tion of his experiments, as would have saved chemistry from the confusion in which, most unquestionably, it is now left. With respect to the second improbability, Mr. Waterland says that chemists know that compounds do not assimilate with their constituents, and therefore it is not surprising that water should be an incombustible substance, though formed of inflammable materials. But I will beg of him to point out any one body composed of phlogistic materials which is incombustible. His carbonic acid and water being such a compound is an error, as in forming that matter by carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen, he will find that the phlogistic matter escaped, as it did in Lavoisier's theory.

With regard to the doctrine of combustion, of which Mr. Waterland's notions are decidedly erroneous, I must beg to refer him to a tract of mine,* on Hydrogen and Electricity, which appeared in November last, wherein he will find combustion, as well as the absorption of free oxygen by water, and some other subjects of his letter, fully discussed. He will find it demonstrated, too, (which I am persuaded he will consider very important to chemistry,) that a metal is an earth, *sui generis*, combined with electric matter, in which state (a metal) it is, as he knows, combustible; and that an oxide is the same earth when it has parted with the electric matter, and is united, instead, to oxygen, and when, as he also knows, it is incombustible. And, as connected with electricity, he will find it also demonstrated, that the mariner's compass or needle is not directed to the north pole in consequence (as is supposed) of any mysterious attraction between the magnetic fluid (whether a modification or not of electric matter) and that pole, but simply because it is a fluid constantly passing in that direction, and necessarily causes the needle or conductor to turn the same way: and which I thus incidentally notice, merely to record the fact, that I was led to the investigation of this and Lavoisier's theory, solely from the circumstance of their great improbability. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

York Hotel, Sidmouth, April 23, 1850.

W. F. STEVENSON.

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON—DESPOTIC RULE OF THE GRADUATE COMMITTEE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR.—I regret to perceive that your excellent and timely editorial precautionary remarks, as to the certain evil consequences of an illiberal spirit in conducting the affairs of the graduates, and the childish hostility to measures tending to general advantage, and perfectly consistent with the principle of the foundation of the London University, were addressed to the graduates at large,—not to the committee,—under the impression, no doubt, that considerable uniformity of opinion prevails between those gentlemen and their committee.

That you may not continue mistaken on this point, especially since you promise to favour us again with your reflections on the subject, I beg leave to direct your attention to this attempt to point out the principal errors Dr. Barnes has fallen into in his recent communication to THE LANCET, vol. i., 1850, p. 644.

The graduates' committee was originally a self-appointed committee, ostensibly for purposes which the members have long lost sight of. It is true that this appointment was confirmed at the third general meeting, the only meeting strong enough to do so with propriety, (not at three consecutive meetings, as stated by Dr. Barnes.) The feeling certainly was pretty general that those who had been zealously engaged in assembling the graduates together, in order to bring forward the London University to its proper place in the front rank with other British universities, should, if they liked, be left to carry out their plan of operations, apparently begun so well. But their resolution proposing to have their functions secured to them under all circumstances, until "a charter—the particulars of which they were not then prepared to declare—should be in actual operation," was regarded, especially by the medical graduates and others who had given themselves time to think, as a fit subject for deliberation. Their scruples, however, at last gave way, the resolution passed, and from that moment the committee became an irresponsible body, and the graduates ceased to be a constituency.

It is amusing to hear Dr. Barnes, who of course understands all the circumstances too well to be deceived, talk of a constituency. The graduates tied themselves hand and foot by their miserable haste to do what they cannot undo. A constituency indeed! It would go rather hard with the committee, should he succeed in finding one.

Dr. Barnes is desirous, naturally enough, of keeping up the semblance of a representative principle as the groundwork of the

transactions on the part of the committee; but I have not been able to discover either principle or policy, or anything deserving such an appellation, good or bad, connected with them. A committee without constituents, responsible to none, most decidedly standing in the way of the most important interests of the medical graduates, saying nothing about the general question—a ship floating on the wide vague sea of its own passions and prejudices, Dr. Barnes at the helm! How much longer, I would inquire of my brother non-committee graduates, will they be contented to entrust their cargo of hopes and aspirations to such a bottom?

Does Dr. Barnes pretend to say that a conference whereat the graduates are treated after the fashion of the office of the Home Secretary, compelled to listen to an oration on points of law, or personal invectives, in hard set terms, delivered by a red-hot young barrister, is a proper and becoming "way of attending to the wishes of constituents?" Yet this was the way, Mr. Editor, some—I myself one—"were attended" to on the above occasion; and at the last general meeting, when remonstrances—in language studiously deferential to the privileges we had been stupid enough to grant without reserving powers to withdraw—were stigmatized as "agitation, and gross pecuniary selfishness." I allude particularly to the expression of our desire that the College of Physicians should be met in a conciliatory spirit; and I here most emphatically declare this to be, in substance, all we ever said or wrote, and urged on the serious consideration of the committee.

The trick in the arrangement of the subjects for discussion at the last general meeting is very properly exposed by a London Graduate. In the main, I agree both with this gentleman and Mr. B., (who may know a great deal about the proceedings of the committee,) and not with Dr. Letheby. Dr. Barnes appears surprised to find so much information and good sense beyond the doors of the committee room, suggesting a notion as to the pains taken to prevent the escape of means of information about whatever goes on there.

There is an admission fairly to be implied in Dr. Barnes' letter, that the members of committee attend in very small numbers. I have been informed that this is really the case. I call on Dr. Barnes to say, whether or not the outline of the charter, so summarily rejected by the senate, presented, too, in an incredibly short time after the meeting, when the committee was *not* prepared to say what it was—the resolution to refuse entering into conciliatory negotiations with the College of Physicians—the declaration condemning the senate—and, lastly,—hear it, ye paralyzed constituency!—the petition to government to suspend the pecuniary grant to the University until the senate should withdraw its opposition to the charter—have been planned and contrived in committee, composed, on an average, of six members to one; not more than two being medical. I say once more, and defy Dr. Barnes to show the contrary, the graduates must be content to stand helplessly by without power of interfering, even at the risk of seeing the last mentioned of the schemes succeed, in cutting away the main stay and support of the University.

Such exhortations as "Be wise," "Be patient," "Be prudent," grate painfully on the ear of such as have forfeited all opportunity of being either. Pray, therefore, Mr. Editor, address your forthcoming remarks to the committee, not to the graduates—*immedicabile vulnus ense recidendam*—a less violent measure will be useless. The committee should either be brought back to its original condition, as a mere section of the graduates at large, or remodelled altogether. But who is to do it? It would be a charity to help us to the solution of this question.

I hope that the sentiments above expressed on the character of the committee will not be taken as showing a want of due respect for its members. The fact is, that there are many whose talents I have reason to hold in high estimation—as individuals, I feel respect for them all, but as a body I sincerely believe them to be a wilful and prejudiced oligarchy, acting at the instigation of an excitement produced by the rejection of their pet scheme (the charter) by the senate. I am unwilling at present to attribute their late objectionable course of conduct to any unworthy motive, such as the securing a place in the government of the University, irrespective of the opinions and wishes of the graduates.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

HENRY SAVAGE, M.D. Londin.

Gloucester Place, Portman Square, June 3, 1850.

MEDICAL GRADUATES OF SCOTLAND, AND LICENTIATES OF THE APOTHECARIES' SOCIETY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I have frequently, on reading THE LANCET, been much amused with the indignation of the Scotch graduates and licentiates, against the unfortunate Company of Apothecaries, for not

* Published by Ridgway, Piccadilly.