

There is very little sculpture proper shown this year, and what there is calls for little remark. The late Maharajah of Mysore on horseback in the Quadrangle, in golden bronze, makes a novel and agreeable break among the crowd of carriages in that stony and dreary space, which would, however, be ornamented to much greater advantage by a good fountain—that living touch that all London lacks, and that we hope to see supplied one of these days in the great courtyard of Burlington House. What an opportunity there is for one of those enchanting glimpses that one catches through half-opened gates in Geneva, Milan, Florence, Cairo, Paris, any city save our own, almost—and the materials are so simple, the grey walls, the central fountain, and a few palms or other trees, and the trick is done—and we have all the necessary trimmings in super-abundance, yet never never do the trick!

EMILY CRAWFORD.

A Book of the Week.

"THE PRINCESS SOPHIA."*

The craze for novels of modern political interest—the intrigues of small European States, the identity of which is sometimes but thinly veiled—bids fair to become monotonous, or worse.

Mr. Winston Churchill made his venture in this field and sadly failed. National issues are big playthings, but when one knows and cares nothing about the nation, one is apt to become bored with the account of all that ambition dared in order to rule it. The Prisoner of Zenda was in the first place a most enthralling love story; the politics were merely thrown in. Others who have aimed to succeed with the same tools have lost this sense of proportion. A high order of genius is required to make the heart throb over imaginary Acts of supposititious Parliaments.

These things being so, it is obviously an achievement on Mr. Benson's part to be able to interest us in the fortunes of the State of Rhodope and the House of Aegina. For without doubt this curious story is interesting, in spite of its hinging on the machinations of an odious Prime Minister.

In face of the present senseless anti-Semitic movement on the Continent, it was perhaps a pity that Mr. Benson should make his villain a Jew. There are plenty of his type in South Europe, one would think, of an entirely Gentile description.

The Princess Sophie had her youth in the fifties. We may therefore judge her less hardly than we should a woman of our own day, when we learn that the qualities she desired in a husband were as follows:—

"I do not require much. The man who marries me
" must be passably good-looking—and he must do one
" or two things well. He must either ride very well,
" or talk very well, or play cards very well, or if he
" only plays roulette and games of that kind, he must
" lose very well."

Prince Petros of Herzegovina (whose English mother denied having been a barmaid at the Alhambra) was fortunate enough to combine all these attractions. She tried him with a whole night at bezique; and she set him on a vicious horse, which he sat to admiration.

"Petros had a seat: he had hands. In Sophia's eyes
" there were few more ennobling gifts of God than
" these."

* By E. F. Benson. (Heinemann.)

This conquering hero had more gifts than even these; but it was not until their honeymoon that Sophia discovered him to be a bad sailor, to play at the tables on a system, and later on, to be ambitious to the point of plotting to dethrone herself.

In this respect, the implied moral of the tale is excellent. The woman who considers a good seat on horseback as one of God's most ennobling gifts, gets what she wants and finds it lamentably inadequate. There can be no true love on such grounds, and as Tennyson has it—

"In a flash the false love turns to hate."

Sophia is a plucky woman, and not without fine qualities: but religion and morals are not among them. Accordingly, when she accidentally learns that her husband is plotting against her, she is guilty of the meanness of increasing his temptation, of absenting herself so as to see to what lengths of disloyalty he will go, and of returning at the crowning moment to discomfort him.

She is a gambler born and bred, and the story is the account of how her only son saved the Kingdom from the results of her wrong doing, though he was obliged in so doing, to leave his mother to her wretched fate, the fate to which Thackeray condemned Becky Sharpe, of ever hovering around the tables; though Princess Sophia, we are assured, is too well-bred ever to display either eagerness or disappointment.

The account of the gradual development of the gambling fever in the high-spirited girl, till she settles down into the fat old woman, lost to all care for duty, forgetting her State and all else in her incessant craving for cards, is well done.

The moral aspect of the case never occurs to her; she feels no shame, even when her only son detects her in the act of staking her kingdom to an utter stranger in the Casino.

A miserable end to a woman with something great in her at the beginning.

WHAT TO READ.

- "England and America after Independence." By Edward Smith.
- "The Diary of a Dreamer." By Alice Dew-Smith.
- "Among Boers and Basutos." By Mrs. Barkly.
- "A Plain Woman's Part." By Norley Chester.
- "Nell Gwyn—Comedian: a Novel."

Coming Events.

May 21st.—West London Hospital. Annual Dinner, Trocadero Restaurant.

May 23rd.—Princess Henry of Battenberg, Patron of the Colonial Nursing Association, will be present at the Annual Meeting at Stafford House, 3.30.

House of Commons. London Borough Councils' (Women's Disabilities Removal) Bill, put down for second reading, by Mr. Lough, member for West Islington.

May 24th.—The Princess of Wales opens the National Bazaar, in aid of the War Funds, Royal Palace Hotel, Kensington.

Annual General Meeting, British Home and Hospital for Incurables, Streatham. Earl Amherst in the chair. 3.30 p.m.

May 26th.—The Polyclinic and Medical Graduates College, 22, Chenies Street, W.C. Conversazione, 4 to 7 p.m.

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