THE SHAPE OF THE EARTH

Mr. WALLACE'S proofs of the rotundity of the earth could have been the cause of the moon's eclipse. Therefore it was utterly impossible that the shadow of the moon would appear to be sunk 50ft. beneath him, always showing a concave figure, and no problem in geometry (by construction) will produce any other figure—always assuming the given data. The Bedford canal face proves nothing one way or the other—all Hampden's folly in risking so large a sum with the whole scientific world ranged against him, as well as the public press and popular prejudice, and the avidity with which his opponents 'grabbed' his £500. No wonder he abuse them—it is enough to make a saint swear! And illustrates a saying of Sir Richard Phillips about 'Parallax' and others to the plane theory. What wonder, when such puerile proofs are adduced in favour of the globular theory? Why, it has never yet been satisfactorily demonstrated that the earth is either a plane or a globe but by the old stock childish arguments of a ship on the horizon, the rising and setting of the sun, &c—all of which are attributable to the laws of perspective—except, indeed, the "assumed" shadow of the earth upon the moon during a total eclipse of that luminary, and that is only a mere hypothesis, for on the 17th of January, 1870, the middle of the eclipse of the moon occurred at a quarter to three o'clock p.m., when both sun and moon were above the horizon at the same time. Therefore it was utterly impossible that the shadow of the earth could have been the cause of the moon's eclipse. The same thing occurred in July of the same year, and was noticed in the Daily Telegraph of the 16th of that month as a singular phenomenon. And well it might be! No mountains can be seen 500 miles off with a curvature of the earth's surface at the rate of eight inches per mile multiplied by the square of the distance. But it is upon record that the Alleghany Mountains have been seen from the Peak of Teneriffe 2,500 miles off; which would preclude the possibility of the earth being a sphere.

Watford, Oct. 16.

W. G.