

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"THIS WAY OUT."*

At any rate, Mrs. Dudeney can lay claim to being original in this latest of her works, and in addition also to being the reverse of dull.

The prologue describes how a Cornish clergyman had discovered and perfected an idea which would revolutionise the mining industry. We are introduced to him the day after he had proposed to Rebecca and been accepted. But Rebecca mattered not at all in comparison to the invention. Andrew Curnow loved Rebecca, and he had by chance hit upon the same invention as the Rev. John Trehwella. When Trehwella discovered this, he pushed his rival over the edge of the rocks on the wild Cornish shore at Clodgy point, and so stilled him for ever.

It is with his descendant, John-Andrew Vaquener, that the story is chiefly concerned and history, to a certain extent, repeated itself.

John-Andrew was a man of letters and he desired fame. His ideas burned within him, but so far he had failed to express them successfully. Entirely without means, he yet intended to force himself upon London.

To attain this object he resolved to live upon his sister Jane, who also wielded a pen for her living, and who occupied rooms in Gray's Inn.

Jane is a creation, and her personality is one of the strongest things in the book.

Her brother reflected upon her as he was making his way to her rooms, where he proposed to live upon her earnings.

Poor, industrious, commonplace Jane! Jane—vulgar, affectionate, genuine! Dear Jane, with her staring eyes and her short neck; Jane, with her noisy voice and kind heart—she was sitting by the fire now, waiting for him and with something hot for tea.

Jane got up from her chair by the fire. She put her arms round him; her fat arms in the thin blouse! "Good old Johnny," she said, affectionately. "So you've come back."

She went bustling about. How she combed out your nerves, poor girl! Everything about her was high and brightly coloured and thick.

Vaquener shot a look at her that was uncommonly like hate; for he did hate Jane's complacency and Jane's competence. She could make her living easily and he had not succeeded in making his; he was always coming back to her and sponging upon her.

Buttifiant, an artist, who lived in the set opposite Jane, was in love with her, as much and as deeply in love with her as though she were not plain and clumsy, noisy and common. But Jane apparently was indifferently unaware of this fact, although she and Buttifiant were intimate chums. She had an inordinate conceit of her person and ability, which carried her triumphantly through most situations. Good-natured as she was to

* By Mrs. Henry Dudeney. London: Methuen & Co.

her parasite brother, she did not hesitate to refer to his dependent state. She would say before Buttifiant: "I'll have to buy you a new bowler soon, Johnny; or would you sooner have a Homburg?" Buttifiant saw Vaquener's mad face, it touched and alarmed him.

John-Andrew, though he lived upon Jane, chafed and fretted under it, but made no effort to earn money in another direction. He foresaw years and years of living upon her, of listening to her typewriter, of taking money for small expenses from her roll-top desk. She had even spoken of drawing a cheque for his new suit, saying, with hearty amiability that it was only fair that he should choose the cloth. He did nothing but dress himself, eat his dinner, and do the marketing for Jane.

Shortly after his advent, she conceived the idea of writing the play, "Cackle Street," and when it was finished she read the MS. to Johnny.

It was supreme, he told her so; but for once she failed to appreciate herself.

Johnny had been a great drain on her resources, and with misgivings she went to see her agent.

But Johnny became a prey to unreasoning jealousy.

"As to letting Jane swagger about London as the author of 'Cackle Street,' he would be hanged if he would.

That night, after elaborate precautions he goes into her room intending to murder her.

Jane was awake. Her eyes looked and taught him all sorts of things. He would never forget that look.

He turned away, and said to himself grimly: 'No, it didn't come off.'

That night, however, Jane died by her own hand; but Johnny realised that he was her murderer. That did not prevent him from producing 'Cackle Street' as his own.

All the same it came to him that it was Jane, confound her, who did the strong thing.

She had kept herself; she had kept him; she had written 'Cackle Street'; she had killed herself. All the strong record was Jane's."

H. H.

COMING EVENTS.

April 20th.—Guy's Hospital Nurses' League. Dinner, 7 p.m. Annual Meeting, 8 p.m. Nurses' Home, S.E.

April 27th.—Quarterly Meeting Matrons' Council, Nurses' Home, Charing Cross Hospital, by kind invitation of the President, 4 p.m. Tea, 4.45 p.m. Address by Mr. Eustace Miles, on "Health, Economy and Food," 5 p.m.

CENTRAL MIDWIVES BOARD (England).

April 19th.—Monthly Meeting. Offices, Queen Anne's Gate Buildings, S.W. 3.30 p.m.

April 20th.—Penal Cases. Offices, Queen Anne's Gate Buildings. 11 a.m.

CENTRAL MIDWIVES BOARD (Scotland).

April 30th.—Examinations. Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen.

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