

on a bush, and very frequently some are wholly red and some, perhaps, wholly white, though I am not sure on this point. Many other cross-bred plants exhibit this inconstancy, which is supposed to be due to an imperfect blending of the elements of parentage. That the sporting is irregular and inconstant is not to be wondered at, when we consider that a plant is not an individual in the sense of possessing only one set of organs. Any vegetative bud of a plant is capable of producing any and all of the organs of the whole plant, or, if detached from the parent plant, to develop into a similar organism, with all its attributes. Given, then, a cross-bred variety, which is not constant, or "fixed," as florists term it, any vegetative bud may give rise to the cross or to one or the other of the parents.

W. BOTTING HEMSLEY.

Mineralised Diatoms.

NEARLY twenty years have elapsed since you allowed me to announce in NATURE the unexpected discovery of mineralised diatoms in the London clay of Sheppey.

Subsequent investigations demonstrated the existence of these unique microscopic fossils on the same geological horizon at several widely separated localities in the south-east of England; leading to the assumption that the band of diatomiferous earth was continuous throughout the formation.

Herne Bay was one of the places at which, in accordance with expectation, search was followed by success. Revisiting this place, a few days ago, for the first time since the discovery, I readily found the fossil diatoms as abundant as before in some recently fallen blocks of clay about half-way between Herne Bay and Oldhaven Gap. As there has been much waste of land at this spot during the interval, it is interesting to observe the presence of these diatoms in the newly exposed clay, giving support, as it does, to the hypothesis of their general distribution at a definite level throughout the London clay.

Perhaps some readers of NATURE may be going to that part of the coast before long, and will then take the opportunity of verifying my observations.

W. H. SHRUBSOLE.

SIR JOHN LUBBOCK AND THE TEACHING UNIVERSITY FOR LONDON.

THE address in which Sir John Lubbock solicits the suffrages of the Electors of the University of London has aroused feelings of surprise and regret among the friends of higher education in London, owing to the unfortunate nature of the references made to the Teaching University question. Six paragraphs out of ten are devoted to this important subject, and it seems almost incredible that so far from recognising that the Gresham Commissioners' scheme has enlisted a considerable measure of support in the University (*cf.* vol. i. 269; li. 298), Sir John Lubbock refers only to the views of its opponents, and, in accepting them, makes the remarkable statement:

"Feeling that Convocation ought to be consulted on a matter so vitally affecting the University, I would strongly urge, and do my best to secure, that the scheme when arranged should be submitted to Convocation for their approval, to be signified as at a Senatorial Election, and would oppose the Bill unless this were conceded."

Now it must be borne in mind that the Report of the Gresham Commissioners has met with a degree of approval from educational authorities and institutions, which not only far exceeds that extended to any previous attempt to solve the vexed question of University reform in London, but has been sufficiently unanimous to lead to the introduction of the "University of London Act, 1895," in the House of Lords by the late Government. This Bill, in accordance with the general tenour of the resolutions passed by the various institutions named in the Report as constituent colleges of the teaching University, enacted (clause iii. para. 1):

"The Commissioners will have power to make statutes and ordinances for the University of London in general accordance with the scheme of the Report hereinbefore

referred to, but subject to any modifications which may appear to them expedient after considering any representations made to them by the Senate or Convocation of the University of London, or by any other body or persons affected."

And further (para. 2):

"In framing such statutes and ordinances, the Commissioners shall see that provision is made for securing adequately the interests of non-collegiate students."

Convocation in January last had the opportunity of exercising its veto in meeting assembled as provided by the Charter of the University on the scheme of reconstitution proposed by the Commissioners, which had previously received the general approval of the Senate. Instead of insisting on this right, it preferred to bring itself into line with the other institutions affected by the scheme, by adopting a resolution in terms almost identical with those employed in the Bill. Only so recently as May, it declined to reconsider this attitude by a majority of two to one, yet it is clear that the Bill, if again brought forward, is to meet with opposition from Sir John Lubbock, if re-elected, unless an amendment is inserted providing that the completed scheme shall be submitted to Convocation for approval in a manner expressly excluded under the terms of the present Charter, viz. by means of a referendum.

It is difficult to imagine by what process of reasoning this seemingly gratuitous proposal can be reconciled with the functions of a statutory, that is a judicial and executive, Commission. Convocation is but one of the bodies affected by the scheme, and in common with the others, it can, under the terms of the Bill, present its case for modifications in the scheme to the Commissioners before the statutes are framed, and like them can appeal against the statutes during the forty days they must lie on the table in both Houses of Parliament before they become operative. Such an amendment could only have the effect of wrecking the latest and most satisfactory scheme of University reform, since no other institution affected by the scheme could be expected to agree to such an unprecedented proposal. Nor is it likely that any person fitted to occupy the position would consent to serve on the Commission, and devote his time and best energies to the difficult and delicate work of adjusting the relations between these institutions, with the knowledge that the statutes and ordinances eventually framed would be subject to the approval of any irresponsible, non-judicial body, let alone one of the institutions closely affected.

For the most part, Sir John Lubbock has held aloof from the controversy on the Teaching University question. Once only does he seem to have taken sides. It is on record that he voted with the majority when the Senate in June of last year passed a resolution expressing general approval of the proposals of the Gresham University Commission, with which action his present attitude is wholly inconsistent. It would be interesting to know whether his descent on the other side of the fence is in any way connected with the absence of opposition to his candidature on the part of the opponents of the scheme. Be this as it may, this uncalled for proposal to subordinate the interests of higher education in London to the pleasure of Convocation, ascertained not after debate, but by a referendum, is not to pass without protest, and we are glad to note that the following letters have already appeared in the press. The first is from Prof. Michael Foster, Sec.R.S., and President of Sir John Lubbock's Parliamentary Election Committee.

"Shelford, Cambridge, July 4, 1895.

"Dear Sir John,—As you know, I am wholly opposed to your view that the scheme for the University of London to be proposed by the Statutory Commissioners ought to be submitted to Convocation for approval. You also know that this difference of opinion, important as it is, does not prevent my desiring that you should continue to