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BOOK CHAT.

MR. JEROME'S BOOK.

A fine coloured reproduction of de László's portrait of Jerome K. Jerome serves as frontispiece to that versatile man's volume styled "My Life and Times," issued at 16s. net by Hodder and Stoughton. To us what Mr. Jerome says about his Times is as interesting as are the details of his Life proper, though there may be varying grades of importance in the book. Certainly we find the last five chapters less absorbing than the Introduction, with its anecdotes, vividly familiar to the present writer, of such literary celebrities in the making or at a standstill as one's dear friend the blind bard Philip Bourke Marston, and his father, the long distinguished dramatist, Dr. Westland Marston, Edward Aveling, F. W. Robinson, J. M. Barrie, Pett Ridge, and the rest. Our own recollections of the Marstons' dingy home in the Euston Road are as clear as are Mr. Jerome's and, indeed, the book is full of topographical items with regard to the author's early life in the East End and his wanderings through London, West as well as North.

Jerome gazed with clear vision at everything and everyone that he saw in the course of his adolescence and his later years, and the volume is stuffed full with matter calling up memories to those who remember *The Idler* and *To-Day*, and who recollect "Three Men in a Boat," "Stageland," and the many plays of the author of "The Passing of the Third Floor Back." His early experiences on the stage are recounted graphically, and we could have done with many more pages such as these and the chapters on his literary and dramatic work instead of the sections on America, the war, and so forth, with which he has endeavoured to round off this semi-autobiography in proper form. This volume, like other books recently published, would have been all the better had the writer or his assistants taken the trouble to compile a full table of contents, naming all the notable people with whom he has mixed in the course of a varied career.

The portions of the work to which we would direct especial attention are the Introduction, deeply interesting, as already said; *I Become a Poor Scholar*; *Record of a Discontented Youth*; *My First Book and Others*; *More Literary Reminiscences*; *Trials of a Dramatist*; and *I become an Editor*. Theatre-going in the old pre-queue days, when many of us stood for hours in the Lyceum pit-entrance; the starting of the Playgoers' Club; the many actors and men of letters with whom Jerome has rubbed shoulders; his plays, from "Barbara," "Fennel," and his first full-sized one, "Woodbarrow Farm," a Gertrude Kingston matinee production, onwards; and reminiscences and stories about numbers of notable folk, including Arthur Machen and his gracious wife, whom we first knew as Miss Hogg—all such things and subjects crowd the pages of Jerome's "Life and Times." It should be read by thousands of old staggers as well as those attracted chiefly by J.K.J.'s former repute as a humorist of modern type. Cycles, buses, rehearsals, noctambulation, serve to make up the contents of a volume the mingled chattiness and serious tone of which form a blend certain to appeal to many tastes.