Today the situation is radically different. There are numerous commercial positions open for agricultural college graduates. County agent work has been established, and its