

What Sir John practically says to us is this: "You may do as you like, but I am taking the management of this business into my own hands." Now, we are undoubtedly proud of having a representative in Parliament; but I am very doubtful whether Convocation is prepared to accept that representative as its master.

The resolution of January 22, as it happened, owing to the prolongation of the debate, was not carried by a large majority. The question was therefore brought up again on May 14, and reaffirmed by more than two to one.

The present position then is this: Convocation has accepted the Report of the Commission in principle; awaits the appointment of the Statutory Commission; and has delegated to a Committee of men representative of various views the duty of conferring with it. This Committee, which has already held a preliminary meeting, can be in touch at any time with Convocation, and it is difficult to see what better machinery Convocation could provide to bring about the result which all reasonable men desire. And all this, Sir John, who is not a member of Convocation, and who has not apparently taken the trouble to acquaint himself with its proceedings, calmly sets aside for a new-fangled and unheard-of plan of his own.

(iii.) Sir John, in what I suppose I may call his defence, says "the University is the only body whose constitution it is proposed to change." I do not know, I am sure, how he arrives at this. But we, who have had to consider the point, have been advised very differently. It has been pointed out to us by very high legal authority, that some at least of the bodies which it is desirable to bring into closer co-operation with the University may be impeded by disabling enactments. And one of the strongest arguments brought before us in favour of a Statutory Commission was the fact that it is a legislative solvent, and could, subject of course to the approval of Parliament, remove any legislative impediment which stood in the way of its ordinances.

(iv.) What I have stated above is sufficient, I hope, to show that Sir John's interference really amounts to a grave invasion of the privileges of Convocation, and I am utterly at a loss to see by what considerations it can be justified. The principle of a *referendum* which it is proposed to force upon us, is one which can only be accepted after the most serious examination.

Let us consider what it involves. At present, on any question of moment, Convocation only proceeds to a decision after a prolonged debate. And I venture to say that in ability, and certainly in earnestness, the debates in Burlington Gardens will compare not unfavourably with those at Westminster. The divisions, it may be inferred, are the outcome of reasoned conviction. A *referendum* is a very different matter. It is only theoretically applicable when the issue is of the sharpest, and can be stated on the most explicit terms. For anything short of this it would be necessary to organise for and against any proposal a costly machinery in order to put before each voter a reasoned statement on one side or the other. But the Statutory Commission, from the nature of things, will have to deal with matters of the most delicate compromise, affecting, as I have shown, other institutions besides the University. To subject these to the accidents of a *referendum*, is, I venture to say, one of the maddest political expedients ever proposed.

I cannot refrain from adding one more remark. I deeply regret that Sir John, in addressing the President and other Fellows of the Royal Society, thought it worth while to point out to them that some of them were not his constituents. There are many students of practical politics who find it difficult to justify the existence of University Members at all. I take it that the only defence that can be made for them is that they are something more than the mandatories of merely local interests, such as may exist, say, in a borough. They stand in Parliament, if they have any claim to be there at all, as the representatives of those interests remote from party which ennoble and dignify the life of a nation. Universities may select and return such Members. But that duty performed, theirs begins. If Sir John really seriously thinks that it is inappropriate that a body of Fellows of the Royal Society should address the Member for the University of London on a matter of supreme public interest, then I can only say with the deepest regret that I hope that the day is not distant when our choice may fall on a man of larger sympathies with the interests of the higher education and learning.

W. T. THISELTON-DYER.

Kew, July 20.

P.S.—I think it important to add from the Bill a portion of Clause 3:—“(1) The Commissioners shall 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.” It will be seen (i.) that it practically accepts the procedure of Convocation and (ii.) gives a *locus standi* to other bodies beside the University which may be affected.—W. T. T. D.

SIR JOHN LUBBOCK seems to have a mistaken conception of the nature of the right of veto possessed by the Convocation of the University of London. The Charter of that University provides that Convocation shall have “the power of accepting any new or supplemental Charter for the University or consenting to the surrender of this our Charter.” But such provisions cannot limit the action of Parliament. The provision is similar to the reference to Convocation at both Oxford and Cambridge of new statutes and of all alterations in old statutes proposed by the Council of the University. Our statutes take the place of the Charter of the University of London in many respects.

When Parliament has overhauled the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge by means of a Royal Commission, it has never occurred to any one that it would be proper to refer the statutes proposed by such Commission to the Convocation of Oxford or Cambridge. Sir John Lubbock's proposal to do what is parallel to this in the case of the University of London is a new departure. Whether he is aware of the customary procedure in dealing with universities, and thinks it objectionable, or whether he supposes that the plan he suggests is according to precedent, or, again, whether he is merely anxious to claim for his constituents an exceptional privilege by demanding which he will be giving effect to their wishes and justifying their selection of him as Parliamentary representative, does not appear.

For my own part, though not a graduate of the University of London, I have been most closely associated with its work and organisation—as professor in University College and as examiner in the University—during twenty years. My conviction is that there is a large body of graduates, members of Convocation, who do not at all approve of Sir John's too flattering claim on their behalf; they do not desire that the Convocation of London should be given exceptional powers possessed by no other body of University graduates in this or any country. They are deeply concerned for the progress and development of the University of London in its true character of the University in the greatest city in the greatest empire of the world. And they are prepared to forego the gratification of personal vanity offered by Sir John Lubbock, in order that an executive Commission may carry out without delay the important development of the University proposed by the Gresham Commission. These proposals have been already approved of by a majority of voters in meetings of Convocation at which they were considered and discussed; the plan of again submitting the matter to Convocation after a Statutory Commission has embodied the Gresham Commissioners' proposals in detailed enactments, is one which can have no other object than that of defeating or, at any rate, delaying the whole scheme.

Sir John Lubbock has adopted, and made himself the leader of this extraordinary and fantastic policy. It seems to me that he has by his action shown an unfavourable estimate of the intelligence of his constituents, and that the time may come when the Convocation of the University of London will require from its representative active co-operation in the task of organising the University, and single-minded devotion to the interests of science, learning, and education, together with attention to those interests in Parliament, in place of the empty flattery of an impossible proposal to confer on Convocation powers rendering the customary Parliamentary control of the University impossible.

E. RAY LANKESTER.

July 20.

WITHOUT entering into the vexed question of the Gresham scheme, will you allow me to explain, in a few words, the grounds on which so many of Sir John Lubbock's old friends and supporters join issue with him entirely on the attitude he has taken up in his letter to Dr. Foster.

We object to the proposed *referendum* to the graduates, and to the mode in which he suggests that it should be exercised.

First, as to the mode. If Sir John Lubbock insists on the maintenance of the right of veto according to the Charter, this should clearly be exercised in the only method provided by the