

his original intention of merely writing lecture-notes for his class, there would have been some force in his excuse; but when he sends forth his work as "a text-book, with the hope that it may find a wider field," he cuts the ground from under his feet. He must recollect that the majority of his readers will never have the opportunity of seeing his lecture diagrams and lantern-slides. If illustrations are out of place in a text-book, why did the author take the trouble to insert twenty-nine? Surely he is not ashamed of his beautiful and instructive frontispiece.

(4) *Mining chapter.*—After Prof. Tarr's candid confession, I will not say another word likely to cause him pain or annoyance; but will merely express the hope that Professors of Economic Geology, while examining mineral deposits, will take the trouble to notice how they are worked, and so render themselves independent of any second-hand aid when writing upon the art of mining.

THE REVIEWER.

Halo of 90° with Parhelia.

ON July 11 the halo of 90°, intersecting a primary halo of the usual size, but intensely brilliant in colouring, was visible at West Newton, Cumberland, for about four hours—9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The sun shone brilliantly all the time. Light strips and wreaths of cirrus and minute mottled cirro-cumulus marked the upper sky. There were several mock suns, not all equally distinct. The halo of 90°, a very unusual phenomenon, was of a pale grey-blue tint, showing no prismatic colours, except in a very slight degree at the point furthest removed from the sun.

This system of halos formed a splendid sight for about four hours, indicating a vast sheet of ice-crystals. I have observed that parhelia sometimes precede heat, as well as stormy weather.

The intensely vivid colouring of the part of the two (almost concentric) halos, where they intersected above the sun, was most striking.

SAMUEL BARBER.

West Newton, Cumberland, July 11.

P.S.—Four dry days followed, the fifth wet.

Rate of the Flight of Birds.

I SHALL be glad if any of your readers can inform me whether the rate of the flight of any birds other than Homing Pigeons has been accurately measured, and what attempts, if any, have been made to employ birds belonging to other families in place of Homing Pigeons.

F. W. HEADLEY.

Haileybury, July 15.

THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON AND THE REPORT OF THE GRESHAM COMMISSIONERS.

THE University of London is beyond question the Institution most nearly concerned with the recommendations of the Commissioners appointed to consider the draft charter for the proposed Gresham University in London. These proposals, as was pointed out in NATURE in March last (vol. xlix. p. 405), involve the reconstruction of the present University and the formation of a Senate and Convocation having powers differing considerably from those at present possessed by them. Importance would, under any circumstances, attach to the attitude assumed by either body towards the Report, and in the present case it is in no way lessened by the fact that in the charter of 1863 it is ordained that Convocation—that is, those graduates of the University who have attained a certain seniority and paid certain fees—shall have "the power of accepting any new or supplementary charter for the University, or consenting to the surrender of this our charter, or of any new or supplemental charter," the consent of the Senate being also requisite before either acceptance or surrender becomes operative. This power of veto was exercised by Convocation in 1891, when a draft charter proposed by the Senate was rejected by a large majority, and the

way made clear for University and King's Colleges to proceed with their petition for a separate University.

The preparation of a scheme for engraving teaching on the present examining functions of the University of London did not originate with the Senate. To Convocation belongs the distinction of being the first to advocate this enlargement of the scope of the University, and its proposals were embodied in a scheme as long ago as 1886, while in a later scheme submitted to the Commissioners it indicated in still further detail the lines on which in its opinion a solution of the question might be found. The inability of each body to accept the schemes of the other, the chronic division of opinion between the Senate and Convocation on the Teaching University question, did not augur well for a joint assent to any scheme resulting from the labours of the Commissioners appointed in 1892.

This contingency evidently presented itself to a large majority of the Commissioners, since, with a wisdom which seems likely to be justified by events, they have gone beyond the terms of reference, which contemplated "the establishment under charter of an efficient Teaching University for London," and say that "in view of the failure of previous attempts to settle this question, and of the difficulty and delay which must inevitably attend an alteration of the constitution of the University through the action of the University itself, we are of opinion that, in accordance with the precedents followed in other cases of University reform, the changes which we recommend should be effected not by charter, but by legislative authority, and by the appointment of a Commission with statutory powers to settle, in the first instance, arrangements and regulations in general conformity with the recommendations which we are about to submit to your Majesty."

The latest project for the inevitable extension of University education in London was speedily recognised by many as a well-considered and feasible plan for meeting the requirements of the case. Highly desirable as it was that it should be accepted by, and not forced upon, Convocation, yet at first the outlook was anything but bright. The Annual Committee of Convocation—the body of graduates elected every year "to advise Convocation upon any matter affecting the interests of the University"—undertook the preparation of a report on the scheme of the Commissioners for presentation to Convocation. While this was under discussion an interview took place between it and the Committee of the Senate charged with the consideration of the Commissioners' Report, and it may be inferred that exception was taken to the revocation of the veto and to the mode of procedure proposed by the Commissioners, since the Chancellor (Lord Herschell), in the course of his reply, is reported to have said: "If the proposals of the Commissioners were generally considered to be for the public good, and a reasonable solution of the problem that had been referred to them, it would scarcely rest with this University, either through the Senate or through Convocation, to veto the plan; nor should the remodelling of the constitution of a public body, with a view to its further efficiency, be regarded as a penal abrogation of its charter."

Disregarding this statesmanlike view of the situation, the Annual Committee the same evening adopted a Report wholly adverse to the proposals of the Commissioners, and drew up five resolutions which they recommended Convocation to adopt. Space will only permit reference to the first: "That Convocation protests against the withdrawal without its consent of the charter of the University of London as proposed by the Gresham Commission . . ." and the fourth: "That Convocation therefore, although it would regret the establishment of a second University in London, is of opinion that it would be less disastrous to establish such a University with a

distinctive title than to carry into effect the scheme of the Gresham Commissioners." These will sufficiently indicate the Annual Committee's views.

Convocation's method of conducting business, it may be hoped, is peculiar to itself. Although an extraordinary meeting was convened on April 10 "to consider the Report of the Commissioners appointed to consider the draft charter of the proposed Gresham University in London, and also the Report of the Annual Committee thereon," it was debarred from expressing its opinion, either by discussion or vote, on the Commissioners' Report *as a whole*, and directed to confine itself to such matters as arose out of whichever resolution of the five might be under debate. After much fruitless discussion the resolutions proposed by the Annual Committee were unanimously set aside in favour of a motion which, "with a view to the speedy and satisfactory reconstitution of the University," referred "the whole question of the constitution of this University to the Annual Committee with power to nominate members of a Joint Consultative Committee of the Senate and Convocation."

This motion, agreed upon at the close of a protracted meeting and devoid of any express instructions to the effect that delegates should be selected so as to represent interests and not individuals, and that the Commissioners' scheme should form the basis of conference, was no doubt unfortunately worded, but the use to which it might be put was certainly not foreseen at the time of its adoption. In its second order's opinion, as stated in a letter to the *Times*, "should such a Committee arrive at a workable result, this may be embodied in a new charter which may be accepted without resort to a Statutory Commission, such as the Annual Committee objected to," in other words, the Consultative Committee might be the means of indefinitely postponing the settlement of the question of University reform. And the Annual Committee, having failed to carry its resolutions, must have taken much the same view, since its delegates were, with one exception—that of a theologian—chosen entirely from its own body, while on points of order raised by two of its members in connection with the motion, discussion on the Commissioners' Report at the ordinary meeting of Convocation on May 8 was again prevented, although a notice of motion expressing general approval of the scheme was allowed to appear on the *agenda*.

Tactics such as these not infrequently meet with the reward they deserve. University reform in London has waited too long for an obstructive and dilatory attitude, whether arising out of questions of "dignity" or of inability to take a broad view of the problem, on the part of a few, to be tolerable, and fortunate it is that a salutary change has taken place in Convocation itself. A movement in favour of the Gresham scheme took definite shape a few days after the extraordinary meeting on April 10; a Committee of Graduates was formed and a circular sent out to elicit from members of Convocation an expression of general approval of its provisions, and a direct vote in Convocation on the scheme being prevented, its adherents took the only course open to them, turned out the old Annual Committee on May 8, and replaced it by one almost wholly favourable to the Commissioners' proposals. Although not a direct vote in favour of the scheme, it has with good reason been regarded as tantamount to this, since the meeting which elected the new Annual Committee would certainly have expressed general approval of the Report had not the motion to this effect been ruled out of order by the chairman.

Since May 8, events have moved rapidly. The delegates appointed by the late Annual Committee, with one exception, resigned their seats on the Joint Consultative Committee as a result of the vote adverse to themselves, and the Joint Consultative Committee with its endless opportunities for delay has been shelved. The circular

issued by the Committee of Graduates just mentioned obtained 856 replies, many of them from the best known and most influential members of Convocation, expressing "general approval of the Commissioners' Report"; and this fact with a list of signatories was embodied in a memorial praying the Senate to "use all its influence to induce the Government to appoint a Statutory Commission forthwith." At its meeting on June 13, the Senate, happy in its opportunity, passed almost unanimously a resolution in which general approval of the proposals of the Commissioners was expressed, and instructions given to its special Committee to consider suggestions for the terms of reference to the Statutory Commission. A fortnight later the Annual Committee and other invited graduates met the Special Committee of the Senate in conference, and on behalf of the former it was urged "that it is desirable to memorialise Government to take immediate steps for the appointment of a Statutory Commission to frame statutes in general accordance with the Report of the Gresham Commission, with full power to make such modifications as they may see fit, after conference with Convocation and other bodies affected." Further, four delegates from the Annual Committee attended the meeting on June 30, of representatives from nearly all the institutions which, according to the Commissioners' proposals, will form constituent colleges of the reorganised University, and concurred in the resolution of similar character, which, as reported in *NATURE* (this vol., p. 227), was passed unanimously by those having the right to vote as delegates. And now the welcome news has transpired that at its meeting on July 11 the Senate passed a resolution urging the immediate appointment of a Statutory Commission with power to modify details of the Gresham Commissioners' scheme if judged expedient after conference with the bodies concerned, and that copies of the resolution were forwarded to the Lord Chancellor, the Lord President and the Vice-President of the Council, and the Home Secretary.

The unexpected, therefore, has happened. In every way in which it has been permitted to do so, Convocation, like the Senate, has expressed general approval of the Commissioners' proposals, and the University of London instead of being placed, by divided counsels, in a position deplorable to all friends of higher education in London, is now at the head of the movement for a University worthy of the greatest city of the world. Now that extensive approval of the Report by the great majority of the institutions concerned has satisfied the condition laid down by the Home Secretary as one to be complied with before action could be taken by the Government, it may be hoped that before Parliament is prorogued an Act appointing the Statutory Commission will be added to the legislative achievements of the Session.

W. PALMER WYNNE.

#### THE OXFORD MEETING OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION.

SINCE the last account of the preparations for the meeting of the British Association on August 8 appeared in these columns, the local arrangements have made steady progress, and the arrangements for the Sectional and other meeting rooms are nearly complete. It may be well to explain that only a few of the Sectional meeting rooms can be darkened for the use of a lantern. It has been found impracticable to darken the large writing rooms in the Examination Schools in which Sections E and F will meet; and the same may be said of Hertford College Hall (Section C) and Keble College Hall (Section F). The Clarendon Laboratory Theatre (Section A), the Anatomical Theatre and Laboratory (Sections D and H), and the Physiology Theatre, are provided with dark blinds; and the large Lecture Theatre