

THE VALUE OF WORMS.

DR DARWIN'S new book is fitted to surprise as well as to charm most readers. Its title is 'The formation of vegetable mould through the action of worms.' Most people despise worms. Some shudder at the sight of them. The florist wages a constant war against them as a garden pest, and the farmer rejoices to see the trains of crows that settles in the new-turned furrow, and tear them from the loosened soil. Universally they are regarded as the most ignoble of all God's creatures. Dr Darwin furnishes in his new book a new view of the character and function of the worm, which falls as a rebuke upon the arrogance and ignorance of man. The worm is here revealed as nature's ploughman. He is an indefatigable toiler, doing at once more effective surface work and cutting far deeper than the strongest and heaviest subsoil plough or the finest harrow can accomplish. If they only knew it, he is the farmer's and the gardener's best friend. His number, fortunately is legion, and is always most formidable where the soil is richest and is best tilled. Dr Darwin believes that the number of worms who are at work in an acre of well-tilled garden ground exceeds 50,000. In corn fields the number is not supposed to be more than 25,000 an acre. In pasture lands there appears reason to believe that the number of worms is much larger than in wheat fields. It is probably one reason why land-lying fallow is enriched that these hordes of unobstructive fertilisers of the soil are left uninterrupted at their work.