

The way some reasoners have of dealing with land and water reminds me of nothing so much as the instructions given to an Irish labourer, who asked his master how he was to dispose of a certain lump of rubbish. He was told "to dig a hole to put it in." "But," says he, "What am I to do with the stuff out of the hole?" The answer was *pat*: "Dig a hole big enough to hold both."

T. MELLARD READE.

REPLY BY THE REV. H. G. DAY TO THE REV. O. FISHER.

SIR,—Mr. Fisher cavils at my proof (*GEOL. MAG.* p. 237). I must apologize for the accidental interchange therein of the symbols α and β ; a slip which affects neither its validity nor its relevance.

Mr. F. claims that I should correct his similar lapsus. Had this been my province, I should certainly have commenced by asking him to explain under what circumstances he finds it impossible to pass a vertical plane through the major axis of his ellipse (p. 21, line 2). Mathematicians had been accustomed to believe that any line could lie in a vertical plane.

H. G. DAY.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE BLACKHEATH SUBSIDENCES. — Attention has been called in *Nature* (Feb. 17, 1881), and in *The Engineer* (Feb. 4, and March 18, 1881) to a series of subsidences that have taken place at Blackheath. In April, 1878, a subsidence of the ground occurred near a place called Rotten Row, the hole being 8 or 9 yards in circumference; in November, 1880, two holes appeared, one not far from the gravel-pit below Eliot Place and Heath House, and the other nearer to All Saints' Church.

The district is occupied by the Lower London Tertiaries—the Chalk occurring at about 100 feet from the surface; and several natural causes have been suggested to account for the production of these holes.

In seeking for an explanation, Mr. T. V. Holmes (*Engineer*, March. 18) recalls attention to the discovery in 1878 of a pit, in all probability a Danes' Hole, at Eltham Park, within three miles of Blackheath, and mentions other ancient artificial excavations or "Danes' Holes" about Bexley, Chiselhurst, and in "Jack Cade's Cave" at Blackheath itself. He considers that the popular tradition that these Holes were originally intended as places of security for persons and property from Danish and other pirates and robbers, seems to be the most reasonable explanation of their existence.

Nevertheless, the question of their origin ought not to remain in abeyance, and it may be mentioned that a committee, comprising members of the Lewisham and Blackheath Scientific Association and of the West Kent Natural History Society, has been formed for the purpose of investigating the matter, and they invite contributions towards their object.

In connexion with this subject attention may be re-directed to a letter from Mr. H. Norton, F.G.S., on the Pits of the Haute Marne, see *GEOLOGICAL MAGAZINE* for June, 1877, Decade II. Vol. IV. p. 286.