

chance has supplied her with another *motif*, the dramatic possibilities of which have been marred by the two tendencies which we have indicated. The half-crazed father, who is willing to lose even his own soul to bring his erring son to the belief in the mercy of God—could anything be finer? But Miss Dougall has her little sermon to preach; or perhaps the handling of such a theme was too great for her; and so literally and metaphorically the struggle for a soul is tucked into a corner, and serves only as an occasion of misunderstanding between Alice and her lover, in consequence of which everything in the book is out of focus. Amy, who should have been a bit of character drawing equal to Rosamond Vincy, is forced to be verbally explained by the author; and there are pages and pages, after the climax, of pure homiletics! Yet in spite of it all the story is bright and interesting.

A QUESTION OF FAITH. By L. Dougall.
Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.00.

We are out of all patience with Miss Dougall. She has a strength of hand, a vividness of fancy, an originality of conception, which might place her very high among our writers of fiction; and she is sacrificing them all to the desire to preach. Now preaching in art is insincere; it isn't straightforward to profess to tell a story, and suddenly spring a moral upon the unsuspecting reader; if he does not resent it, it is because he is, like the children, used to it, and supposes it to be the correct thing. All that the artist may do is to hold the mirror up to nature; if the scene of his choice contain a moral, the frame of the mirror will doubtless serve to isolate it for the better observation of the beholder; but to point it out, by so much as a finger, is presumptuous, and should be unnecessary. We may illustrate by referring to Mrs. Deland's *Philip and his Wife*, and to Miss Dougall's own first published novel, *Beggars All*. The latter had also the advantage of a plot of singular character, so unusual, indeed, that the author has ever since been hampered by a vain desire to rival her own work, and in consequence has given us stories whose framework is cheap, whose colouring is gaudy, and whose motive is clap-trap. In *A Question of Faith*, her latest work, genius or