

One of the most novel exhibits in the colonial section of the Paris Exhibition is a complete set of bed hangings made of silk obtained from the halabe, an enormous spider found in great numbers in certain districts of Madagascar, where the production of spider silk promises to become a highly important industry. Each of the spiders yields from 300 to 400 yards of a brilliant golden colour and fine in quality, and is then liberated.

A Book of the Week.

"THE SECOND LADY DELCOMBE."*

There is so much ability in this book as to make it distinctly worth reading, in spite of its curiously wobbling moral tone. The heroine, Rita Frost, is an American heiress, of the type more or less familiar to novel readers, but she is a most refreshing example of the type in question. She encounters—one cannot help regretting it—Lord Delcombe, an impoverished English peer. He thinks her bad style, a fact of which she is "puffectly" aware; but his necessities are pressing. He has an only son, at Eton. This boy's mother he has divorced, and she has become Mrs. Ratcliffe. For Tony, the boy, he has a most sincere affection, and it appears to be the prospect of having to take him away from Eton that finally screws him up to the point of proposing marriage to Rita Frost. He is described as a racer, a gambler, a consumer of whisky pegs; he has no intellectual ability, he is not even good-tempered. One sincerely pities any woman who is his wife. Indeed, one woman, as has been seen, had found the post too hard for her.

Yet Rita Frost—and evidently Mrs. Arthur Kennard herself—appears to find something most fascinating about him. The only act chronicled of him which seems in the slightest degree meritorious is that, not being in love with Rita, he does not pretend to be, when he makes her the offer of his hand. The girl, knowing perfectly why the offer is made, nevertheless accepts it. She becomes Lady Delcombe, mistress of one of the loveliest old places in England, and, nominally only, the wife of the Earl.

By degrees, the mixing in good English society, fines down the little excrescences. Lady Delcombe becomes very much the fashion in London. But, meanwhile, she is falling in love with her extremely undeserving husband: and so her social success fails to satisfy her. Lord Delcombe, on his side, is busily engaged returning the compliment; but his first advance is furiously rejected by the little lady, and, indeed, it was not of a very dignified order.

Her chief happiness is found in Tony, the Eton boy, and one of the prettiest parts of the story is that which relates how the merry boy's fondness for her takes away her loneliness and makes her feel at home in her husband's stately old mansion. But Tony dies of a fall from a vicious pony. In his delirium he cries repeatedly for his mother, and Rita urges that she should be sent for. This was only what any large-minded woman would have done in her place; but the acquaintance between them which is afterwards kept up, jars upon one's feelings. In truth, the recognition of the re-marriage of the divorced creates difficult situations: perhaps Mrs.

* By Mrs. Arthur Kennard. (Hutchinson.)

Kennard rather meant to show this, though she in no way points the moral.

After Tony's death Lord Delcombe retires to a small and ill-managed Irish property of his, and is accompanied in his exile by a certain Mr. and Mrs. Jack Ellison. Eva Ellison has always been in love with him, and continues deeply to increase the breach between him and his wife. This woman is a very successful portrait of a modern type, and there is a capital sketch given of the *ménage* under her guidance, the *laissez faire*, the flirtations, the mixture on Sundays of early mass, billiards, and baccarat, the whiskey and soda which everybody indiscriminately takes all day long, and the outraged feelings of the neighbouring clergy and gentry.

At the end of an incredibly long series of wilful mutual misunderstandings, the husband and wife are united, though not before an evicted tenant has shot the Earl. By-the-way, one of the most genuinely humorous bits in the book, is that in which Rita anonymously sends O'Brien the money to pay his rent, and her abasement and chagrin when no rent is forthcoming in spite of her ill-advised subsidy!

It is to be hoped that she and her ill-tempered husband lived happily ever after, though neither his manners nor his morals lead one to expect it, but the charm of the book lies in its brisk, racy narration, with here and there a dash of character drawing, which leads one to think that the authoress might do much.

G. M. R.

WHAT TO READ.

- "The Story of Baden-Powell; 'The Wolf that Never Sleeps.'" By Harold Begbie.
- "Baden-Powell: The Hero of Mafeking." By W. Francis Aitken.
- "The Ascent of Man.." By Mathilde Blind.
- "John Ruskin, His Life and Teaching." By Marshall Mather.
- "Nude Souls." By Benjamin Swift.
- "Bequeathed." By Beatrice Whitby.
- "The Kingdom of the Yellow Robe; being Sketches of the Domestic and Religious Rites and Ceremonies of the Siamese." By Ernest Young.
- "The Shadow of Allah." By Morley Roberts and Max Montesole.
- "Wiles of the Wicked." By William Le Queux.
- "Bettina." By May Crommelin.

Coming Events.

May 26th.—The Duke of Cambridge lays the memorial stone of a new wing of the Victoria Hospital, Folkestone.

June 5th to 8th.—The Medical, Surgical, and Hygienic Exhibition, Queen's Hall, Langham Place, W. Concerts 3.30 to 6, and 7.30 to 10 p.m.

June 30th.—Prince and Princess of Wales open the new Jenny Lind Infirmary for Sick Children at Norwich.

July 5th.—Meeting of the Provisional Committee of the International Council of Nurses at the Matron's House, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, 11 a.m. Members entertained to luncheon by Miss Isla Stewart, 1 p.m.

July 5th and 6th.—Matrons' Council Conference Medical Societies' Rooms, Chandos Street, Cavendish Square, 3 to 6 p.m.

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