

Monarchs and Muscle.

BY MISS PHYLIS BENTLEY.

[Miss Phyllis Bentley is well known to the public by her clever exhibition of experiments in lifting and balancing. These experiments she has had the honour of performing before many of the Crowned Heads of Europe, and in the following interesting article relates her experience of these Royal personages.]



THE world at large—thanks to the ubiquitous “descriptionist”—believes it knows almost everything worth knowing concerning the Emperors and Empresses, the Kings and Queens, the Princes and Princesses, and other exalted personages of this earth. It has been told precisely what this Emperor eats and what that Empress drinks; the likes and dislikes of this King and that Queen, and a thousand other little personal and domestic details, many of which, I feel sure, astonish far more those described than those for whom the descriptions are written.

It would be difficult—except, perhaps, in the direction of accuracy—to add much that would be new to the published descriptions of the personal and domestic life of Royalty, and I may at once say that I have no intention of attempting to overcome such a difficulty.

What I purpose doing in this article is to deal with the Imperial and Royal personages with whom I have had the honour of having been brought into contact, from an entirely different standpoint; from a standpoint, in fact, from which they have never been described.

I cannot tell you anything about Kings from a psychological point of view, but I can tell you a good deal about them from a physical point of view, for I have had exceptional opportunities of testing both their strength and their weight.

The first Court I had the honour of visiting was the Danish Court, last summer, during the celebration of the King and Queen of Denmark's Golden Wedding. Amongst those who tested my experiments were their Majesties the Emperor of Russia and the King of Denmark, and their Royal Highnesses the Crown Prince of Denmark, the Duke of Cumberland, Prince George of Greece, and Prince Waldemar of Denmark.

Of the Czar's enormous strength I had heard a great deal. I had been told of his ability to bend together, with one hand, the points of a horse-shoe, and of his accomplishing feats which even a Sandow might envy; and it was, naturally, a matter of great interest to me that His Majesty should try his strength upon me. The Czar, who prides himself upon his physical powers, too, was, he assured me, anxious to see whether his strength could be as readily nullified as that of others who had taken part in my experiments.

To say I was not a little anxious when I placed myself before the Czar, for him to essay the task of lifting me, would not be true; I was just a bit nervous, for there flashed across my memory the long record of the wonderful things he had accomplished, and of his alleged lack of gentleness where his purpose was thwarted. But there was in reality no sort of cause for anxiety. His Majesty took me by the elbows, with the object of lifting me; to him it at first,



MISS PHYLIS BENTLEY.

From a Photo. by A. Marz, Frankfurt.



THE CZAR ATTEMPTING TO
LIFT MISS BENTLEY.

I think, seemed an easy task, and he did not put forth all his strength; but, finding I remained standing on the floor, he commenced to lift in earnest.

But in spite of His Majesty's efforts I did not go up. That His Majesty was considerably astonished was evidenced by the look on his face, and he plied me with questions as to how I had arranged to so completely defeat his endeavours to lift me. I explained to His Majesty the principle of the angle wherein the secret of the power of resistance lies, and he at once commenced operations with the ladies of the Royal party to see how far they had mastered the secret of that angle. His first effort was with the Princess of Wales, who, with charming readiness, had placed herself before His Majesty to be lifted. Quite easily Her Royal Highness, who had not yet mastered the secret of the angle, went up, much to her and the Czar's amusement.

Then followed the Czarina, who went up with the same ease as had done the Princess of Wales. But the task of lifting the Crown Princess of Denmark—who is, if I may be

permitted to use the word, of almost masculine build—was, His Majesty discovered, somewhat more difficult; but in the end the Czar's strength and the Crown Princess's lack of experience told, and she, too, was lifted.

In all the other experiments—those with the billiard cues and the one of, whilst grasping my shoulders, endeavouring to push me against the wall—that His Majesty tried with me I experienced the same gentleness and strict observance of the conditions as in the lifting test. His Majesty assured the company (which assurance was not necessary for me, *for I felt it*) that in each test he had put forth his full strength. But it was the strength of a man who had approached the subject scientifically, and not the indiscriminate employment of brute force. For instance, he did not grasp my elbows as if he were gripping the points of a horse-shoe, or use that sudden jerk of the arms he employs when throwing a weight over his shoulder. His Majesty did his best, his very best, only he



THE CZAR LIFTING THE PRINCESS OF WALES.

took no unfair advantage of his giant strength.

We have had many word-pictures of the Czar, scarcely two of them alike, but no description of His Majesty I have read is in accordance with the opinion I formed of him. One can only judge of a man as one finds him, whether he be prince or peasant; and I found the Autocrat of All the Russias to be very different from what I, both by hearsay and from what I had read, had imagined him. It is in tests of strength, when the brute instinct in man is uppermost, that one can get a very fair idea of this or that man's character; at least, such is my experience, and my experience has been a very extensive and varied one.

Now, as I have already pointed out, the Czar is gentleness, thoughtfulness itself; wholly unlike the Czar of popular belief—a popular belief created by the erroneous descriptions that have been given of him.

Next to the Czar, Prince George of Greece is the strongest Royal Prince I have met. His Royal Highness is somewhat taller than the Emperor, and weighs, I should fancy, several pounds heavier. He has not the Czar's iron grip, and, from an athletic point of view, is barely in such good condition as his uncle; but his width of chest is enormous, and then his arms! I have seldom seen such muscles outside of the strong man fraternity.

It was this young Viking who saved the life of the Czarewitch whilst in Japan, and the head of the murderously-inclined Jap must have been of abnormal thickness to have withstood the blow His Royal Highness dealt him with the stick that warded off the sword-thrust at the heir to the throne of All the Russias; an ordinary head would have been smashed in as easily as an egg-shell.

When the account of Prince George's feat in Japan appeared in the papers, more than one writer, I remember, expressed their surprise that a man who showed such slight muscular development could have knocked anyone down; but these very superior critics had no personal knowledge of Prince George, whom they mistook for his younger brother, Prince Nicholas. Now, Prince Nicholas has none of his brother's splendid physique; he might almost be called effeminate-looking. In manner he is gentle, with a good deal of a woman's—his mother's—gentleness, and a more striking contrast between him and his elder brothers, the Crown Prince and Prince George, could scarcely be found in any family.

But to return to Prince George. In His

Royal Highness's attempt to push to the ground a billiard-cue held by me in my open hands, so great was the force he brought to bear upon the cue that it broke in two as if it were a reed.

Propos of this little incident, when I was at the Palace in Athens this spring, Prince George said to me, with a look at the billiard-cues standing in a corner of the reception-room, "I see you have had the cues made thicker since you were at Bernstorff last summer. But," he added, with a sigh, "I cannot have the pleasure of testing their strength this time, as I am, as you see, almost a cripple." His Royal Highness had fallen while dancing, and had badly hurt his leg and foot. I explained to His Royal Highness that amongst the new cues there were two I had used at Bernstorff.

"Oh, yes," he replied, taking up a cue; "isn't this the one we held down whilst the Grand Duke Michael sat on the top? I ought to know it by the way it cut into my hands. And this (taking up the cue broken at Bernstorff), surely this is my old friend?"

"The same, sir."

"And why do you take it all over the world with you?"

"So that people may know how strong you are."

At this His Royal Highness laughed heartily, adding, "I had no idea it was so thick; it seemed to break so easily."

The fact is, Greece's sailor prince does not know his own strength, either in pushing or in lifting. I know how strong he is, for several days afterwards I felt the strain in my arms, caused by His Royal Highness's endeavours to lift me.

Amongst the Royalties with whom my experiments have been performed, it is not easy to say who, in the matter of physical strength, comes next to Prince George of Greece; both he and the Czar stand out so much ahead of all others that there is no immediate next.

The Crown Prince of Greece is also very strong, and so are the King of Württemberg and the Crown Prince of Roumania, but their strength is not of the giant order. The Crown Prince of Greece has neither the height nor weight of his brother, Prince George, nor has he the same length of arm with—what "Ouida" would probably term—its "god-like" biceps; but His Royal Highness is exceedingly muscular, and is as upright as a dart, a commanding, distinguished figure that has few equals in any land.

His Royal Highness tried all the tests



PRINCE GEORGE OF GREECE BREAKING THE CUE.

with me, but he neither strained my arms nor broke any cues, although he exerted himself to the utmost. But, as a matter of fact, the only cue I have had broken at my various Palace performances was the one snapped in twain by Prince George, the half of which I still have, and the other half the young Grand Duke Michael of Russia kept, I believe, as a memento of "Cousin George's" strength.

The King of Denmark has been strong in his time, and even now His Majesty, I found, could exercise not a little strength; indeed, so far as my experiments were concerned, there was very little difference in the display of grip and muscle on the part of His Majesty and that of his three sons, the Crown Prince of Denmark, the King of Greece, and the Prince Waldemar. I did not, in fact, expect that the King at his age would have taken so great a personal interest in experiments which, although scientifically interesting as showing how physical force can

be diverted without the employment of a counter physical force, have generally speaking, in the matter of personal experiment, greater attractions for the young and the robust; but although His Majesty had seen both the Czar and his grandson fail where it was not possible for him to succeed, he was himself desirous of testing the experiments. It was not mere curiosity on His Majesty's part: it was the outcome of real interest — an interest which he takes in everything that he considers to be of artistic or scientific importance.

The King of Roumania is not tall or robust-looking, but he is what is termed "wiry," and it was not until His Majesty was going through some of the "tests" with me that I discovered how strong he really was. True, he is not so

strong as his nephew, the Crown Prince (who is married to our Princess Marie of Edinburgh), whose appearance is even more deceptive than that of his uncle. Slight of build and of middle height, none would give him credit for the strength he really possesses.

His Royal Highness was—to use an Americanism—convinced that he could "down" me, and he certainly tried his hardest to bring this about, but his efforts in the direction of the lifting and other tests were unavailing. No one has ever approached the subject with greater zest and determination to succeed than His Royal Highness, and his fruitless efforts afforded great amusement to both the King and the Crown Princess.

Talking of "downing," the most determined effort, regardless of condition as to fairness, to beat me I have ever experienced was at the Abdeen Palace, at Cairo, on the part of one of the Khedive's *aides-de-camp*. His Highness, after witnessing the failure of

several members of his Court to push the billiard-cue I held to the ground, commanded a stalwart *aide-de-camp* to essay the task.

The *aide-de-camp* stepped forward and grasped the cue. He did his best, but the cue was not to be got to the ground. The more he tried the greater grew the Khedive's merriment; in fact, I thought at one time His Highness, in his mirth, would have rolled from off his chair. This so excited the man that he completely lost his temper. He had been commanded to push the cue to the ground, and he was going to do it or perish in the attempt. All thoughts of conditions or unfair actions were banished from his mind. He seized hold of the cue, much after the fashion of a hungry lion seizing hold of a bone, and, utterly regardless of what became of me, attempted to dash it to the ground.

At this His Highness peremptorily ordered him to desist.

Never shall I forget the sudden change that came over the man's face. In a moment he was the humble slave. He let go of the cue and clasped his hands and bent his eyes to the floor in token of the deepest humility, and thus he stood until the Khedive, who was highly indignant at what he considered to be the man's unfairness, ordered him to retire.

The Khedive is the only ruler to whom I have had the honour of presenting my experiments who has not personally taken part in the tests. But the reception at the Abdeen Palace was of an official character, all the Ministers of State being present, as well as the usual *entourage*; and from an Oriental point of view it would not have done for His Highness to have tried any of the experiments and have failed. Had he tried he would *have had to succeed*. An Oriental ruler must always do, or be supposed to be able to do—which is much the same thing—what none of his Court are capable of accomplishing.

In the East it is all so different from what it is in the West. A European Prince is superior to being thought ridiculous, but an Oriental Prince would not dare to run the risk of for a moment being thought to be of the same build or on the same level as those below him.

But although His Highness was precluded by his position as Khedive from personally taking part in the experiments, he evinced the deepest interest in them, and not only did he warmly thank me for what I had shown him, but he presented me with a bracelet of

scarabæi—a most unique and handsome gift—as a token of his appreciation.

The last King whose strength of muscle I had the opportunity of testing was the King of Würtemberg, and that only a few weeks ago. His Majesty did me the honour of inviting me to his villa—locally termed *schloss*—at Marienwhal, Ludwigsburg. His Majesty is somewhat above the medium height, broad of chest and strong of arm. He, like all German officers, is exceedingly fond of gymnastics, and knows exactly how to use his strength. He, therefore, approached the subject more as an expert than as a novice, and his knowledge of the principle upon which my experiments are performed was greater, I think, than any of my previous experimenters. But His Majesty did not for a moment allow his knowledge to infringe upon the conditions under which the various tests can alone be effectively demonstrated. It was all the more interesting to me to do my experiments with one who had such an inside knowledge of the question, especially as I was altogether successful in everything I attempted.

What I think most interested His Majesty was the chair test, in which I lifted four members of the Court seated on a chair, *whilst His Majesty's hands were placed between my hands and the sides of the chair*.

I knew His Majesty was looking forward to this test, for the first words he addressed to me after the presentation were: "Have you brought the famous chair?" I had brought the "famous chair," and I pointed it out to His Majesty, who examined it with considerable interest.

It is an ordinary-looking chair, strongly built and painted black, and has been made famous from the fact that upon it I have lifted one Emperor, several Kings, Princes, and other famous folk. In fact, more Royalty, more intelligence, and more wealth have sat upon that chair than upon any one single chair in the world. It has been with me through all my travels, and all my public and private tests have been performed with it. It is not an object of admiration, but it is certainly an object of interest, and it is amusing to hear in different countries the various remarks people, knowing its history, pass upon it as they see it at the railway station or standing upon the stage.

Many people have been anxious to buy it, but it is not for sale. Only the other day an American millionaire expressed a great desire to take it back with him to the States.

Said he: "I guess I ought to have the

chair ; it ain't much to look at, but it's got a mighty interesting history. They don't grow chairs like that in the States, and I should have what no other man could either buy or steal. I guess if I stuck that in my hall at home my friends would just glue themselves to it. What, you won't sell it?—well, let's have another squat in it ; it ain't every day one gets an opportunity of squatting in a chair as the Czar and a whole bilin' of Kings have been lifted upon." And he squatted.

I have, I assure you, quite an affection for this chair ; it has had some extraordinary adventures both by land and sea, and has been lost on several occasions, but it has always turned up again to seat another King.

Going back for a moment to the Würtemberg Court, the audience that evening was, outside the Queen, the Princess, and their ladies, almost entirely composed of amateur athletes, and, in good-humouredly imitating some of my experiments, they did some extraordinarily funny things. One, a Prince of Saxe-Weimar, was like an eel in his slipperiness ; no one could either hold him or lift him. Someone suggested that His Serene Highness should don female attire and come out as a "magnetic lady," with a new series of experiments of his own invention. He would be an immense success.

It is always amusing to see—not in fun like this, but quite seriously—the various Princesses who have witnessed my demonstrations endeavour to demonstrate on their own account. Some of them would do the tests very well with patience and practice—two very necessary auxiliaries—whilst others would always be hopelessly at sea. Anyhow, these princely ladies take a great interest in my work, and I already have amongst them several imitators and one serious rival—the Crown Princess of Denmark.

It may suggest itself to some people that Royalties do not, in their experiments with

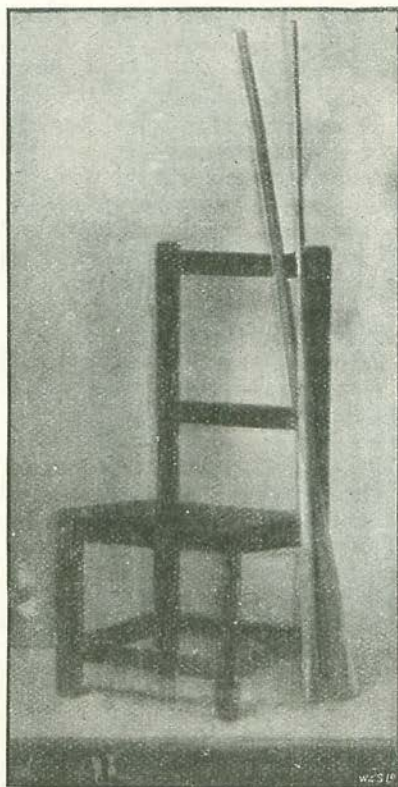
me, try so hard as would every-day folk. Such a suggestion would be altogether erroneous. In addition to my experiences at Courts, I have had a very extensive experience of public audiences in various countries, and, if anything, the Royal investigator is more in earnest than the members of a committee at a public audience. It is in this way : A King has heard that such and such a Royal cousin has not succeeded in the tests made with me, and he determines to succeed where the Royal cousin has failed. Now, amongst a general committee, no such little friendly rivalry exists ; each man lifts, as it were, for his own hand. Whereas, with a King, he, as I have already said, seeks to do what one of his own order has not done ; so his efforts are guided by a double object.

But whilst members of a miscellaneous committee will occasionally be guilty of just a little meanness in the matter of evading the conditions, such a thing never occurs with Royalties ; they are always fair—always the acme of everything that is honourable.

Of all the experiments I have performed at Courts—with the exception of the chair test, when I lifted the Czar, the Crown Prince of Denmark, the Duke of Cumberland, and Prince George of Greece—which has, perhaps, been most discussed in Royal circles, was the one in which I lifted the young Grand

Duke Michael whilst seated upon the top of a billiard-cue held down by four pairs of hands.

It was in this way : The billiard-cue, with the pointed end to the ground, stood upright, and upon the butt end of the cue Prince George of Greece placed his hands ; upon his hands were placed those of the Crown Prince of Denmark, upon the hands of the Crown Prince those of the Duke of Cumberland, and finally upon his the hands of my relative, Mr. Stuart Cumberland. The Czar then lifted his son on the top of this pile of



CHAIR AND CUES.

hands which were holding down the cue. I then lightly took hold of the cue and lifted it with the young Grand Duke several inches from the ground.

The company were, I think, exceedingly

difference existing between European and Oriental Princes; but the difference between really princely and snobbish folk is still more strongly marked. The snob is always afraid of compromising his position by being lifted



MISS BENTLEY LIFTING THE GRAND DUKE MICHAEL.

surprised at this, and I am certain they were highly amused; for, when the Grand Duke went up, he slightly lost his balance, and rolled off into the arms of the Czar.

I am always, at every Court I visit, asked to repeat this test, but it not infrequently happens that there is no one small enough amongst the assembly to sit upon the cue, and, rather than give it up, I ask the smallest man there—who may weigh some ten or eleven stone—to mount on to the hands. Weight does not make much difference to me, but it makes all the difference to those who are holding down the cue. I often, when a heavy man is upon the cue, feel very sorry for their poor hands.

I have already drawn attention to the

on a chair, but with a Prince there is never any such thought.

Of course, much depends upon how you go to Court—that is, the conditions under which you go. If you go simply as a hired entertainer, you are not allowed to personally experiment *with* the Emperor or King, as the case may be; in such case, your experiments would have to be performed *before* him and his Court—which is quite another thing.

I mention this, for had I not had altogether exceptional opportunities of visiting the Courts where I have given my demonstrations, I should not have been allowed to experiment with the Royal personages I have described, and I could not, from personal experience, have given the foregoing impressions of them.

With respect to the relative physical strength of nationalities, the English, Scotch, and Germans are, according to my experience, the strongest, and the Levantines the weakest. The Germans, perhaps above all others, are, from a scientific standpoint, the most interested in my work; they approach every experiment scientifically, and not from the mere "show" point of view; they like being scientifically puzzled.

The English, very much like the Americans, view everything performed on a public platform in the light of a "show." With them it is not so much the scientific aspects of the performance as whether the performance is in itself a "good show." The French, in fact all the Latin races, simply look for amusement in their entertainments; they, unlike the Teutonic races, resent any attempt at instruction in connection with an exhibition, which must amuse them, and amuse them alone. The Anglo-Saxons and the Teutons go to a performance out of interest, the Latins out of curiosity; that is why a good performance has a more lasting success in England and Germany than in France and other Latin countries, for interest has greater staying powers than mere curiosity. Another thing—so far as my experiments are concerned—to excite even curiosity amongst the Latins one should pretend to be almost everything that one is not. It would not be enough to say, "Come, I have something that is interesting—nay, amusing—to show you!" To draw them one would have to say, "See, I am something quite out of the common; I am altogether inexplicable. Come and try and solve the mystery—if you can."

But in Europe the true lovers of the mysterious are the Russians. They, as a rule, are interested only in what they consider to be the supernatural aspects of both mental and physical phenomena. They always seem to be altogether disappointed with a rational explanation of what they have decided must be supernatural. They naturally have a great hankering after the occult; and it is easier for them to believe that a certain experiment is explicable only on the basis of occultism rather than that it can be explained on purely scientific grounds.

With Russians—many of whom have been of very exalted rank—I have frequently had very great difficulty in convincing them that my demonstrations are not the result of magnetic force.

"But," they will say, "I felt a magnetic shock directly I took hold of the cue"; or,

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"Your elbows discharge a most powerful electric current; my arms are tingling even now. Come, how do you explain this?"

I do my best to prove to them that it is all the result of imagination; but they remain to this day unconvinced. Their argument is that I do not understand my own powers; that it is I who imagine I accomplish my experiments in one way, when in reality they are the outcome of a force which I am personally in ignorance of. True, I am wholly ignorant of being in possession of such a force; but, with people who see signs of the supernatural in the most natural of daily occurrences, what will you? Then, again, there are those—and they are not confined to Russians, but are common amongst all nationalities—who imagine, in fact assert it, that I am a hypnotizer, and that I take away their strength by means of hypnotism.

Well I remember an exceedingly comical incident, bearing upon this belief, that occurred in connection with a famous diplomatist. Just as His Excellency had laid hold of the cue, which I hold in the open palms of my hands whilst standing upon one foot, with the object of pushing me backwards, he suddenly stopped and said, "Please do not look at me like that, you are mesmerizing me; I cannot go on if you look at me."

I was unaware of the fact that I was looking at him, but to meet his wishes I turned my head, and he turned his head in the opposite direction, and so I stood, and so he pushed. It was really too funny for anything.

I remember reading in a French newspaper a few months back an extraordinary account of my alleged mesmeric power, in which it was minutely explained how on one occasion I had mesmerized the Czar. His Majesty, it went on to say, told me to stand against a wall, but I refused, and defied him to push me there. He raised his arm for that purpose, but I looked him in the eye, made certain passes over him, and, lo and behold, he was hypnotized! A little truth is a dangerous thing, and the highly-imaginative French journalist had only got hold of the smallest grain of truth; the rest of the story was evolved out of his inner consciousness.

What really happened was this: I placed the tips of my fingers against a wall, and asked the Czar to put his hands upon my shoulders and push me against the wall. His Majesty tried and did not succeed, that was all. There was, of course, nothing mesmeric about the experiment, it being performed upon precisely the same basis as



THE CZAR TRYING TO PUSH MISS BENTLEY AGAINST THE WALL.

the other tests I did with His Majesty ; but the story, as I have told, was that on *this* occasion I had actually mesmerized the Czar, and several times since I have been asked to do "the mesmeric test you did with the Emperor of Russia." I have repeated the test, but not as an exhibition of mesmerism, about which subject I neither care nor know anything.

I wish, for once and all, it to be clearly understood that there is nothing of a supernatural character about my exhibitions, and that I have always disavowed the possession of any so-called magnetic powers. What I do is perfectly understandable, and although the experiments are apparently widely different from each other, they are really one and all, with the exception of the chair test, performed upon precisely the same basis—that of the diversion of physical force.

I have really nothing to disclose, as there is nothing of the character of a trick about my experiments ; the secret lies in the position I assume and the angle at which the cues are held. In this way I can, without the slightest strain or physical effort, nullify the force displayed by the strongest men.

It is curious that it should be so, but so it is.

Some people think I must be exceedingly strong ; on the contrary, I am anything but strong or robustly built, whilst my weight does not exceed eight stone. But the experiments do not depend upon strength for their success. What is required is a knowledge of dynamics and a certain quickness of perception blended with a sufficiency of nerve and self-possession. One has always to be on one's guard, for no two men lift or push alike, and it is not until the test has begun that I know precisely the course I have to take in order to divert the force that is being brought to bear against me.

In the chair test everything depends upon how the chair is packed. I do not care how heavy the four or five men who sit upon it at one time really are, as long as they are properly balanced. If the balance is all right I take the chair on the swing and lift it (not merely tilt it) all four feet from off the ground. I do not grasp the sides of the chair with my hands, as I actually use no physical effort in the act of getting the chair with its living weight up ;

I merely, as I say, catch it on the swing, and up it goes.

It not infrequently happens that when the men packed on the chair lose their balance the whole of them fall to the ground, a confused mass of struggling bodies and moving arms and legs. Such a sight is much relished by an audience, especially if the unfortunate men be known to them, but it is a *contretemps* I always do my best to avoid.

At one Palace the poor chair, in spite of its solidity, ran a serious risk of being broken into matchwood. Some members of the Court thought they would sit on the chair on their own account, whilst another exalted personage did the lifting. They took their places, but, before the exalted personage had got himself in position, they slipped, and over they went, taking the chair with them. They kicked and struggled, whilst, amidst a roar of laughter, another member of the Court made a hasty sketch of the scene. I would much have liked to have gained possession of that sketch, it was all so exceedingly comic.

I am afraid I am indirectly responsible for a great many damaged Royal chairs and



MISS BENTLEY LIFTING THE CZAR, THE CROWN PRINCE OF DENMARK, PRINCE GEORGE OF GREECE,
AND THE DUKE OF CUMBERLAND.

broken billiard-cues, for, as I have intimated elsewhere, my visit to a Court has always been followed by a vigorous attempt to reproduce my experiments, with the result that chairs have become disjoined under the strain of an unexpected weight, and cues have snapped at the angle at which they have been held. All this is, of course, to

be regretted, but it is some satisfaction to me to know that my experiments not only afforded considerable interest at the time to various crowned heads, but that they still, during the periods of imitation, are capable of providing those who have honoured me with their attention with a good deal of amusement.