

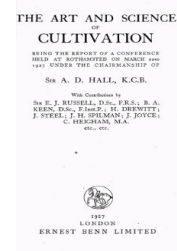
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The Art and Science of Cultivation

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Preface

Sir E. J. Russell

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PREFACE

THE purpose of the conference on cultivation was to bring together farmers, implement-makers, tractor-makers and scientific workers to hear an account of the practice of spring cultivation in different parts of the country. The papers were read by farmers who are themselves skilled cultivators, and the subsequent questions and discussions helped to bring out the facts and to clear up uncertain points. Cultivation is the most ancient of the farmer's arts, and it has received less aid from science (apart from engineering) than any of them. The purpose of the Soil Physics Department, under Dr B. A. Keen, is to obtain exact knowledge of what cultivation does to the soil and so to change the old art into a science. Eighty years ago chemists changed the art of manuring into a science and produced artificial fertilizers; the gain to agriculture was enormous. Whether physicists can do as much for cultivation remains to be seen. But the whole history of the last one hundred years shows that progress is rapid once science is really applied to any human activity: it will be surprising if science is unable to help the cultivator. The first step is to get at the facts, and here our farmer friends can help us; the rest is to try to explain these facts and so to discover the underlying principles, and here our farmer friends must have patience. Until the scientific worker knows his problem he cannot solve it; once a process can be explained some ingenious inventor finds an easier way of doing it.

E. J. R.

October 1927.