FORTY YEARS OF HELPING THE FARMER WITH KNOWLEDGE¹

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In 1900 the United States Department of Agriculture, state experiment stations, state agricultural colleges and secondary agricultural schools expended about two and a half million dollars, in 1940 more than a hundred and ten million dollars; this last includes the cost of vocational agriculture in high schools. In 1900 many of the colleges were still accepting students with little or no high-school training. Such subjects as mathematics, chemistry, physics and English were taught in courses about equivalent to those taught in high schools, and a considerable percentage of students enrolled in agricultural colleges were taking these courses to prepare for admission to other colleges. The teachers in agricultural subjects seemed to be exceptionally earnest and had developed forcefulness by their contact with robustly critical audiences at farmers’ meetings. What most of them taught, excepting teachers in soil science, animal nutrition and entomology, was the result of reasoning from inadequate knowledge of plant and animal processes, experience of exceptional farmers who wrote for farm journals or talked in farmers’ meetings and data from rather poor field trials that were beginning to be published.

Soon after 1900 new men were taken on rather
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