

Brief Book Notes

MRS. JAMES T. FIELDS' "Memories of a Hostess" (Atlantic Monthly, \$4), edited from her journals by M. A. DeWolfe Howe, is a substantial book of recollections of the 1860's and 1870's, of Dr. Holmes, of Concord and Cambridge, of American and English authors and actors. An entertaining and agreeable record; lively and pleasing.

An excellent book for a gift at Christmas: Herbert G. Ponting's "In Lotus Land: Japan" (Dutton, \$6). The illustrations are reproductions of photographs, exceptionally clear, and are varied by eight pictures in color. Mr. Ponting will be remembered as the author of "The Great White South," that remarkable book about the Scott expedition to the South Pole. This is clear and effective writing, inasmuch as there is no straining for effect.

So much emphasis is naturally laid upon his diplomatic experiences in "The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page" (Doubleday) that it is easy to forget that the first of these two volumes contains, among others, a most interesting chapter about the future ambassador's journalistic and other adventures in letters. His work with the *Forum* and *The World's Work*, his editorship of *The Atlantic Monthly*, are described in this chapter.

The "Four Famous Mysteries" (London: Nisbet & Co.) by Sir John Hall include the puzzles of the vanished English envoy, Mr. Bathurst; the murder of Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey; the

identity of the spy who brought to the English cabinet the news of the Treaty of Tilsit; and the murder of Paul Louis Courier. The author is rather heavy in his discussion of Mr. Bathurst's strange disappearance, but treats the murder of Godfrey more appropriately. I fear Sir John Hall panders a little too much to the serious historian to catch the charm which surrounds an historical mystery.

"His Talk with Lincoln" (Houghton Mifflin, \$3.00) is a letter written by James M. Stradling, a sergeant in the army, who was received by Lincoln and conversed with him at the White House in 1863. It is an interesting bit of hitherto unpublished reminiscence. Lord Charnwood furnished the introduction, and the little book is excellently printed in a limited edition.

The slapstick tires, the bladder is flourished with waning energy in Henry L. Mencken's "Prejudices; Third Series" (Knopf, \$2.50). It is amusing, often vigorous, for a page or two, but the custom of hitting every head in sight can not be kept up year after year. Mr. Mencken is over forty; he cannot fight off the natural kindness which creeps over the most determined scoffer at that age, no matter how many cups of hot blood he quaffs or how often he refreshes himself with wormwood and gall.

More sketches of London—of London by night—the lights o' London—are in Thomas Burke's "The London Spy; a Book of Town Travels" (Doran, \$2).

Richard Le Gallienne's "Ballade to a Departing God" begins with this stanza:

God of the Wine List, roseate lord,
And is it really then good-by?
Of Prohibitionists abhorred,
Must thou in sorry sooth then die,
(O fatal morning of July!)
Nor aught hold back the threatened hour
That shrinks thy purple clusters dry?
Say not good-by—but *au revoir!*

From "A Jongleur Strayed" (Doubleday, \$2.50).

An amusing miscellany about animals, with many illustrations, is "Puppy Dogs' Tales" (Macmillan, \$2), edited by Frances Kent. It will delight children with its variety of short sketches and stories, photographs and drawings about dogs and cats, ducks and geese, rabbits, and other attractive creatures.

About a dozen short plays, some of them very short indeed, are included in the volume by Floyd Dell, called "King Arthur's Socks" (Knopf, \$2.50). They were performed at the Liberal Club, or by the Provincetown Players.

An entertaining book upon a subject of endless fascination is "The Boys' Book of Whalers," by A. Hyatt Verrill—a good account of whales and their hunters, and of whaling considered commercially, and as adventure.