OPPORTUNITIES OF SHORT COURSE STUDENTS AS FARM MANAGERS.

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Members of the Wisconsin Experiment Association, friends and fellow students: It affords me much pleasure on this occasion, to bring before you this subject. "Opportunities for Short Course students as farm managers." This is a subject that has taken but very little space in the agricultural press in the way of discussion, but we will no doubt see and hear more about it in the future. The very rapid, increasing interest that men of capital are taking, in our agricultural lands at the present time, and for many other reasons too numerous to mention here, have made farm managing a profession which has a very promising future before it, especially for the young man who has had training in our agricultural colleges. In the last decade agriculture has made a most wonderful stride in this country; farming is not carried on as it used to be; competition has forced upon the American farmer many improved methods, which are mostly based upon scientific principles. This with many other improvements has opened a large field for the man who has had training along this line. Never was there a time in the history of America, when there was such a demand for good agricultural land. Never was there a time when so many men of wealth were putting money into farms, as there are at the present time. Nor was there ever a time when farm managers were in such great demand as to-day. We see men from almost every industry in the world turning their attention to farming. And a great many of them have millions to back them. As a rule such men know but very little about the details of the farm. Their time has been spent far from the farm, and their lives have been buried in other business. Such men depend almost entirely upon our agricultural colleges for men to manage their farms. This is one reason why our colleges of agriculture receive so many more calls for men than can be supplied. I don’t know of any profession to-day that affords its seekers better opportunities than farm managing, neither is there any, where the supply is so far below the de-
mand as in this vocation. During each year the Wisconsin college receives calls from almost every state in the Union for Short Course men to take charge of farms. If Prof. Moore should receive a call to-day for a dozen book-keepers or clerks, he could easily find them. Or if the call should be for lawyers or engineers, he could send them by the score, but if the call should be for farm managers, he would be puzzled to know where to get them. As the great American wheel of agriculture keeps rolling around, the demand still increases, so I say to the young man who is able to fill this position when he finishes school, that he has a very inviting future before him. We often hear the remark made by people that know but very little about the value of an agricultural education, “Don’t go to Madison and take that Short Course, people won’t be willing to pay you for what you know.” Well now, when it comes to dollars and cents, the man that thoroughly understands farming with all its details, and is able to apply his knowledge will realize about as much out of it as any of them. Now, you young men, when you go to hire out on a farm you expect a certain sum and your board. We married men, hiring out as farm managers, don’t expect to board with our employer, but we do expect such perquisites as a horse, fuel, rent and many other little things which add a great deal to our salary at the end of the year. For instance, we will take the young man seeking employment in other lines of work. I mean men who have fitted themselves for a certain profession which compels them to live in the city. Most of them live in rented houses, buy their fuel and almost everything they live on. We will say a fair average of their wages would be $50 per month. Now say he pays $150 a year for rent, $60 for fuel, $50 for milk, butter and cream, and $40 for potatoes, eggs and poultry, which makes $300 per year. This is half of his year’s wages. Then he buys his family’s clothes and pays the grocery and meat bills, also his incidental expenses, and what has he left at the end of the year? On the other hand, the farm managers’ wages run from $45 to $75 per month. His house, fuel, milk, butter, cream and eggs are furnished free of charge. Allowing him just the same for his family’s clothing, for certainly he has a right to just as good clothes if he does live on a farm, also the same for groceries and other expenses. These I stated cost the
city man $300 which you can see at once, the farm manager would have to put out at interest. I visited a farm not long ago, owned by a very wealthy man, and was told that when completed with buildings and stock ready for business it will have cost the owner $300,000. I understand this man will give any one $2,500 a year, who will take charge of that farm and make a success of it. A man of capital, who has two large farms now in operation, told me not long ago that he would buy another one worth $40,000, if he could get a competent man to take charge of it. But it seems to be the problem to secure good, responsible men as farm managers. I think it needs no argument on my part to convince you, that there is a very bright future before the young man who fits himself for this work. I know a Short Course student who finished in 1902, who now has a position in this state, and when all his bills are paid, including his family’s living which consists of himself, wife and three children, he has $75 in cash at the end of each month. This is $900 a year and his family’s board. To equal this in the city you would have to get over $100 per month. Without an agricultural education this young man would have been working for common wages. We believe that American agriculture is just entering the most wonderful era of its history. One thing is sure, if you come here to Madison, with the right motives in view and do your best, when the two years’ work is finished you will leave, feeling amply repaid for what it has cost you. Then if you possess certain other qualifications that you can’t obtain in school, you can step out into this busy world and make a success of the most noble profession that confronts the young man of to-day. The opportunities for Short Course students as farm managers are most wonderful, although just in their infancy. We believe ten years hence will find the demand double what it is now for such men. First prove to the world that you are master of your profession and no one will hesitate to pay you the price for your time.