

CHAPTER V.

DEEP-SEA SOUNDING.

The ordinary Sounding-lead for moderate Depths. — Liable to Error when employed in Deep Water. — Early Deep Soundings unreliable. — Improved Methods of Sounding. — The Cup-lead. — Brooke's Sounding Instrument. — The 'Bull-dog'; Fitzgerald's; the 'Hydra.' — Sounding from the 'Porcupine.' — The Contour of the Bed of the North Atlantic.

IN all deep-sea investigations it is of course of the first importance to have a means of determining the depth to the last degree of accuracy, and this is not so easy a matter as might be at first supposed. Depth is almost invariably ascertained by some modification of the process of sounding. A weight is attached to the end of a line graduated by attached slips of different coloured buntine (the woollen material of which flags are made, in which the colours are particularly bright and fast) into fathoms, tens of fathoms, and hundreds of fathoms; or, for deep-sea work, with white buntine at every 50, black leather at every 100, and red buntine at every 1,000 fathoms. The weight is run down as rapidly as possible, and the number of fathoms out when the lead touches the bottom gives a more or less close approximation to the depth.