

The College Question

By H. L. Blanchard

[This contributor is a successful farmer, and has a son in the Agricultural College.]

Editor the Ranch: In order that a fair estimate may be placed upon the statements of a writer, something must be known of his antecedents, where he lives, his occupation, etc., for which reason one would be at a disadvantage in attempting an answer to the article upon the Washington Agricultural College by "The Hayseed," appearing in The Ranch of October 17. However, my experience and observation as a farmer citizen of our state, as well as, for several years, patron of said college, and also in justice to the large farmer patronage of said college and all interested therein, I feel prompted to give an expression of my views with reference thereto, which has been induced by the appearance of said article.

It being a public institution, in order that a criticism or review of its administration be impartial, fair and just, it becomes very necessary that the origin and purposes of the college be fully understood and kept in mind. The article in question would lead one to infer that in so far as the college gave instruction in matters other than such as pertain to agriculture, it just that far became a trespasser upon the privileges and prerogatives of the State university, and that its legitimate purpose were in great danger of being defeated by an alleged over-ambitious desire on the part of its administration to build up a classical institution, or as is said, "a second university." The Washington Agricultural College and School of Science was founded by an act of our state legislature, approved March 28, 1890. This step was in keeping with what had been, and was then being done, by the legislatures of a large number of the agricultural states of the Union.

Evidently, one of the leading incentives to the founding of these colleges was to provide an attractive and popular place where the sons and daughters of the farmers of the land and all interested in agricultural pursuits could receive a liberal and practical education, as contra-distinguished from a purely classical education. The following quotation from the law applies, viz.:

"The course of instruction of said college shall embrace the English language, literature, mathematics, philosophy, civil and mechanical engineering, chemistry, animal and vegetable anatomy, and physical and veterinary art, entomology, geology, political economy, rural and household economy, horticulture, moral philosophy, history, mechanics, and such other courses of instruction as shall be prescribed by the Board of Regents," and the law also provides that other classical and scientific studies shall not be excluded. The law further provides that one of the objects of said college shall be to train teachers of physical science and to collect information as to schemes of technical instruction adapted to other parts of the United States and in foreign countries, and to hold farmers' institutes at such times and places and under such regulations as the Board of Regents may determine.

This brief reference to the law supplies, to the writer's mind, evidence sufficient to clearly show the intentions of the founders of our agricultural college. Further on, the law provides that "a department of said col-

lege shall be known as the Department of Agriculture." From the foregoing it would appear that the legislature did not intend to narrow the course of instruction to a single department—that of agriculture alone—as before stated, it was the evident intention to provide for a liberal and practical education, having chiefly in view the training of the mental faculties of our youth into a broad and healthy development. To prepare the youth for his life work, for as a rule, in proportion as such training is made both liberal and practical will the student, as well as the state, be both benefited and enriched. The chief aim of the various institutions of learning is to wisely plan the courses of instruction with a view to the disciplinary effect. Each method has its advocates. In our state we have the State university offering its classical instruction, and the State Agricultural College offering a liberal and practical instruction to which may be added the classical, as the law provides. In consideration of the support given, the state demands, that the institution of learning turn out broad-minded and intelligent men and women—useful citizens. The methods that shall prove to be the most successful will become the most popular.

From our knowledge of the agricultural college, we believe that in its methods of instruction that institution is keeping within the law. That while instruction in the classics is being given, the department of agriculture is receiving first consideration in so far as the circumstances will admit.

The fact that only one out of every four or five students of the college are now selecting agriculture for their major study does not argue that that department is not receiving due attention. The fact, however, that the number of students entering the department of agriculture during the last five years has increased from five to fifty-four argues that the department, as the instruction given therein becomes the better understood, is growing in popular favor, and at the present ratio of increase it is destined in a very few years, to become, numerically, the strongest feature of the college. The college authorities are not expected to compel students to take up any particular line of work. They are there to advise and to do the work demanded of them, and we think that its history speaks most creditably of the ability and sagacity of the instructors of said department, as well as of the general administration of the college.

Now, referring to the statements in said article reflecting upon the conducting of the experiment farm at Pullman, as also the farmers' institutes, we would say that they are not confirmed by our limited knowledge and observation, and allowing all to be true, under the existing conditions, they do not argue that there is any serious wrong going on. We must not lose sight of the fact that in a comparatively few years much has been accomplished and that, too, under many obstacles. A 200-acre college farm in its raw state cannot all be converted into an experimental plot in the short space of five years, nor even ten years, with the available help at the college—nor is it necessary that it should be—and, granted, that the law is silent on the subject, we cannot see the wrong in growing the ordinary farm crops upon the land not at present required for experimental purposes, and using the proceeds from the sales of such crops in the payment of the legitimate college expenses.

In regard to what is said of the farm-



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