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Book Notices

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A book certain to be much talked about is a small one on the subject of cultivation. The fly-leaf blurb hails it as the greatest advance of the century in scientific agriculture. Since its subject matter is not new, the exaggeration is obvious. The author does not make any such claim himself, fortunately, yet he boldly sets forth his inferences and conclusions from few or no experimental field data. He further attempts to bolster this stand by a cryptic remark about a certain noted botanist being the only scientist who could comprehend and properly appreciate his point of view. The subject matter, briefly, is concerned with using a disc harrow in place of a mold board plow. As a small book dealing seemingly with a topic of importance to food production it is most timely. But problems such as types of soil best managed by discing or plowing or costs of preparation or the results desired are somewhat lost in speculative discussions on water content of soils, mineral supplies in soils and other alleged benefits. As the crop from which the phenomenal yields are reported is the sweet potato, in which, as I understand it, the individual plants are set into place after they are four or more inches in length, any discussion of the amount of litter left on the soil after cultivation becomes somewhat academic. This book also states that the reason less organic matter accumulates as humus in forests than in prairies is because prairies are composed of annual plants. The author does not draw any further inferences from this remarkable statement.—A. E. Waller.