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A HALF-CENTURY OF ACHIEVEMENT BY THE ILLINOIS AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION¹

By the late Dr. H. W. MUMFORD

DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND DIRECTOR OF THE AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

THE responsibility for evaluating the work of the Illinois Agricultural Experiment Station for the period of half a century is a task from which any thoughtful person might well shrink, not because it is an unpleasant duty, but because adequate treatment of the subject is obviously impossible. The findings of the station over this period have been reported in painstaking detail in some thousands of printed pages. The human record is found in changed practices on the farms of the state and in a higher level of living than would otherwise have been possible. All I can do is to choose examples that will illustrate something of the underlying objectives and policies of the station and that will be suggestive of the scope and significance of its work.

¹ Abstract of address at the fiftieth anniversary of the Illinois Agricultural Experiment Station, March 25, 1938. Dr. Mumford died on May 14.

Starting with the establishment of the Morrow plots in 1876 and the initiation of the Soil Survey in 1902, the station, through an unbroken program of research, has accumulated a wealth of knowledge concerning the soils of Illinois, on the basis of which land-use programs can be intelligently planned and the land resources conserved as a continuing source of wealth.

The oldest experimental plots of their kind in the United States, the Morrow plots have stood as incontrovertible evidence of the tragedy of faulty soil management and the promise that is held out to the future in intelligent soil management. From 44 bushels of corn an acre in the early years of these plots, good methods of soil management have advanced yields to 66 bushels. On adjacent land, depleted by continuous cropping to corn year after year, the yields are now only 24 bushels, and they are still declining.

But after all the Morrow plots cover less than an

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