

# George Nieman Lauman

*February 15, 1874 — November 1, 1944*

George Nieman Lauman, Professor of Rural Economy, Emeritus, departed this life November 1, 1944, from his home in Ithaca, New York, at the age of seventy years. He had retired from active duties in 1942, after having served on the faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences for thirty years and on the faculties of the College of Agriculture and of Cornell University for forty-three years. While memory of him is still green, it is only fitting that his colleagues should pause to consider him and his work.

G. N. Lauman was born in Pittsburgh (Allegheny), Pennsylvania, on February 15, 1874. Following graduation from high school, he worked for two years in an architect's office and then came to Ithaca where he prepared at the Cascadilla School for entrance to Cornell. In the University he elected to take an agricultural course because of the opportunity that it offered for obtaining an education in the sciences; he was graduated in 1897 with the degree of B.S.A.

Having shown a predilection for horticulture, he became an assistant in that work, and in 1899 an instructor. In 1902, his duties were broadened to include agriculture as well as horticulture. These interests bore literary fruit in the form of collaborations with and other assistance given to Dean Liberty Hyde Bailey in the preparation of the *Cyclopedia of American Agriculture*, and the *Cyclopedia of American Horticulture*.

The young teacher, however, became increasingly interested in the economic and social problems of agriculture then only beginning to be studied. In the school year 1899-1900, he gave the first course in the history of agriculture offered in this country. Two years later, he taught the economics of agriculture. In 1903 came official recognition of the new field and this pioneer worker was made an instructor in rural economy. That year farm accounting was added to his offering of courses. In 1904-1905, he broke new ground again by teaching one of the early courses in rural sociology.

Promotion to Assistant Professor of Rural Economy came in 1905, and to Professor in 1909. He served as head of the Department of Rural Economy from its inception until that unit was combined with the Department of Farm Management. He became a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. In 1913, he was an official delegate from New York on The American Commission on Agricultural Cooperation and Rural Credit in Europe. Service on this commission required travel abroad, and visits to many institutions, duties that doubtless appealed to Professor Lauman, for he had already been in Europe, and was to go again after the conclusion of

the work. From 1903 to 1910, while advancing in the field of his permanent interest, Professor Lauman served as Secretary to the Faculty of the College of Agriculture.

Although Professor Lauman gave attention to the subdivisions of Rural Economy in which he taught classes, his chief interest was the history of agriculture. On that subject he gathered extensive materials for study, from European as well as from American sources, and became a recognized authority.

In Professor Lauman's thinking, a catholicity of outlook was deepened by the long perspective of the past. Accuracy was ever his watchword as he worked out the intricate patterns of rural economic problems past and present. And to be accurate, in his opinion, meant not only that the surrounding circumstances of an event or issue must be studied, but also their past must be known and evaluated. This is not the easy pathway to scholarship, but Professor Lauman travelled it with singular steadiness of purpose. He read extensively from a wide range of sources. He attended many university lectures including the lectures in a considerable number of courses. His emphasis was always on what he regarded as matters of importance to the scholar. Things that he regarded as of temporary significance attracted him not at all, whatever reward in popular or even professional recognition might attach to their pursuit, and interested him only as material for observation, recent additions to the great store of history, to be classified and ticketed for comparison with others from years long past. He was not to be turned from the course that he had laid out.

We cannot take leave of this sturdy individualist, who lived his own life and no other, without recalling him as he walked among us. In Professor Lauman, gentleness and humor were blended with understanding. He was in personal relations the soul of courtesy, consideration, and honor. Regret that he has gone is sweetened by the memory of him.