

## Book of the Week.

## A LARGE ROOM.\*

Mrs. Dudeney has added another remarkable book to her long string of original writing, and in the character of Amaza we find ourselves interested and absorbed through a volume of considerable length. She never once disappears out of its pages, and herself sustains the interest in herself until the end. Throughout her lonely childhood, girlhood, and wifehood she paid the penalties of the imaginative.

"I was only—looking," she whispered, as the wet leaves and little sticks were savagely shaken from her black frock.

"Well, now you walk nicely round the gardens with Master Sebastian, and then we'll get home to tea, for this is what I call a regular raw day."

Nurse had said it was a "roar-re" day with a ripe roll of the words that Amaza, being an epicure in sights and sounds, decidedly liked. She said it to herself, rippling her red tongue in her grave mouth, as she and Sebastian went off according to directions. Her tongue repeatedly and silently said "roar-re," her eyes were fathoming the intricacies of each winter tree high up, and dwelling on the wine-tinted patterns of sodden leaves low down.

And this extract gives a very clever insight into her character.

She thought that the men servants she saw looking blankly over the tops of dining-room blinds were exactly like Turvey, the butler at home.

"Evidently some little babies were born marked 'Butler.'"

At eighteen she is strikingly beautiful, odd, and totally ignorant of life. A sad picture is presented to us of her at Christmas, left alone in the handsome house in Russell Square.

"Never had she been able to bear loneliness alone. After dinner on Christmas night she put a long cloak over her trailing frock and sneaked out of her house. The servants were singing. What would they all say if she ran down the kitchen stairs, broke the ring round the fire, made of herself the extra link? That would be a loneliness even more alone than this. . . . She walked like a hunted thing, listening to the noise of feet, of music, of voices, that came from every house.

. . . Amaza bent to see the shining stars in the puddles. She remained huddled up, half happy.

"Some one said presently, and it was a very nice voice, 'Are you looking for anything?'"

"I am always looking," she said, very simply.

"He had never before heard such a simple voice, nor had he seen such a striking girl.

"Amaza through those distracting days that followed walked in a web. It spun across her eyes, it tangled her feet. She beat it from her with both hands. It was a time to tremble over; to be penitent with, reminiscent with, in terror of, yes, and for ever. Not for what was just a vicious and well-bred man of the world, just a very young and totally ignorant girl, but for what was going to be."

\* By Mrs. Henry Dudeney. (William Heinemann, London.

A sham marriage before a sham Registrar, a terrible realisation, a ruined life, and always the restless insistence of her inner self, "It wasn't me, it wasn't me."

Then comes her marriage, with commonplace, good-natured Humphrey; but Amaza, still persuading herself that "it wasn't me," keeps him in ignorance of the tragedy of her life.

Then the birth of little Jim-John, her passionate delight and absorption in him, his tragic death, and the final shattering of Humphrey's trust in her. "I never wish to see your face again," he said, staring at it. "Get out, can't you."

"She pinned on her hat and slipped into her coat. When she was ready she looked all round the room, heavy as it was with every memory.

"She was feeling for Jim-John, a something more passionate than kisses, more deep than tears. Nothing could heal her but the touch and sound of him, and that would be never more."

We are left in uncertainty as to her fate.

Mrs. Dudeney has created in Amaza a character at once fascinating and repellent, and though she must awaken a sympathetic response, we must feel that there was a great deal to be said for her husband.

H. H.

## VERSES.

It is an old belief

That on some solemn shore,

Beyond the sphere of grief,

Dear friends shall meet once more.

Beyond the sphere of Time

And Sin, and Fate's control,

Serene in changeless prime

Of body and of soul.

That creed I fain would keep,

This hope I'll not forego;

Eternal be the sleep

Unless to waken so.

LOCKHART.

## COMING EVENTS.

December 22nd, and 29th.—Nursing Pageant. Members of Committee at 431, Oxford Street, London, W., 11.30 a.m.—7 p.m.

December 25th.—Christmas Day Hospital Festivities.

December 30th.—East London Hospital for Children, Shadwell, E. Christmas Entertainment for the Patients, 3 to 6 p.m.

December 31st.—St. Bartholomew's Hospital, Rochester. Concert and Christmas Tree, 4.30 p.m.

January 1st.—New Year's Day, 1911.

## WORDS FOR THE WEEK

"The supernatural only means the soul of the natural—absolutely no more than that."

"One of my maxims is that there are no such things as nations: and another that every man is worth shaking hands with for something or other."

"Poverty, Temperance, and Simplicity—these three; but the greatest of these is Poverty."

"Now, money, I say, is the one cause of slavery, and work the one hope of salvation."

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