

Mr Charles Darwin is probably the first naturalist in Europe. I cannot help according him this meed of praise, though hostile to that remarkable theory of the evolution of man, which was, and ever will be, eternally associated with his name. There is one feature in Mr Darwin's character especially essential to a naturalist, and which he possesses in a pre-eminent degree. I mean the quality of patient observation. Nothing is more remarkable in all his works than this—every little fact is examined and turned to account; not a movement or habit of men or animals but is closely watched, and traced to its supposed origin. Just lately has been published his lifelong researches on the insignificant and grovelling earth-worm, and, astonishing as it may seem, he shows clearly enough that probably no creature on God's earth has exercised so great, or at any rate a greater, influence in bringing about the present condition of things on the earth's surface than this—one of the lowest beings in the scale of life. Mr Darwin shows that over every acre of ground more or less—at least 10 tons of mould are turned up to the surface from a depth of at least six or eight feet. The soil is absorbed by the worm in order to extract its organic nutriment, and having passed through the intestines is voided in the minute coils of mould so well known to all. In this manner the soil is ploughed and re-ploughed year after year, and thus ancient monuments, pavements, coins, &c., are covered and undermined in the course of ages. Thus the fine villa of Brading, in the Isle of Wight, to which some time ago I drew your readers' attention was covered with three or four feet of this excreted mould, the floor having gradually sunk as the worms burrowed and threw up their excretions! Even one of the mighty flocks at Stonehenge has sunk considerably through this agency. As regards the functions of nature, the worms are but poorly provided. Mr Darwin thinks they cannot see, hear, or smell—the first, perhaps, slightly—but the sense of touch is, as is well known, highly developed; and it is probably by this means that they become sensible to the approach of man through the tremulous motion of the earth. These

few remarks will show your readers that written as it is in lucid and scholarly style, such a treatise cannot fail to be highly interesting and, like all his other works, will probably be translated into every European language. I should add that the learned author is now in his 73rd year, but seems as mentally and physically active as ever.