

There few of the people who wantonly trample the fertile worm under foot, or turn aside from it with loathing, have any conception of the wonderful part it plays in the scheme of Nature, and it has been reserved for that distinguished naturalist and profound student, Dr. Darwin, to open the eyes of his fellow-men to the poor worm's real significance. Darwin has done more for science than any man living, but his astounding views and doctrines concerning the "Descent of man" and "natural selection," have undoubtedly created a pretty widespread prejudice against him among many people. The present volume should go far to remove this impression. It does not contain a word or a line calculated to shock any of our preconceived ideas, for the simple reason that the great majority of people had no preconceived ideas on the subject of worms, farther than that they were creatures to be avoided—provided by providence for the express purpose of supplying bait for the angler's prey, and holding no other useful destiny whatever. Such an impression—the unavoidable result of complete ignorance—the volume now before us will very much modify, if it does not completely overthrow. Here the author shows us how the worm, constantly sheathing earth and bringing it to the surface where it is cast, forms that soft rich mould which usually goes by the name of "vegetable mould," and in a comparatively short space of time throws a completely new surface over our fields and meadows to the depth of several inches. He shows how the worm, by covering up objects dropped or laid on the ground, keeps them faithfully preserved until such time as they shall be turned up by the ploughshare or the spade. He also proves that the worm is a true friend to the archaeologist, carefully preserving for him under a thick deposit of mould the ruins of bygone ages. But perhaps the most interesting chapters of the book are

those devoted to the structure, habits, and habits of the little reptile. The worm, it seems, is perfectly deaf, and almost as blind, his being merely enabled to distinguish light from darkness, and it is only through his acute sense of feeling—so strongly developed in all blind and deaf creatures—that he is enabled to perform the duties for which he was created. The poor worm has literally to feel his way through the world. It may seem strange at first to read of the "intelligence" and "mental qualities" of the reptile—so very far down in the scale of creation are they—but there is no reason to suppose that the Creator would place on such any animal, however humble, and give it a mission to fulfil, without at the same time providing it with a certain proportion of mind. On the other hand, the author does not credit the worm with the possession of any acute feelings, and it must be some consolation to those whose consciences have pricked them for trampling on one of these objects, to be told that their sufferings are not really so great as their writings would lead one to believe. But the subject is too great for us to treat in any methodical form in the limited space at our disposal. The best we can do is to recommend our readers to procure Dr. Darwin's book, and read it carefully for themselves. None who have any admiration for the wonders of nature, and reverence for the marvellous means our Maker takes to fulfil His great design, can rise from a perusal of this volume unimpressed with the truth that however poor, mean, and insignificant even a worm may be, he is not placed in this world without having some work to do in carrying out the Divine purpose.

Notwithstanding Dr. Darwin's advanced years and the enormous amount of labour he has gone through, his latest work is as fresh and vigorous in style as any of his writings, and will, we feel sure, find its way into every corner of the globe where thinking men and women are to be found.

ment, which grew contained within itself all the flesh, in miniature, which was afterwards to be developed.

We have seen that some of the ancient Greek philosophers maintained that organized be-