

RECORD: Anon. 1882. [Review of] The formation of vegetable mould through the action of worms. *The Daily Record-Union* (Sacramento) (1 July), p. 4.

REVISION HISTORY: Transcribed by Christine Chua and edited by John van Wyhe 2.2020. RN1.

NOTE: See F1357

[page] 1

This is Mr. Darwin's last contribution to science, and it is not less interesting than the volumes which have preceded it. Certainly the world has until now had very little idea of the importance of the part played by the humble earthworm in mundane affairs. Yet Mr. Darwin has ascertained from personal observation that these little unobtrusive creatures are among the most active agents in producing changes in the earth's surface. By their burrowings they gradually change the entire surface of fields. They accelerate the erosion of hillsides by loosening and exposing the soil. They cause stones and rocks, and even ruins, to sink gradually into the earth, by undermining them first, and then by covering them up. They even triturate stones and pebbles, by passing them through their intestinal canals, and they prepare the soil for the growth of plants. It has been calculated that there are on an average 53.707 worms to an acre of land. This would give a weight of 356 pounds in worms. Mr. Darwin estimates that the worms on one of his fields must have passed the earth through their bodies, in the course of a year, at the rate of over eighteen toes per acre. It will be perceived from these figures that the earthworms may easily play a very important part in producing changes of the earth's surface, and that in hilly regions the operation of the worms must hasten the denudation of the soil very greatly. The influence of earth worms in sending debris into the rivets of this State was not considered in the late Gold Run Mine case, though Mr. Darwin's treatise on the subject might have given the defense several suggestive points.