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THE NEW SOIL SCIENCE

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Soil science or pedology, as it is now coming to be called, is not new. It is centuries old, as may be readily deduced from an examination of many old books and records. Recently, however, the study of soils has taken on a different aspect and we now have a new concept of soil science. It is this modern, rather recent development of the subject which is referred to as "the new soil science."

As is the case with many of our present-day sciences, the beginnings of soil science lie buried in the dim mists of antiquity. Just when and where it might be said to have originated can not be determined. Perhaps the first observations were made in the Garden of Eden. The writings of Moses indicate that agriculture is as old as man. Isaac and Jacob certainly knew how to grow good crops and they probably gathered many facts about soils. Observations on soils certainly have been made from the time man began to learn the art of using them for the production of crops.

According to Herbert Spencer, use is the underlying cause of the development of all science. In the early stages, the practical phases always receive the most attention, because of the struggle by man toward the utilization of nature. This has been particularly true, and naturally so, in the case of the various agricultural sciences.

But there is another force which is perhaps even more powerful than use in bringing about the evolution of sciences. It is the "unconscious struggle of our natures for the acquisition of abstract knowledge or for the discovery of the laws of phenomena." In any branch of science, this force soon becomes the more significant, and the present status of knowledge...