Few of our correspondents seem aware of the admirable essays by Patmore, entitled, *Religio Poeta*.

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QUESTIONS.

(Answers should reach the Bootle Public Library by April 12th.)

1. What is the use to a librarian of such works as Ebert's *Bibliographical Dictionary*? Mention any similar works you are acquainted with.
 2. Discuss your ideal of a free public reading-room.
 3. Explain, in as few words as are consistent with clearness, the working of an indicator-charging system, and state what you consider the strength and the weakness of the system.
 4. Tabulate in parallel columns and give dates of birth and death of twelve principal English, six French, four German, and six Italian authors who flourished between 1250 and 1650.
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LIBRARY ASSISTANTS' ASSOCIATION.

THE fifth monthly meeting of the Library Assistants' Association was held on Wednesday, February 3rd, at 20, Hanover Square. Mr. T. Mason, librarian of St. Martin's Public Library presided, and there was a large attendance. A most interesting and able paper, entitled "The Assistants' Opportunity," was read by Mr. H. L. Elmendorf, late Hon. Sec. of the American Library Association. The subject has been dealt with in previous papers read before the Association, but was presented under an entirely different aspect on this occasion, the speaker's remarks naturally dealing chiefly with the question from an American librarian's point of view. Mr. Evan G. Rees, sub-librarian at Westminster Public Library was elected to fill the vacancy on the committee caused by the retirement of Mr. E. E. England, late of West Ham Public Library.

F. M. R.

Correspondence.

To the Editor of THE LIBRARY.

Borough of Bootle,
Free Public Library and Museum,
February 23rd, 1897.

CLASSIFIED CATALOGUES.

DEAR SIR,—Mr. J. D. Brown and Mr. L. Stanley have done me the honour to criticise "Some Pitfalls in Cataloguing" and some features of the "Bootle Free Public Library Catalogue, 1896." Allow me to correct one or two errors of fact.

There is no "preface statement that books on each subject are all gathered together at one place."

The heading "Natural History" includes thereunder no work which does not relate to that subject, and very few whose style of treatment of the subject would warrant their being placed under botany, biology, or zoology. The separation of the merely "popular" from the "students' books on Nature implied in the use I have made of these headings must have escaped my critics. I have no "objection to classification." But, lastly, I have not published a "classification" in the catalogue. Therefore, all the remarks about this "wild and weird production" are utterly beside the point.

So much for correction.

Now, on the topic *Class List v. Dictionary Catalogue*, I desire to say that I believe heartily in both plaintiff and defendant, and I think there is no case between them. There is much difference between a logical system, which the system of the class list is, and a logical exposition of a system which your contributors' articles I humbly think are not. What I should like to see is a fair comparison between a class list such as Mr. J. D. Brown has made, and a dictionary catalogue dealing with the same books such as he could make if he set about it.

I would suggest to Mr. Jast and Mr. Brown that in future articles they should "speak to the point." They discuss at length such subjects as annotations and abbreviations of titles, as though these matters had a bearing in settling the question of a classified or alphabetical arrangement of subject names in a list of books.

Further, can the case (supposing there were a case) ever be settled by reference to bad dictionary catalogues and good class-lists, or to bad class-lists and good dictionary catalogues?

If I were not myself the object of some of the criticism, I should be inclined to say that the tone of Messrs. Brown and Jast's article is rather regrettable.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN J. OGLE.

To the Editor of THE LIBRARY.

118, Heath Street, Hampstead, N.W.

February 26th, 1897.

EXAMINATION OF LIBRARY ASSISTANTS.

SIR,—I am in agreement with Mr. Jast in so far as he supports the plan of examining library assistants before making appointments, because I believe it will cut at the root of the pernicious system that obtains in public libraries of "taking on" lads whose fitness for the work is never considered at all, and who, when tired of the job, throw it up for a situation as errand boy in a neighbouring grocer's shop. Entrance examinations should likewise be held before admission of candidates to posts in academical or subscription libraries, where the nature of the work postulates an intelligent education even more than in the case of public libraries. The above-mentioned ancient and learned institutions frequently appoint to their subordinate posts "ignorant and unlearned" adventurers of mature age.

But with regard to Mr. Jast's revolutionary proposal—for such in effect it is—to abolish the Library Association examinations, I think he requires