

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"WAR PHASES ACCORDING TO MARIA."*

Can we have too much of Maria? Certainly not while she continues to supply us with such an abundance of humour. We will not take up space with comment; Maria demands all she can secure. Forthwith to Maria. She still continues to wear Tango curls as a war economy. She wished to "do something."

"It isn't the sort of thing," said Maria mournfully, "for which people's pictures are put in the papers."

Mrs. Dill-Binkie, her social rival, had already won notoriety as a Red Cross nurse. In the ha'penny illustrated, in the place of honour usually reserved for royalty, was Mrs. Dill-Binkie in a uniform manifestly designed by no less a one than "Lucile." "There she is, and don't know any more about nursing than a cat—not so much, for she has never had kittens. And to think she is already in the papers, and hasn't had her uniform a week, and only had one convalescent, and he ran away in a week. I know she had to wait three months for her uniform," said Maria mysteriously, for "Lucile was so rushed making uniforms for duchesses who simply wouldn't wait, they were in such a tearing hurry to start nursing. She had to board Mr. Dill-Binkie before she could turn her house into a rest-cure for convalescent officers. And the way the photographers rang at the front-door bell all day long and asked to take her photograph surrounded by her nurses was most touching."

* By Mrs. John Lane. John Lane, Bodley Head.

"Amateur nurses," she explained, "have so much more real feeling. They keep a common one to do the work." On Mrs. Dill-Binkie's head was a snow-white cap veil, one of the sort that flops in the soup and catches in the door, but makes them all look like amateur nuns. Maria is human, and she heard with gloomy joy that the amateur nurses were rebelling against always being photographed as surrounding Mrs. Dill-Binkie like humble and adoring satellites. They were neither humble nor adoring, and their uniforms cost just as much as hers, and so did their caps.

The only convalescent who had so far come—and that by mistake, it turned out—declared to the common or garden nurse who did the hard work and to whom he clung, that he didn't believe he had any face left, it had been nearly all washed away. But, of course, as there were so many nurses and only one convalescent he couldn't possibly go round.

"Maria on submarines" is equally delicious.

Her son managed to get a commander to show her over one. The blue-eyed commander introduced them gaily to his heart's treasures—the torpedoes. And that was the historic moment when Maria asked if she might sit down on one, she was so tired. Maria has no sense of humour.

"And do you know what I thought of as I sat there?" she asked pensively.

I said I didn't; how could I?

"I thought of Tomkins," said Maria.

Now, to think of Tomkins, at the supreme moment when one is sitting on a torpedo! For Tomkins is Maria's housemaid and has a mania for scrubbing as other people have for writing poetry.

"I could almost see her polishing the torpedoes." Maria spoke with feeling.



MRS. DILL-BINKIE AS A MINISTERING ANGEL.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)