

Esther Bould's Book Corner

SMASHING HALOS

"ANATOLE FRANCE HIMSELF"

By Jean Jacques Brousson.
J. B. Lippincott Co.

If this be truly "Anatole France Himself" then he was surely the most impish, conscienceless gay and naughty old man that ever lived. Basking in the warmth of his own brilliance he lived a life of freedom which would never be accorded to potentates or kings. The "monarchy of France" was one which had its own laws and indulgences—many indulgences, and really only one law and that was "Each man must find his own salvation as he can." The throne room of the realm is entered by the secretary—author of this work: "The Master is raised up at his desk. He wears a dressing gown, felt slippers, and a silk skull-cap. In his hand are a drawing and a reading glass. He makes a little collective bow to the newcomers, who arrange themselves around the room."

From this beginning M. Brousson continues as an active spectator in the comi-pageant for about 10 years. He watched faithfully and recorded with a great deal of relish and humour and absolutely no reverence. Not that M. France himself inspired reverence. Imagine seeing through a golden haze the man who, when his oldest friend is announced, calls to his housekeeper—in the presence of a dozen people—"Don't leave him alone downstairs for a moment. Keep a sharp eye on my precious objects." Or the rogue who when "Madame," the friend to whom his best and probably his only allegiance, is given, insists upon accompanying him to a print shop, treats her thus: "He chooses the longest and hottest way. You would think he wanted to exhaust the lady on her rickety high Louis XV heels. He spies an old curiosity shop, or bookseller's—and dashes off to it, leaving her on the scorching asphalt and taking her parasol with him to inspect some treasure in the window." Or later: "As Madame is very short-sighted and likes to pass for having excellent vision, he amuses himself by showing her drawings the wrong way. What do you think of this little Natoire?" "Delicious!" "Do you think it is genuine?" "Of course. Look at the misty background. True. But you would see it much better if you looked at it the other way: you are holding it upside down."

As for his more serious misdemeanors—as M. France would never have called them—they are treated in the same lighthearted manner. There are conversations in which Rostand is solely distinguished for having written "the worst prose since Victor Hugo," and in which Napoleon is disposed of as a "buffoon." But as M. France at home changed his mind as often as he changed his skull-cap which was often, these may not be taken too much to heart.

One can only wonder how society would have treated such a man had he not been a genius. True it is probably only the liberty given to genius which allowed such a man to develop. In any case, the book, while it may smash a few illusions, is highly entertaining.

A GOOD MYSTERY STORY

"DR. RICARDO"

By William Garrett.
D. Appleton & Co.

For those whose vacation satchel needs for its completion a story of mystery or adventure "Dr. Ricardo" can be heartily recommended. William Garrett's latest book is an excellent type of mystery novel—it has a clear straightforward style, a good plot, and an ingenious unravelling. If one is addicted to chess as is the famous detective, Mr. Drew, there is plenty to try one's head at here, and to be able to solve the problem before the author is willing to disclose the solution, will take a good chess head, indeed.

Sir Richard Montague is the charming type of young nobleman who is always just spoiling to get into an adventure which does not particularly concern him. Mr. Drew, American detective, comes to England on a little business which he terms "unlikely to be productive of adventure or indigestible excitement." An excellent beginning for an adventure which at every step becomes more indigestible and more exciting.

Louis Farrell, holder of the blackmail papers which Drew has come to England to recover, is, on the day after the detective's arrival, mysterious-

ly murdered at his farm near Tanner's Green. A mystery which seems at first so simple that we are sure we could explain it ourselves is unrolled. There are a few irreconcilable facts, but we agree to disregard them and hang the obvious murderer.

But not so Drew. He is sufficiently anxious to get the right man that he willingly enters upon, dragging Sir Richard and us after him, a series of hair-raising experiences. The puzzle is entirely solved, with all parts fitting and enough excitement to ensure one night's loss of sleep.

SPIKES FABLED PORT OF MISSING VESSELS

A mass of ship hulks, entangled in a sea of weeds, this is the fabled Port of Missing Ships located in the Sargasso Sea. The tales about this weird spot in the Atlantic ocean have been handed down from age to age, generation to generation for thousands of years, according to Jack Slown, local Exide dealer.

Columbus, on his first voyage to find a new passage to India, discovered it and named it Mar de Sargaco. But even before Columbus there had come stories from the Phoenicians and other mighty sailors of hundreds and thousands of years ago about this mass of seaweed which hindered the path of ships and sometimes caught them and held them fast. In the mass of weed securely entangled are reputed to be the oldest ships that sailed the seas. Each nation, age and continent is represented. Some day, too, that all the wrecks and hulks of ships lost in the Atlantic gradually drift until they reach their final resting place in this mass of weed, this Port of Missing Ships.

Many fascinating tales of adventure have been written about this elusive sea. Stories of treasure hunts and search for the Spanish galleons laden with Incas' gold from the ancient mines of Peru. Not so long ago a moving-picture company produced a picture called "The Isle of Lost Ships"—a story of shipwreck and adventure

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among the vessels caught in this sea of weed.

But though it may shock the romantic ones, we must have the truth. So far as William Beebe, well-known scientific explorer, is concerned, the fabled Port of Missing Ships seems to be a greater myth even than the well-known and somewhat notorious sea-serpent.

When Dr. Beebe, as head of an oceanographic expedition sent out by the New York Zoological society, started on his recent exploration of the Sargasso Sea he promised to look into the legend of lost ships.

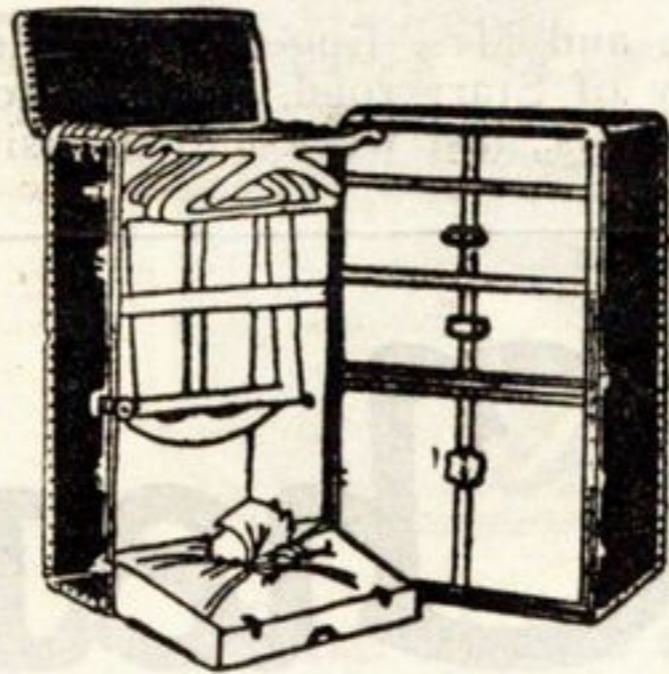
"The Sargasso Sea," he wrote in the New York Times Sunday Magazine, "has always been one of the most appealingly romantic spots of the world."

But he didn't find the "Port of Missing Ships," the "Isle of Lost Ships," or anything of the sort.

He did, however, make many interesting discoveries of greater scientific interest, and if the trip has lost the romantic background of the isle of lost ships, it nevertheless is surrounded with the interest of modern science.

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Mrs. Philip T. Mallen of Pine street, entertained a number of friends at luncheon and bridge on Wednesday.

Miss Beatrice Ripley of 29 Indian Hill road has as her guest this week Miss Ruth Taylor of New City.



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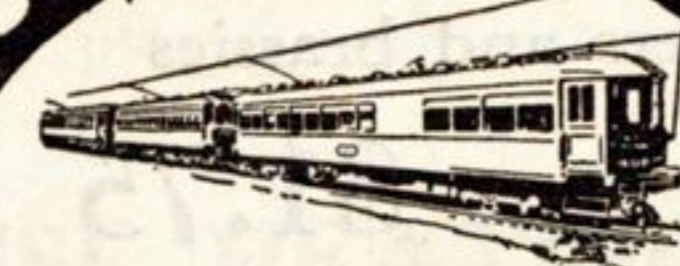
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