

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

[The Editor does not hold himself responsible for opinions expressed by his correspondents. Neither can he undertake to return, or to correspond with the writers of, rejected manuscripts. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.

[The Editor urgently requests correspondents to keep their letters as short as possible. The pressure on his space is so great that it is impossible otherwise to insure the appearance even of communications containing interesting and novel facts.]

British Association Sectional Procedure.

As the time for holding the Manchester meeting of the British Association approaches, it seems natural to inquire whether any action will be taken by the Council of the Association toward carrying out the important suggestions made in the columns of NATURE (vol. xxxiv. p. 495), by Prof. Oliver Lodge, immediately after the late meeting at Birmingham. I can vouch for the fact that many of the active workers in the Section meetings of the Association can heartily indorse the expression of discontent which fell from Prof. Lodge as to the inadequacy of the present arrangements. The effect of the attempt to shirk holding Section meetings on the Saturday, and on the succeeding Wednesday, has been to cause a most undesirable pressure upon the time available on other days, and has rendered serious and effective discussion of the subjects of the papers almost impossible. It is understood that at Manchester, thanks to the generous hospitality of the local leaders, the Association will be graced by the presence of an unusual number of foreign men of science, including some of the most distinguished of chemists, physicists, and biologists. This fact is in itself an additional reason for expecting earnest and lively discussions to arise in the Section meetings,—discussions such as add greatly to the interest of the meetings, and are of extreme value to those who are actual workers in science. It would indeed be cause for regret if the anticipated discussions were to be burked or spoiled by want of due attention to the arrangements of the meetings. The suggestions of Prof. Lodge are indeed so timely that I fear to weaken their force by adding to them or emphasizing any of them. Yet I cannot refrain from urging two points: one the extreme undesirability of scamping the Wednesday sitting; and the other the advisability of reconsidering the hours of holding Committee meetings. Why should not the Sectional Committees meet from 3 to 4 o'clock, and the Sections at 10.30? A clear half-hour would be gained; Committee-men might slip out for lunch instead of attempting to sit out a dwindling meeting in a famished state; and they would continue their attendance to the end of the Section meeting because of the Committee meeting at its close.

Further, much good would accrue if the Council would cause to be published from the first the days and hours appointed for the reading of papers or the holding of discussions on the various topics. Last year I succeeded in inducing the Sectional Secretaries to begin this practice, in spite of the cold water thrown upon my suggestion by more than one of the ancient lights of the Council. If the Council would only, as a matter of good business-like arrangement, issue instructions that this should be done in No. 1 of the Journals, the benefit would be double. As an instance I will only mention that many of the members of the Committee on Electrolysis, of which Prof. Lodge is Secretary, are looking forward to a full and interesting discussion of their report, in which discussion they especially anticipate that an important part will be taken by their distinguished Continental visitors. Knowing this to be the case, why cannot the Council fix beforehand a day and hour for this matter, which is to many of the physicists and chemists the most important event of the meeting, more important than the addresses of Presidents of Sections, more important than the set evening discourses, more important even than the address of the President himself?

SILVANUS P. THOMPSON.

20 Arundel Gardens, W., June 4.

The Recent Earthquakes in Mexico and Turkestan.

IN vol. xxxiv. p. 570 of NATURE you kindly allowed me to bring forward some facts in support of a view advanced by me

and mentioned in your review of the "Catalogue of European Earthquakes" which appeared in your number of September 16, 1886 (vol. xxxiv. p. 465), that earthquake localities lie on or are connected by great circles representing main lines of fissuring and therefore coast-line directions. Since then I have observed and noted two or three other remarkable cases, but the earthquakes recently reported (May 30) from Mexico, and June 9 from Turkestan, are so interesting in this respect that I venture to ask you for permission to point out how a great circle connects them.

This great circle is a coast-line direction which I had laid down and called "Coast of Coromandel Great Circle." It passes through or near the following localities and points. Parting from the mouth of the Musi River on that coast it takes in the coast-line to Pulicat; traverses the Indian and Southern Oceans and South Polar region (passing not far from the South Magnetic Pole); traverses the South Pacific and cuts the coast of Mexico at Talipa; passes at Oaxaca (the province of the same name is named as having been affected by the recent earthquake), also between Puebla and Vera Cruz (also similarly affected); runs parallel to the west coast of the Mexican Gulf; traverses the United States, about 200 miles west of the boundary shown in Major Powell's map of the earthquake of August 31, 1886 (see NATURE, vol. xxxv. p. 31), and roughly parallel to it; cuts the west coast of Hudson's Bay at the mouth of the Nelson River; passes at about 1° east of the North Magnetic Pole; traverses the North Polar region; crosses Nova Zembla, and the promontory to the north of the Sea of Obi and Siberia; and passes at about fifty-two miles to the west of Vernoje.

It may be of interest to remark that a great circle representing the Riviera coast-line, so lately and so disastrously shaken, passes in a north-west and south-east direction about 4° to the north-east of this point, and as the Turkestan earthquake has evidently extended beyond Vernoje, the actual distance between this great circle and the district affected may be less than 4°. In any case it is an interesting relation, and all the more so as this Riviera great circle cut New Zealand in the vicinity of the earthquake district of June 10, 1886, itself antipodal to that of Andalusia of December 25, 1884.

J. P. O'REILLY.

Dublin, June 11.

The Late Earthquake on the Riviera, February 23, 1887.

HAVING been at Nice during the late earthquake, I was much interested in the accounts published in NATURE (vol. xxxv. pp. 419 and 442), from which I have drawn up the following table:—

Earthquake of February 23, 1887.

Local time.	Greenwich M.T.	Duration.	Dist-	Time,	Velocity miles per minute.	
			ance, miles.	minutes.		
			(From	Nice.)		
Nice—						
(1) h. m. s. 5 59 o a.m.	h. m. s. 5 30 o	} 55 secs. 25 intense.				
(2) 6 10 o	5 41 o		5 ?			
(3) 8 30 o	8 1 o		10 ?			
(4) 11 15 o p.m.	22 46 o					
Marseilles—						
(1) 5 55 o a.m.	5 33 40	90 secs.	100	3 3/4	30	
(2) 6 5 o	5 43 40	15 "	100	2 3/4	37	
Turin—						
(1) 6 22 o	5 32 o		100	2	50	
(2) 6 31 o	5 41 o		100	? simul	taneous.	
(3) 8 53 o	8 3 o		100	2	50	
Basle—						
(1) 6 4 7	5 34 5		270	4	67	
Paris—						
(1) 5 45 o	5 35 30		420	5 1/2	76	
Greenwich—						
(1) 5 38 o	5 38 o	20 secs.	650	8	81	
(2) 5 45 o	5 45 o		650	4 ?	? 160	
6 o o	6 o o					
7 40 o	7 40 o					
7 50 o	7 50 o					