ANNUAL MEETING OF THE L.A.U.K.

SIR,—There are one or two matters which I think might be advantageously taken up again at the meeting, though they don't require to be introduced by papers, *e.g.*, the supply of Stationery Office Publications free of charge to such libraries as apply for them, also those of the Science and Art Department, and public documents in general. Of course I remember the deputation who waited on the Chancellor of the Exchequer some years ago, and the valuable concession (!) made of allowing 25 per cent. off the published price to libraries. There is also the arrangement (very little known, I fear) that papers presented to Parliament may be had for the asking. Then there are the occasional distributions to the larger libraries of duplicates from the British Museum.

Again, as to details of administration and distribution in Public Libraries. Of course our hand-books are admirable guides in this respect, but still I think much good would be done by collecting and distributing details as to the various plans adopted in every library, which could then be compared and amended from each other, and hints given how certain difficulties were got over. The information collected for the Chicago Exhibition must contain a great deal of valuable information, could a digest of it, or copies of it be got.

I always feel that our meetings are too much devoted to papers which are better adapted for study at home, and which appeal more to the antiquarian or bibliographer, and, while I do not wish to undervalue these I think it is a pity that the joint experience of so many able and enthusiastic library administrators yields so little for the information and assistance of the tyro in such work. It is all very well for those gentlemen who have smoothly working and well arranged libraries to discuss the higher phases of the profession, but for learners and inexperienced folk, who are plodding on under difficulties, let us have "more light."

Yours truly,

D. WATSON.

Hillside Cottage, Hawick,
15th July, 1894.

BERMONDSEY PUBLIC LIBRARY.

SIR,—I observe that in connection with the Library Association Preliminary Examination Mr. J. D. Brown acted as examiner in the subject of "Library Management."

I have all due respect for Mr. Brown, but would like space in your magazine to advance reasons why I consider him unfitted to examine in at least two of the questions submitted to the candidates for certificates.

The first of these questions runs as follows: "What are the differences between the Elliot and the Cotgreave indicators?" Now it is well known that Mr. Brown has used the Cotgreave indicator in the Clerkenwell Library for some years past and until a very recent date, and in the paper *London* of a few weeks past Mr. Brown writes of the "freely expressed detestation of the mechanical indicator formerly in use." This criticism,

it must be borne in mind, refers to the Cotgreave indicator, and I leave it to all fair-minded persons whether it is right for Mr. Brown to sit in judgment on an indicator which he has already prejudged and so emphatically condemned.

The second question is : "Is it an advantage or otherwise for a library staff to be brought into frequent contact with readers? Give reasons in support of your opinion."

Mr. Brown, by abolishing the indicator, has brought his staff into frequent and direct contact with readers. In the article already quoted from *London* he lavishes unqualified praise on his new system and refers to "the wisdom of my commissioners in making the change." It must then be perfectly obvious to any disinterested looker-on that Mr. Brown's mind is quite biassed in favour of his own system of "bringing the staff into frequent contact with the readers," and I contend therefore that Mr. Brown is utterly out of place in acting as examiner on such questions.

I am, yours truly,

JOHN FROWDE.

[We have printed this letter because the pages of *THE LIBRARY* are open to all librarians for the airing of grievances, as well as for pleasanter communications, but we strongly deprecate both the tone and the matter of Mr. Frowde's letter, which, had good taste been considered—to say nothing of proper professional feeling—should have been addressed to the Council of the L.A.U.K.—Ed.]

PUBLIC LIBRARY LEGISLATION.

SIR,—The Act which you printed in *THE LIBRARY* for August, amending the Public Libraries Consolidation (Scotland) Act and which extends to Scotland the provision contained in Sir Francis Powell's Amending Act for last year which transferred the power to adopt the Acts from the ratepayers to the "library authority" raises a doubt in my mind as to whether it would not have been better, while giving the "authority" the power of spontaneous adoption, to have left to the ratepayers the power they held *as an alternative* to be used in cases where reactionary authorities refuse to adopt the Acts.

Now that the power is in the hands of the "library authority" there no longer exists any reason why Parliament should restrict the rate to 1d. any more than it should restrict the water rate or the Sewer rate. The only reasons for the limitation of the rate originally were (1) to give communities some kind of incentive to the adoption of the Act, and (2) not to give the voters at large the power of assessing an unlimited tax; but the transference of the power to local authorities has completely obviated the necessity for such optional conditions. If a town or district has so much regard for its own public library as to wish to spend on it a larger amount than Parliament allows there seems no logical reason why it should not do so. In view of the proposed amendments on the law, particularly as regards exemption from rates, I should be glad to see in the pages of *THE LIBRARY* opinions from library authorities as to the propriety of introducing further legislation to abolish the limitation of rating powers.

X. Y. Z.