The areas in the above table are calculated on the assumption that both shell and foot are ellipses, which is fairly near the truth. I need hardly point out that the old theory of atmospheric pressure will not account for these figures, and in the case of *Patella* the mucus is too thin to have much cohesion. Perhaps some of your readers can throw light on the subject.

29 St. James's Street, Jersey.

PERCY A. AUBIN.

On the Variation of Latitude.

IN connection with the interesting investigations of Dr. Chandler on the variation of latitude, permit me to suggest the desirability of calling attention to Maxwell's remarks on the same subject at the conclusion of his paper "On a Dynamical Top," Ed. Phil. Trans., xxi., Part iv. p. 568 (read April 1857).

Maxwell, taking the value of $\frac{C}{A}$ as 1'00309, as deduced from the amount of precession (Pontécoulant, ii. 268), finds the time of revolution of the pole of the earth about the true pole to be about 325'6 solar days. Dr. Chandler's period of 427 days would on the same principles correspond to the value $\frac{C}{A} = 1'00235$.

ROBT. B. HAYWARD.

Fairlight, Harrow, February 28.

ORNITHOLOGY OF THE SANDWICH ISLES.

THE departure for Honolulu of Mr. Robert C. L. Perkins (as already announced in these pages), the gentleman sent out by the Joint Committee appointed by the Royal Society and by the British Association to investigate the zoology of the Sandwich Islands, may render the present moment opportune for noticing what has already been done towards obtaining a knowledge of their presumably expiring Fauna, though I can only lay claim to acquaintance with a single Class of it—the Birds. Yet students of that important branch of Biology which is known by the clumsy and not strictly accurate title of the "Geographical Distribution of Animals," will bear in mind that the first successful attempt to grapple with and elucidate it was based upon this very Class; and, furthermore, that by far the most comprehensive work on the subject has proceeded from the pen of a most proficient ornithologist, while nobody can doubt that but for his intimate knowledge of Ornithology many of his results would have been inconclusive if not unattainable. Into the reason why the most vagrant Class in creation was thus so serviceable to Mr. Sclater and to Mr. Wallace, there is no need here to enter. It is perhaps enough to state that indubitable fact to warrant the publication of the present remarks having reference to a small portion only of the Hawaiian Fauna; and, if they should furnish an indication of what may be proved when the rest comes to be better known, it will so much the more redound to the credit of Ornithology; while, should further acquaintance with other Classes contradict the inferences to be drawn from the Birds, the suspicion, to call it by no stronger name, at times expressed, that what is a good Law of Nature for one set of animals will not hold for another, may be justified.

Moreover, within the last six months has been published a very remarkable dissertation, "On the Structure of certain Hawaiian Birds, with reference to their Systematic Position," contributed by Dr. Gadow to Mr. Scott B. Wilson's beautifully illustrated "Birds of the Sandwich Islands." From its title, this essay might be supposed to interest only the taxonomer or the ornithotomist; and the zoologist of wider views might leave it unheeded as having a scope too limited for his purposes. The very contrary is the truth, and those who will follow the author's deductions to their logical end will perceive that his "Remarks" disclose a state of things which is not only subversive of the generally-received opinion as to the nature and affinities of the avifauna of the Sandwich

Islands, but is fraught with evidence of a kind hardly hitherto suspected in regard to the origin and derivation of the animal population of that group. Hints to this effect may, indeed, be gathered from Mr. Wallace's works, and especially from his "Island Life"; and that, with the few facts at his disposal, he was able to give them, is proof of the depth of his perception; but henceforth he will be able to speak boldly, and drop every uncertain phrase.

The dearth of facts with which Mr. Wallace had to contend, even in 1880, shows that the Sandwich Isles have not been fortunate in their Natural Historians, though perhaps no worse off in this respect than many another group "lying in dark purple spheres of sea." Discovered in 1778 by Cook, during the last of his celebrated voyages, his ships communicated with one of the more western islands—Atooi, as its name sounded to him and his companions, but since, and doubtless more correctly, written, Kauai. The admiration of the visitors was excited by the cloaks and helmets of the natives, beautifully bedecked with feathers, the more or less moth-eaten remains of which may yet be seen in many a Museum; and the scarlet birds which furnished the most brilliant adornment of these ingenious works of art were duly mentioned by Cook in his journal as published. After less than a fortnight's stay, in the course of which the existence of five islands was made out, his ships stood off to the northward to prosecute their voyage of discovery. Towards the end of the year they returned, and Cook, having had experience of the hospitable treatment of the islanders, designed to make his winter-quarters in the Sandwich Isles, as he had named them, after the then First Lord of the Admiralty; but, keeping more to windward, the first land he made was the most eastern of the group, one that he had not even seen on his first visit. This was the historic Owhyhee—nowadays written Hawaii—which, being the largest of them, and that which produced the warrior-king and statesman who eventually subdued all the rest, has given its official name to the Archipelago.

Though Owhyhee was sighted on November 29, Cook's course along its eastern and southern coast was so deliberate that it was not until January 17, 1779, that he found a safe anchorage, and that in Kealeakakua Bay, on its western side. What passed there during the next three weeks need not be here recorded, but those who know how to read his narrative and the accounts since divulged from native sources will admit that it throws an important and yet most lurid light on the history of superstition. To the unprejudiced it must be doubtful whether even now the whole truth is or ever can be known. The ships sailed on February 4; but in making her way to the northward, the *Resolution* sprung her mainmast, and within a week returned to her old anchorage. Three days later occurred the terrible tragedy which deprived the world of one of its greatest seamen. A week after Cook's death, the ships sailed to the westward, touching at some of the intermediate islands—Mowee (Mauai), Lanai, and Morotai (Molokai), making once more for Atooi (Kauai) and Oneehow (Niihau), the last famous for its yams. Then, on March 15, they bore away again to the northward, and did not return.

Now, the object of giving here these details is to show that the natural history specimens obtained by Cook's ships were procured only on the islands of Hawaii, Kauai, and Niihau. This is the more needful because the first descriptions of any of the birds of the Sandwich Isles were given, with two exceptions, by Latham in his "General Synopsis of Birds," published in 1781-85, and most of the specimens so described no longer exist. Some were in the British Museum or the collection of Sir Joseph Banks, afterwards transferred thereto; the rest were in the Leverian Museum. Of the former, as is