to the Rev. Mr. Gilpin. 'The tradition of this tree,' says this ingenious writer in his *Remarks on Forest Scenery and other Woodland Views*, 'traces it half way up the Christian era. It is still a noble tree, though it has suffered greatly from the depredations of time. About a yard from the ground, where its rough fluted stem is 36 feet in circumference, it divides into eleven vast arms; yet not in the horizontal manner of an oak, but rather in that of a beech. Beneath its shade, which overspreads an area of 300 feet in circuit, an annual fair has long been held on the first Friday in July.' This celebrated tree was for some time fenced round with a close paling about five feet high. Almost all the extremities of its branches have been sawed off, and Mr. Forsyth's composition applied to them, to preserve them from decay; and the injury which the trunk of the tree had sustained from the lighting of fires have been repaired, as much as possible, with the same composition. On one of the branches a board was fixed, with this inscription, 'All good foresters are requested not to hurt this old tree, a plaister having been lately applied to its wounds.'

If my recollection serves me correctly, a drawing and description of this old tree is contained in one of Hone's publications,—I think his *Table Book.*

Another large tree is mentioned in the same volume (p. 87.) as being called "Doodle [Query, *dole* or *boundary*] Oke."

To conclude (if I have not already trespassed too much upon your space), Is the Fairlop Oak still standing; and, if so, what is its present condition?

J. B. COLMAN.

Cypress trees on the continent of America grow to immense ages. By counting the concentric rings observed in the wood, on saving a trunk across, it appears that 400 years is a common age. There is a gigantic trunk near Santa Maria del Tula, in the province of Oaxaca, in Mexico, whose circumference at the dilated base is no less than 200 feet. Of this, taking 1 ft line as the average growth of a year, the age would be 3512 years. (*Lyell's Second Visit to United States*, vol. i. pp. 254, 255. *Prescott's Peru*, vol. ii. p. 315. 4th edition.) Adanson, the celebrated botanist, calculated the age of one of the famous Buab trees of Senegal to be 5150 years. (*Marquis of Ormonde's Sicily*, p. 76.) A tamarind tree in the Mahometan burial-ground at Puteal, in Ceylon, is 39 feet in diameter, or upwards of 117 feet in circumference, from which the age may be calculated on the above scale. (*Sirr's Ceylon*, vol. i. p. 85.)

**Arrangement of Books** (Vol. v., p. 49.)—Your correspondent L.'s letter is very valuable. May I add a few contributions?

There is a mode of printing used in Cuvier's *Règne Animal*, which is exceedingly useful for books of classification, that is, to print those sentences which relate to the primary divisions in a larger type, and full up to the side; the subdivisions to be printed short, as sums are entered in an account book, and in a smaller type. I believe I had the fortune to introduce a slight improvement in indexes. For instance, in your index the subordinate items are arranged according to time, but that gives a great deal of trouble. Under Mr. Beez's name there are fifteen items; they should be arranged alphabetically, like the principal items, as is done in the same index in the case of notices of books, unavoidably. But such subordinate items had better, in general, have the word on which the alphabetical arrangement turns printed in Italic, rather than invert the order of the words, as must be done in the principal items.

In what books the old spelling should be retained is a matter of individual question, upon which no rules can be laid down. Walpole complained that the *Paston Letters* were printed with the old spelling, and that, though a version is on the opposite page; but few persons will agree with him in that. In such books we have a right to see the old spelling in order to judge whether the version is right, as well as for general information.

C. B.

**The Ring-finger** (Vol. iv., pp. 150, 198, 261.).—The two questions mooted concerning the ring-finger, *i.e.* why the third finger is the ring-finger, and why the wedding-ring is worn on the third finger of the left hand? have not yet been satisfactorily answered.

The third finger is the only recognised ring-finger. Hence all who wear rings *ex officio*, wear them on that finger. Cardinals, bishops, doctors, abbots, &c., wear their ring on the third finger. The reason is that it is the first vacant finger. The thumb and the first two fingers have always been reserved as symbols of the three persons of the Blessed Trinity. When a bishop gives his blessing,
he blesses with the thumb and first two fingers. Our brasses and sepulchral slabs bear witness to this fact. And at the marriage ceremony, the ring is put on to the thumb and the first two fingers, whilst the names of "The Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost" are pronounced. Thus the third is the first vacant finger, and the ring-finger. The wedding-ring is worn on the left hand to signify the subjection of the wife to her husband. The right hand signifies power, independence, authority; according to the words:

"The salvation of his right hand is in powers."
—Psalm xx. 6.

"The change of the right hand of the Most High."
—Psalm lxxxvii. 10.

The left hand signifies dependence or subjection. Married women, then, wear the wedding-ring on the third finger of the left hand, because they are subject to their husbands.

Bishops, because they have ecclesiastical authority, and doctors, because they have authority to teach, wear the ring on the ring-finger of the right hand.

Ceylon.

Count Königsmark (Vol. v., p. 78.).—The Queries put by Mr. Markland will be found solved in that excellent book, The English Causes Célèbres, edited by Mr. Craik, and published in 1840. It is a great pity that Mr. Craik's undertaking was not prosecuted beyond vol. i.

Walpole was wrong, and Sir Egerton Brydges right. Charles John Count Königsmark was the instigator of the assassination of Mr. Thynne. Philip Christopher von Königsmark, the younger brother of Charles John, was the presumed lover of Sophia of Zell.

Charles John von Königsmark was mortally wounded at the battle of Argos, on the 29th August, 1686.

The presumed "foul play" in the Königsmark case consisted, I suppose, in Chief Justice Pemberton summing up strongly, in accordance with the known wish of the king, that the Count should be acquitted.

John Bruce.

Mr. Markland will find his inquiries as to the two Königsmarks answered in a late number of the Quarterly Review. (I think that for October, 1851), in an article on the Lexington Papers. C.

Petition respecting the Duke of Wellington (Vol. iv., pp. 233. 477.; Vol. v., p. 43.).—I thank Ægrotus for the clue he has afforded me, as to the date of the document he inquired for, and can now give him some further particulars. At a Court of Common Council held Feb. 23, 1810, in consequence of a proposition in the House of Commons to settle upon Lord Wellington 2000l. per annum, for three lives, a motion was made, and carried by sixty-five to fifty-eight, to petition the House against it. The petition is very long, but it is to the following tenor: it commences by objecting to the grant on the ground of economy, and that his services have not deserved it; "that his gallant efforts in Portugal have lead only to the disgraceful and scandalous Convention of Cintra, signed by his own hand;" that the result of the battle of Talavera was a retreat, with the abandonment of sick and wounded; that as yet they have seen no inquiry into either of these campaigns; that he and his family have held lucrative appointments in the East Indies; that no provision has been made for the family of the highly deserving Sir John Moore. It then goes on to say, "that it appears a high aggravation of the misconduct of his Majesty's incapable and unprincipled advisers;" that they advised his Majesty to refuse to receive from the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs, either at a levee, or personal audience, a petition from the livery praying an inquiry into the conduct of the commanders of the late campaign. This is the substance of the petition which I should think might be readily seen in extenso by a reference to a file of newspapers of the date.

Southwark.

P. S.—The petition from the Livery, doubtless agreed to in Common Hall, which the king refused to receive, and which is referred to above, is most probably the one which Ægrotus inquires about, and of which the Duke complains in his dispatch of Jan. 1810. I have not been able to see it; but if I can find it, I will send you notes of it: the mem. I have sent establishes the fact of its having been carried.

Reichenbach's Ghosts (Vol. iv., p. 5.; Vol. v., p. 89.).—If A. N. will do me the favour to refer to my question, he will see that his remarks do not furnish a reply. Reichenbach says, that "thousands of ghost stories will now receive a natural explanation," from his discovery that the decomposition of animal matter is accompanied by light, or luminous vapour, which is visible to certain sensitive persons. As I originally stated, "my Query is, where to find the 'thousands of ghost stories' which are explained by it." I now repeat that Query in unaffected ignorance. I have read a good many ghost stories, British and foreign; but I know that some of the writers in "N. & Q." are much better acquainted with German literature and superstitions than I am; and I ask them if they can tell me where to find such stories,—that is, ghost stories explained by Reichenbach's discovery? I do not ask for "thousands," nor even hundreds—a score or two will be quite enough; or even a dozen, if they are good ones.

S. R. Maitland.

Gloucester.

The Broad Arrow.—I can only offer the following note on the above subject as a conjecture,