

Is this a Delusion?

In a selected article, entitled, "Popular Delusions," which appeared in the EDUCATIONAL REVIEW for September, I find the statement: "The earthworm does not rain down."

Are you quite sure? I have a strong opinion that if he does not "rain down," he sometimes *snobs down*. I once saw earthworms by the hundred lying on top of some inches of snow. They were frozen stiff when I first saw them; but it was a thawing day, and in a little while they were crawling on the snow. It is easier for me to believe that they had come down in the snow squall of the previous night than that they had come up through the still frozen ground. Is there any other way of accounting for their presence in this case?—W.

Our correspondent's observation is very interesting, and so far as it goes a valuable scientific observation. Dr. J. Stafford, at present of McGill University, reports from Canada as many as ten species of earthworm, representing four genera. It is a pity the exact species of worm seen in such abundance on the snow was not determined. Were it a species whose life history is well made out, we might be better prepared to account for its presence on the snow under the circumstances. Mr. Marshall contributed to the Nova Scotian Institute of Science an account of what was thought to be a shower of worms at Middleton, N. S., in the spring of 1890. His sketch may be found on page 56 of the Proceedings of the Institute, Volume I of the Second Series, Part 4, Session of 1893-94. The species was not determined in this case either. Were the eggs of the worms borne on the breeze until they were not only hatched but grown to respectable maturity without browsing on terrestrial food before they fell in the rain, it would be very wonderful indeed. But that all this growth should take place in the chill empyrean of winter on no better culture bed than a bottomless cloud would be more marvelous still. These incidents show that there are many natural history facts not yet observed, although some progress has been made since the days of the agnostic naturalist who wrote the history of Job.

Cannot our teachers and pupils be on the lookout for such occurrences and send preserved specimens of the worms to some authority for identification? And cannot we also study the natural history of such organisms so as to determine their whole life history accurately? In the meantime any further exact accounts of such phenomena will be gladly received by the editor for communication to a naturalist who is engaged in this department of zoology.

A. H. M.

ENGLISH IN THE LOWER GRADES.

Letter Writing.

BY ELEANOR ROBINSON.

(CONTINUED.)

The importance of training in the writing of informal notes, spoken of in my first paper, is dwelt upon by a writer in the October number of *Harper's Bazar*, who says:

Few girls seem to be aware of one serious deficiency in their social training (possibly because it is so widespread), their inability to write a correct and graceful note. It is really sad and disheartening to receive from girls who have had every advantage notes such as an upper servant might be expected to write—the handwriting unformed, the matter ill-expressed, and the spelling by no means always above reproach. The long and delightfully written letters of the last century are gone forever. We may lament the fact, but cannot help it. Life is too busy and crowded to admit of hours devoted to correspondence, but notes come in a different category. It takes no more time to write a good note than it does to write a poor one. It is all a question of knowing how, and then taking pains. One stumbling-block to the modern girl seems to be the ending of her note. She is very apt to sign herself "Sincerely," or "Truly," utterly ignoring the "Yours," which is essential to grammar as well as to grace of expression. . . . It is not easy always to say just where to draw the line between the "Yours truly" of a business note, and the "cordially yours" of a friendly note, and the again more personal touch of "Sincerely yours." However, a little thought will decide such cases as they arise. Oh, that a philanthropic millionaire would endow a chair for "social training" at one of our women's colleges and make the writing of notes an important feature of the course!

It is not necessary for me to give rules for the forms of letters and notes as they are to be found in all text books on composition. These rules have been prescribed by custom, and are, for the most part, founded on practical convenience or courtesy. I shall, however, draw attention to certain points on which mistakes are often made.

I am often asked whether "My dear Miss Smith," or "Dear Miss Smith" is the more formal address. I was taught, when a child, to use the possessive pronoun only when writing to relatives or intimate friends, and I remember a case in point from one of Miss Charlotte Yonge's stories. The heroine is writing to a friend of years' standing, once her lover, from whom there has been a long estrangement. She hesitates how to address him. "My dear Owen" was too intimate; "Dear Mr. Sandbrook," too formal. She decides on "My dear Mr. Sandbrook," as indicating the proper degree of