

feet. Below this point, therefore, it is concluded that complete darkness prevails.

THE biggest earthworm ever heard of is probably the one recently sent from Cape Colony to the Royal Zoological Society in London. The longest measurement taken was six feet and five inches; but it is supposed that if the worm's frame were relaxed by drowning it would measure at least ten

feet. It is reported to be a loathful animal, and we have no difficulty in accepting the statement. It is to be dubbed *Lumbricus microcheta*.

THE largest crystal of zircon yet known has been found in the County of Renfrew, Ontario. Its weight is about twelve pounds. The largest specimen hitherto known weighed less than three pounds.

SCHOOL WORK.

DAVID BOYLE, TORONTO, EDITOR.

SCHOOL DISEASES.

It is a serious question whether we are not getting what is called education at too exorbitant a price, when the health and usefulness of eyes are impaired or sacrificed. And the mischief that is done to eyes in schools and colleges may safely be taken as an indication of the damage that is inflicted upon other parts of the body. Objectors may, perhaps, say that the appalling statistics obtained by the foreign observers could not be gathered in American schools and colleges. I believe that they might, and I found my belief upon twenty years' work among just the classes of subjects tabulated by Cohn and the other Continental observers. I believe that our system of education, if, indeed, we may be said to have a system, is one of the most damaging in its effects upon the growing bodies of scholars of any in the world. Let any one familiar with hygiene take the pains, as I have, to inquire carefully into the physical effects of curricula of our leading schools and colleges, and he will be compelled to confess that there is the greatest cause for reform. The attention which is paid to gymnastic exercises and other methods of physical culture, does not correct the evils. It often happens that those who really need physical exercise most do not get it, or that the exercise is excessive, and does harm to those who engage in it. What we

need in our school and college curricula is a diminution of the hours of labour. The working hours too often extend from eight or nine in the morning to ten or eleven at night. The strain thus put upon growing bodies is too great. Some method should be devised by which much that now involves a persistent use of the eyes in confined and unnatural postures of the body could be accomplished through the use of models or photographs, or the blackboard. Much that is now attempted to be taught by badly printed books might be taught orally, or by some form of object lesson. Even if such radical changes could not be accomplished, much might be done toward lessening the evil effects of our present method by shortening the hours devoted to study, by correcting defects in the architecture of class and study rooms, by improving the ventilation, heating and lighting of school-houses, and by diffusing information among the parents of scholars, so that there may be less in the home-life that is prejudicial to health. And just here we touch the very fountain of the evil. Our schools cannot be much, if any, above the intelligence of their patrons. I do not blame the teachers for the evils in our systems of education. I blame boards of trustees and other school and college boards for not applying the principles that have already been worked out by scientific men. If architects and boards of managers of schools and colleges would apply, in