

## FLEUR-DE-LIS.

There is no more charming story in "Princess Mary's Gift Book" than that of a baby by Kate Douglas Wiggin. If the book were not full of good things it would be worth while to secure it for this story alone. Besides, the profits are given to the Queen's "Work for Women Fund," which is an additional reason for purchasing it.

"Fleur-de-Lis had been christened Marie Hortense Amélie Dupont; Marie for her mother, Hortense and Amélie in honour of the two Viscomtesses de Rastignac, sole survivors of the proud old Royalist family in whose service Marie's mother and grandmother had lived and into whose service Marie herself had been born. But when *la petite* Marie Hortense Amélie was a mere blossom of babyhood she forsook the name that the priest had given her as he touched her downy head with the holy water, and chose instead to be called Fleur-de-lis, a name in sooth much better suited to a noble daughter of the Rastignacs than to a child of Marie Dupont, maker of tissue-paper flowers, and Pierre Dupont, street musician.

"Fleur-de-lis had first opened her eyes in a very humble chamber, but it was large enough to hold a great deal of sweet content, which grew all the sweeter when she came to share it. There were only two rooms for father, mother and child, and these were in a dreary tenement house, for Pierre Dupont, a stranger in a strange land, was having a desperate struggle with poverty. On being discharged from the hospital, where he had passed through the dangerous illness that left him a maimed and broken man, he had to begin the world all over again, and to begin it single-handed in very truth."

He managed to scrape a living together by playing a street piano in which he invested the last of his savings, and Marie who was young and pretty and loyal, when affairs were most desperate "offered to take the baby Fleur-de-lis and accompany her husband, gathering the pennies in a tambourine while he ground the so-called music from the piano with the left arm, that grew so weary with the monotonous service," but Pierre would not have it. "So Maman Marie, loving him more than ever for his chivalrous regard of her, took up an almost forgotten pastime of her girlhood and fell to making artificial flowers, which she sold to an old woman who stood on the street corners and offered them to passers-by. . .

"Fleur-de-lis's cradle had curtains made of a bit of tricolour, and from the centre of the canopy there hung a medal of the Virgin swinging on a narrow ribbon of blue. The cradle itself was a wooden box, and Marie, with a maternal ingenuity that surmounted the lack of ordinary materials, had lined the inside of the hood with tissue paper flowers, white and blue fleur-de-lis to match those on the faded satin coverlet, a fragment of ancient grandeur, where the Rastignac coat of arms was intertwined with the Bourbon lilies of France. And when the baby's vagrant gaze wandered to the flowery heaven above her head, and her pink fingers reached to touch it and to

stroke the soft counterpane, Maman Marie would tell her the name of the posies; and so after a time, when she discovered that people and things possessed names, Marie Hortense Amélie, Mademoiselle Bébé, elected to call herself Fleur-de-lis. It was the first word she lisped, and she attached it to herself with the utmost complacency. It was appropriate enough, for she looked as if she might have been originally intended for a flower, and then somehow a soul had strayed into the flower and it had fluttered down to earth as a child, a curious blossom to come from lowly stock, a kind of tender and beautiful miracle wrought out of common clay by the fashioning and refining power of love. At times, when Marie sat at her work and looked at Fleur-de-lis cooing and smiling under her tri-coloured curtains, she forgot the strange land outside the windows and the Babel of strange tongues in the crowded tenement, and as her deft brown fingers shaped the tissue flowers she saw in fancy the poppies and the wheat and the lilies of her native Breton fields. . . and if Fleur-de-lis slept she hummed a Breton lullaby as she twined her paper nosegays. What wonder then that there was a French air about them that attracted purchasers."

## INFANT WELFARE.

At the annual meeting of the Hayward's Heath, Lindfield, and Scaynes Hill Nursing Association, Mrs. Russell gave an interesting address on Infant Welfare, in the course of which she said that the question of infant welfare was closely related to the question of war. It was only after the Boer war that the subject of the health of babies and their mothers was seriously taken up. Mother love was not the same thing as mother knowledge. It came as a terrible shock to find that although the general rate of mortality had gone down, infantile mortality had stood at a standstill for seventy years.

So many men willing to enlist were rejected owing to some physical disability that the Government took alarm and inquired into the health of the nation. On getting back to school children, large numbers were found suffering from physical defects. From the school children they got to babies, and then to the mothers. All over the country infant welfare centres were springing up to help the babies and to help the mothers. The old-fashioned nurse had gone, and the new-fashioned sensible scientific midwife had taken her place. These were doing a great work in a great unassuming way. The Notification of Births Act had come into operation as an adoptive Act, and they had seen Infant Welfare Centres, Schools for Mothers, and Baby Welcomes established, either municipally or voluntarily. We wanted all our boys and girls to grow up into healthy citizens. Maternity and the life of the infant now became the special care and a charge upon the nation. She described in much detail the work that went on at a typical centre, and said that now Government grants were obtainable half the financial difficulty had disappeared.

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