

## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

INSECTIVOROUS PLANTS. By CHARLES DARWIN, M. A., F. R. S. New York: D. Appleton & Co.

In every department of literary enterprise the Messrs Appleton have long taken high rank, but for nothing is the public more deeply indebted to them than for the promptness and thoroughness with which the latest scientific developments and the best thoughts of leading scientific minds are given currency. "Insectivorous Plants," by one of the closest observers and keenest reasoners that the whole galaxy of science contains, is a work which will claim the attention of cultured readers at once wherever the English language prevails. It advances far into a new field of research and presents the conclusions of a patient but brilliant investigator who has spent years of laborious study in working up his observations for the benefit of the general public. Yet among naturalists even this branch of the subject is so recent that it was not until 1860 that Dr Darwin knew from personal observation that insects were caught in large numbers by the common sun-dew. Since then he has pushed his investigations with wonderful effect, and the tales he tells of the strange power of the plants he has studied read as though a little magic had been interwoven. He explains to us the anatomy and aggressive characteristics of this peculiar class of vegetation, and we learn that a large number of plants are but slightly rooted in the ground and draw little nourishment therefrom, but catch their food from the luckless floating population of the air that comes in contact with their discs and feelers, and is hopelessly caught in their relentless toils. They have not merely the organism to capture their prey, but powers of digestion as well, and some of them are vegetable gluttons, gorging themselves with the delicacies of the season with almost human intemperance until at last they become sick, the coveted morsels disgust their taste, and their digestive apparatus has to wait for time, the great healer, to bring them back to soundness and to health. The tentacles upon which animal food acts in these plants never make mistakes. Their sensitiveness is not apparent when inorganic substances touch them; but let that which can be healthily absorbed touch their surface and action begins at once. The Venus Fly Trap is one of the varieties mentioned by Dr Darwin as most common. In this interesting work it may seem as if the author had exhausted the subject, and yet he claims to have no more than opened it. At all events, his statements read like a fresh revelation of Nature, and they will enlist the engrossed attention of all who welcome new knowledge in natural science. The work is profusely and excellently illustrated, the drawings being by George and Francis Darwin, sons of the author, and themselves scientists of no mean repute.