mind of the student as possible; and this, we think, might best be accomplished by prefixing to each chapter diagrammatic sections of the succession of strata, exhibiting their equivalences in different parts of the country. Again, although we recognise with the author the impossibility of quoting in such a work as the present the authority for every statement, yet we think that a well selected series of references to those original memoirs, in which fuller details concerning each formation may be found, would greatly add to the value of the book without materially increasing its bulk.

We cannot but commend the manner in which Mr. Woodward has resisted all attempts at fine writing, and has sought rather to produce a work characterised by accuracy and soundness than by showiness and superficiality; in this respect following the example of his father, the late Dr. Samuel Woodward, to whose memory the work is dedicated. We anticipate for the "Geology of England and Wales" a sphere of usefulness not less extended than, and a reputation as enduring as that which has been attained by, the "Manual of the Mollusca;" and higher praise it would scarcely be possible to award to it.

It only remains to add that the work is illustrated, not only with a very clear chromo-lithographed map prepared by Mr. Griesbach, but by woodcuts of such excellence (as will be manifest from the specimens we give of them) that we can only regret that they are so few in number.

J. W. J.

SUMNER'S "METHOD AT SEA"

IN reference to our review of Sir William Thomson's work on this subject (vol. xiv. p. 346), our attention has been called by Sir G. B. Airy to the following paper in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society*, vol. xix. p. 448:—

"Remarks on the Determination of a Ship's Place at Sea." In a Letter to Prof. Stokes. By G. B. Airy, LL.D., &c., Astronomer-Royal.

Royal Observatory, Greenwich, S.E.,
1871, April 5.

MY DEAR SIR,—In the last published number of the *Proceedings of the Royal Society* (vol. xix. p. 259), there are remarks by Sir William Thomson on the proposed method for determining the *locus* of a ship's place at sea, by making one observation of the sun's (or other body's) altitude, and founding, on this, computations of longitude with two assumptions of latitude; and there are suggestions, with a specimen of tables, for solving the spherical triangles which occur in all similar nautical observations, on the principle of drawing a perpendicular arc of great circle from one angle of a spherical triangle upon the opposite side.

In regard to this principle and the tables which may be used with it, I may call attention to the employment of a similar method by Major-General Shortrede, in his "Latitude and Declination Tables," pp. 148 and 180. In p. 150, line 11 from the bottom, it will be seen that the "column" gives the trial-value of the perpendicular arc by which the two right-angled triangles are computed. This is not the same (among the various elements which may be chosen) as Sir William Thomson's; but it is so closely related that in some instances the tabular numbers are identically the same as Sir W. Thomson's, though in a different order. General Shortrede's object was "Great Circle Sailing," in which the trigonometrical problem is the same as in the nautical observation. I think, however, that Sir W. Thomson deserves thanks for calling attention to the application of this method to time-determinations.

In regard to the problem of the "*locus*," allow me to point out the geometrical circumstances of the case. If, upon a celestial globe, an arc of small circle be swept with the sun's (or other body's) place for centre, and the observed zenith-distance for radius, the ship's zenith will be somewhere in that curve; and if, with the pole for centre, arcs of parallels be swept with the two assumed colatitudes for radii, the intersection of these two curves with the first drawn curve will give the ship's zenith on the two assumptions; and if within the celestial globe there be placed a small terrestrial globe, and if these zenith-points be radially projected upon the terrestrial globe, the terrestrial places

of the ship on the two assumptions will be marked. But the practical application of this requires that the position of the terrestrial globe, or of the earth, be known in respect of rotation—that is, it requires that the Greenwich sidereal time, or solar time, be known; in other words, it requires a perfect chronometer. Now the experience of Capt. Moriarty, cited by Sir W. Thomson, does not apply here. Capt. Moriarty received time-signals from the Royal Observatory through the cable every day, and he had therefore a perfect chronometer. But other ships have no such perfect chronometer; and though the *direction* of a *locus*, as determined above, may be sufficiently certain, yet its *place upon the earth* will be uncertain, by a quantity depending on the uncertainty of the chronometer. Thus three chronometers may give the following positions for the *locus-curve*:—

Chron. No. 1. Chron. No. 2. Chron. No. 3.

And the question now presents itself, which uncertainty is the greater—the uncertainty of latitude, which is the real object of this problem to remedy? or the uncertainty of the chronometric longitude, which must be used in attempting to find the remedy? I do not doubt the instant reply of any practical navigator, that the chronometric longitude is far more uncertain than the latitude; and if it be so, the whole method falls to the ground.

I fear that a publication like that which has been given to this method may do very great injury among navigators who are not accustomed to investigate the geometrical bearings of such operations, and may lead them into serious danger.

I am, my dear Sir, yours very truly,

G. B. AIRY.

Prof. Stokes, Secretary of the Royal Society.

[From a general recollection of a conversation I had with Sir W. Thomson before the presentation of his paper, I do not imagine his object to have been exactly what the Astronomer-Royal here describes, but partly the saving of trouble in numerical calculation, partly the exhibition, for each separate observation of altitude at a noted chronometer time, of *precisely what that observation gives, neither more nor less*, which introduces at the same time certain facilities for the determination of a ship's place by a combination of two observations. Of course the place so determined is liable to an error east or west corresponding to the unknown error of the chronometer; and doubtless, under ordinary circumstances, this forms the principal error to which the determination of a ship's place is liable. This remains precisely as it did before; and it is hard to suppose that the mere substitution of a graphical for a purely numerical process could lead a navigator to forget that he is dependent upon his chronometer, though perhaps the general tone of Sir W. Thomson's paper might render an explicit warning desirable, such as that which Mr. Airy supplies.—G. G. STOKES.]

NOTES

WE hear with sincere regret of the death of the eminent French meteorologist, M. Charles Sainte-Claire Deville. We hope next week to give some details of his life and work.

WE publish on another page an abstract of the Rev. Mark Pattison's forcible and outspoken address at the Social Science Congress, Liverpool, on the state of our universities. Many other valuable papers were read, but they were for the most part too special for notice in our columns. We should, however, mention the remarks of Mr. W. H. James, M.P., in connection with the discussion of the question of incorporating a professional and technical training with a sound system of general education. Mr. James traced the history of the City Guilds of London, showed how enormously wealthy they must be, how this wealth is totally misspent, and maintained that the country had a perfect right to ask an account of their stewardship, and appropriate the funds, if necessary, for educational purposes. He proposed that