

**Earthworms Astray.**

Dr. MacKay makes a further contribution to the question discussed in the October REVIEW on certain popular delusions regarding the earthworm. The authorities quoted, with his own testimony, are very interesting:

In a chat on worm migration with Dr. Stafford, of McGill University, who is not only the best authority in this department of zoology in Canada, but probably in America, he says that the eggs of earthworms are deposited in cocoons that are left in the soil along the sides of their burrows. The cocoon contains six to ten eggs and a quantity of food-albumen, and when developed to the thickness of a small pin and a few millimetres in length, they eat through one end and creep out into the soil where they find their food. They grow slowly. The cocoons are never blown about.

I can understand how a whirlwind might take up worms among other objects of like weight, and how they might be showered down elsewhere, and even on top of buildings. They are capable of climbing rough boards; and there is no difficulty in their climbing from muddy gutters on to even the roofs of buildings. Should they come out on a fine day from the still unfrozen earth, they would soon be chilled and frozen by a lowering temperature, and blown with drifting snow to quite a distance with a strong wind.

Dr. Ardley, keeper of the museum at McGill, who aids the zoological staff in obtaining specimens for dissection, said he never saw so many worms as he did once on the lawn in front of the museum on top of snow. It had fallen the previous night, and the weather had turned very mild, so that the worms came out of their burrows and through the snow. During next forenoon the snow disappeared and left them on the grass. They are plentiful in this sod, so that at the end of September and first of November 1,500 specimens for class dissections were collected in two or three evenings. In the case mentioned, the worms had come through the snow, and then the weather turned cold and numbed the worms so that they could not return to their burrows. The following day they had thawed out. If a high wind had come before this it would have carried the worms away to another locality, where in milder weather they would be thawed out. There can be little doubt but that they often come up through their burrows when the ground is frozen when the weather is mild, and that sometimes they move under the snow when the temperature is mild.

The trouble with the usual statements of such observations is that untrained observers leave the observation imperfect. The essential concomitants are not carefully noted at the time; and when the phenomenon is related, the imperfect memory supplies inferred, if not imaginary, conditions, which make a conundrum which no one can solve—because the facts alleged are not *all* facts, and are not all *the* facts pertinent to the case? A. H. M.

We pray you, set your pride

In its proper place; and never be ashamed

Of any honest calling; for all the rest, hold up your heads,  
And mind your English.

—Jean Ingelow.

**A Pretty Christmas Thought.**

A few years ago the New York *Sun* printed a pretty answer to the following letter from a little girl. We give the letter and answer here with a few slight changes:

"Dear Editor: I am 8 years old.

Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, 'If you see it in the Sun, it's so.'

Please tell me the truth; is there a Santa Claus.

VIRGINIA O'HANLON.

115 West Ninety-fifth street."

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not understood by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus. It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no child-like faith then, no poetry, no romance, to make tolerable this existence. We would have no enjoyment except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus, coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus; but that is no sign there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not; but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can deceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You may tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside; but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God! he lives forever. A thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

The shortest two despatches on record are said to be that of Lord Lawrence to Queen Victoria—"Peccavi!" (I have Sinned), and that of Sir Francis Drake to Queen Elizabeth—"Cantharides!" (The Spanish Fly).

Roderick—Percy Sapp is always talking about his family tree. Is it really a family tree?

Van Albert—I've heard so much about it I begin to think it is a chestnut.—*Chicago News*.