

## THE AUTHORISED LIFE STORY OF PRINCESS MARINA.\*

At an auspicious moment comes "The Authorised Life Story of Princess Marina," by Grace Ellison, for the nation realises how little it knows of the history of this Princess who, during the brief weeks she has been in this country since her engagement, and especially on her wedding day, has taken the hearts of the British public by storm, by her simplicity, beauty and charm—that indefinable gift of the gods which is one of the greatest in their power to bestow.

And our new Royal Duchess is happy in her biographer, for it is written by one intimately acquainted with her family, and with the modern history of Greece which forms the background of the book. Thus it is no ephemeral story which Miss Ellison has written, hastily compiled to meet a popular demand, but one historically accurate, sympathetically appreciative, and characterised by deep affection for the Princess and her family. It comes to us, moreover, with the imprimatur of the Princess, who wrote to Miss Ellison: "I think your biography is charming, it has my entire approval."

So, as we read this story—"the story of a royal lady regaining the happiness she so richly deserves"—we realise how our knowledge of European history is enriched in its narration.

"The daughter of two great European houses, Princess Marina has been very 'carefully brought up by her parents, Prince and Princess Nicholas of Greece, and educated for the part she had every right to suppose would be hers. When the Greek dynasty was exiled, Princess Marina had to follow her parents, and that at the most impressionable moment of a girl's life. Most certainly then, those tragic days, in striking contrast to her happy childhood, must be firmly stamped on her memory.

"With great dignity, without self pity, and without a complaint, like her parents, she accepted her fate as the will of God. Like them, never losing faith or hope, she learnt her hard lesson. But sorrow, like success, cannot spoil Princess Marina; schooled as she has been in the dictates of righteousness and truth, and the responsibilities of true royalty, in the service of others; quite on the contrary, it strengthens and gives balance to characters of sterling worth.

"And now once more, when she steps back to the exalted station in which she was born, her years of exile will give her an understanding of life—of joy as well as of suffering—which will take her straight into the heart of the whole nation."

In her childish days Prince Nicholas, thinking sometimes that a little judicious teasing might be good for his fascinating daughter, asked her on one occasion if she really thought she was good looking. "With a mischievous glance at her distinguished-looking father, she replied without hesitation: 'Darling angel, when I look at you I'm thankful I am no worse.'

"When he reproached her with riding too much, she answered; 'You taught me to have consideration for others, and now when I find the King of Yugoslavia's horses need exercise, and am prepared to give it to them, you tell me that I ride too much.'

"Princess Marina is full of fun, though never lacking in dignity, and her talent as a mimic will always help her out of any difficulty."

It is of interest to recall that it has been the privilege of Princess Marina to live in the neighbourhood of the Acropolis. "One of her first drawings was of a celebrated antique which was a great favourite of Queen Alexandra, and which Prince Nicholas himself has often drawn. One

sees the influence of these exquisite Greek lines in the dresses which she has chosen."

"She loved the picturesque costume of the Greek Guard (Evzoni) with their quaint kilts (fustanella) and she must recently have found some resemblance in their dances to the Scotch dances as well as the Scotch kilts, which must have made them doubly attractive."

"In this united family," we read, "it is at Christmas and Easter and other great fêtes that the Princesses have particularly remembered their happy home days in Athens: and in exile they have always endeavoured to meet in order to celebrate these great days together."

The description of the great Christmas tree, with tables for presents for each person, from the Queen down to each grandchild and servant, is charming.

"Queen Alexandra never forgot to send the children presents for Christmas, and before they went to bed that great Royal lady, Queen Olga, took them into her own little chapel to hear Vespers and to thank God for all the nice things He had sent them. In exile they have followed this custom as much as possible, and keep Christmas and Easter particularly with as much solemnity as possible."

"All the Greek Royal children were very religiously brought up. The Danish grandfather, King George I, always remained a Protestant to the day of his death. The Royal children and grandchildren were all brought up in Queen Olga's faith, that of the Greek Orthodox Church. They were never allowed to disobey one of its laws, and even to-day, in memory of Queen Olga, not one of them would miss church or go to a theatre in Lent, and they all keep the prescribed fasts."

After the departure of King Constantine and his family from Greece the situation became unbearable and "even had not M. Jounart (the French High Commissioner, 'a man who far exceeded the orders of his Government' in all he did), inspired by M. Venizelos, required the King's brothers to leave the country they would have done so of their own accord."

Recently Prince Nicholas and his family have lived quietly in Paris. Now "the wheel of fortune has turned, as turn it must for those who deserve it. Born in the purple, suffering with such courage and dignity as a result of other people's clumsy political blundering, if ever a family deserved happiness it surely is the family of Prince and Princess Nicholas of Greece."

"Princess Marina," says Miss Ellison, "is so radiantly happy that you feel her happiness whenever she comes into the room; it warms you like the sun." "And what is the crown of all my happiness," the Princess told Miss Ellison recently, "is the employment my wedding will bring to so many who need work so badly." Even in her happiness her first thought is for others.

"She has everything to take her straight into the hearts of the people and to keep her there. And what is it? Not only her beauty, her charm, her culture and intelligence, but above all her own sweet nature, born partly of suffering and mostly of happiness, and a nature schooled above all in the right Christian spirit of love and service for others."

"The story of Princess Marina's life I have classed in my mind," says the author, "according to the Rosary mysteries: Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious. She had her happy years in her beloved Greece, where she still hopes she may return one day: she has had her days of sorrow: and she has now stepped into the days of glory which those who love her hope sincerely will never end."

Miss Ellison is to be congratulated on the story she has told, and the manner of its telling, while the many illustrations add considerably to its interest. A large circulation for the book is a foregone conclusion. It would make a most acceptable Christmas Gift, and its moderate price brings it within reach of modest purses.

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\* William Heinemann, Ltd., London and Toronto. 3s. 6d. net.

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