

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"FLOWER OF THE DUST."*

Yet another story of that ever-fascinating person, the hospital nurse. We fancy the public must be a little weary of the halo round her head.

Hiliary Brown has a varied and wide experience of life, for she was born little Ilry Brown, the daughter of a bargee, and died Lady Milroy, the wife of an eminent surgeon. At an intermediate period she trained as a nurse. She trained thoroughly; we have no fault to find on that score; but, alas! on the first interview the Matron described her to the surgeon as a "born nurse," which gives the position away, as we know it is not so that Matrons are wont to speak of the probationer in embryo to their honorary staff.

To be quite fair, however, nursing was Hiliary's true vocation, and from the time she was of age to think of shaping her life, she never faltered in her determination to attain her objective. Her career is somewhat of the high falutin' order, and does not strike us as very convincing, but at the same time we feel sure that Hiliary is a type that has a very real and affectionate place in the imagination of the general public. There is in addition a charming frontispiece of an exceptionally pretty girl in a Sister Dora cap, and lots of golden hair, and we can imagine that such a bewitching apparition polishing the brasses was quite sufficient to make one of her patients exclaim that "it is a fair treat to watch you. I don't sleep much in the night. Wish you'd polish that there rail all night." In addition he requested the surgeon to "let that new young woman tend me, then I b'lieve I might get better in time."

We like better the description of her life with her parents on the barge.

"What's God?" she asked of her mother one night.

"God?" said Mrs. Brown, vaguely faced suddenly with the question of the ages. "God?—why . . . I dunno's I can exac'ly tell you, Ilry. He's up there," jerking her thumb skywards. "Them's things I dunno much about, never havin' had the chanst."

"An' heaven, what's that?"

"That's another. You wait, my gel, an' you'll mebbe learn all about it in time."

And that was all the religious instruction Ilry got. We have said that Ilry's experience was varied, and the description of her conducting the burial of the body of a little stillborn brother or sister goes to prove this.

"I've made it up in a parcel an' you'll keep it just as it is, like a good gel, and do just's I've told you."

Ilry nodded, and her mother went slowly into the other room and brought back an oddly-shaped little parcel done up in newspapers.

"Take the little shovel," said her mother, "and see you dig deep. You're a good gel, Ilry."

* By John Oxenham, Hodder & Stoughton, London.

"You done it all proper?" asked her mother when she reached home.

"Yus."

"Good an' deep?"

"Yus." And that was the end of it.

But Ilry, on windy nights, shivered at the thought of the "little parcel out there."

Mr. Brown had some time previously fallen off the tow-path and been drowned, so that when Ilry's mother was taken to the infirmary, where she died, there remained nothing but the Magpie Schools for Ilry and her little brother. So it will be seen that she travelled a long way before she became Sister Hiliary and finally Lady Milroy.

Before she went out as part of the staff to the new hospital at Peking she was commanded to the presence of the "Little Great Lady," Queen Victoria, who was much struck by her cheerful bearing and gracious figure. She knelt before her while her Sovereign pinned to the breast of her gown a most exquisite little brooch with the mighty letters "V.R." in tiny diamonds.

It is not made clear why this honour was conferred upon her, but anyway it was.

Afterwards she married the chief surgeon of the hospital, and they were both massacred in a Chinese riot.

"St. Hiliary Brown was born on a canal-boat, and nurtured on a dust-heap; but I count her as worthy of canonisation as St. Cecilia, St. Elizabeth and St. Catherine."

H. H.

COMING EVENTS.

December 16th and 17th.—Central Midwives Board. Penal cases. Caxton House, Westminster, S.W. 11 a.m.

A WORD FOR THE WEEK.

DECEMBER.

More like a spirit than a flower,
Clad in her gown of flame,
Poinsettia comes to point the way
The blessed Christ Child came.
May Christmas bring to you and yours
Blessings to fill each hour,
And may your future be as bright
As this most radiant flower.

FRENCH FLAG NURSING CORPS.

Candidates for the French Flag Nursing Corps Service in France can be interviewed by arrangement with the Hon. Secretary, 431, Oxford Street, London, W. Mrs. Bedford Fenwick will be at 431, Oxford Street, W., on Friday, December 17th, from 2.30 to 5 p.m., to see candidates, who must be well educated and hold a certificate for three years' general training, which they should bring for inspection. Experience in fever nursing is an additional advantage, also a knowledge of French.

Candidates cannot be seen on December 20th, 24th and 27th.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)