

Darwin's mind throughout his career. It has, in our opinion, overpowered in some of his works the rigid caution he endeavors to practise in drawing conclusions from his observations; but it has had the immense advantage of giving him a clue for what we may call his cross-examination of Nature. It is Plato, we think, who says that if a man is to ask questions with advantage, he must previously have some surmise of the answer of which he is in search; and Mr. Darwin's surmise has evidently been, from the first, that which was suggested to him during the voyage of the *Beagle*.

He tells us, in fact, in the Introduction to his most famous work—that on “The Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection”—that when on board the *Beagle* he was much struck with certain facts in the distribution of the organic beings inhabiting South America, and in the geological relations of the present to the past inhabitants of that continent. “These facts,” he says, “seemed to throw some light on the origin of species—that mystery of mysteries, as it has been called by one of our greatest philosophers.” On his return home it occurred to him, in 1837, “that something might, perhaps, be made out on this question by patiently accumulating and reflecting on all sorts of facts which could possibly have any bearing on it.” After five years' work he allowed himself to speculate on the subject, and drew up some short notes; these he enlarged in 1844 into a sketch of the conclusions which then seem to him probable, and “from that period,” he adds, “to the present day, I have steadily pursued the same object.” This was written in 1859, but it would remain substantially true up to the present time. Even the monograph now before us on Vegetable Mould and Earth-worms has, as we shall see, its bearing on Mr. Darwin's main conception, and has been in great measure inspired by kindred ideas. The same conception is equally conspicuous in the other works which have from time to time borne witness to his extraordinary industry and to his fertility of thought.

(To be continued.)