

## BEAUTY AND POWER IN A NEW NOVEL

In "A Fountain Sealed" Mrs.  
Sedgwick Has Drawn  
a Mother of Rare  
Character.



ANNE DOUGLAS SEDGWICK has long held an assured place among those writers of fiction who may be depended upon not only to tell an absorbingly interesting story but to tell it with that decided touch of power and style that marks the difference between excellence and mediocrity. All of her books have contained something better than the development of startling plots, and her characters not merely allow themselves to be described—they actually live on her mimic stage and reveal themselves by word and deed, for Mrs. Sedgwick has no less a gift for analysis than for narrative and description.

But these are not the qualities that make especially for popularity in novels, and such stories as "The Rescue" and "Paths of Judgment" were appreciated by the few rather than the many. The unusual quality of their writer's latest book, "A Fountain Sealed," (Century Company) is, however, so plainly manifest—it is such a moving, vivid, illuminating picture of the kind of tragedy that everywhere dignifies human life, that it can but make a wide appeal. The plot is an unusual one in many ways and its development offers a striking study of youthful selfishness, self-conceit, and obtuseness against the background of a character which is its exact anti-thesis—a rare blending of natural sweetness, understanding, and self-effacement in a woman past her first youth.

The two women are a mother and daughter who have become somewhat estranged through the mother's inability to fit her own ideas of life with those of her eccentric husband and her consequent decision to take up her residence in England while leaving the other members of her family in their New York home. When the story opens the father has just died, and the mother comes home filled with all sorts of loving plans for making up lost time with her daughter. The girl has not only inherited some of her father's most impossible qualities, but

worships his memory and adopts toward her mother an attitude that is a mixture of disapproval, patronizing forbearance, and jealousy most trying to its recipient and calculated to lead to family jars in very short order.

The working out of these two characters and of the change of view which comes to the girl's friends in regard to her differences with her mother is accomplished with wonderful skill. Imogen is a "poser" just as her father was, and under all her assumed goodness is really the "cold-blooded, self-righteous, self-centred girl," which one of her disgusted admirers accuses her of being.

There are two interesting men in the story—a young American and an elderly Englishman—and in its movement between English country life and its several American scenes it affords Mrs. Sedgwick many opportunities for charming description. But it is the mother who is the fascinating centre of the story and it is her heart tragedy that gives the book its title.

### TOUCHING BIT OF FICTION.

**A GIRL OF THE FORTUNATE ISLES.**  
By Bessie Marchant. Illustrated by Paul Hardy. Pp. xxvi.-292. London: Blackie & Son, Limited.

This tale of New Zealand life is exceedingly pleasant reading. There is nothing remarkable about the story, no very complicated plot, and little new material, but the old stock is worked over excellently and time and again is the heart touched by the brave sacrifices of a most lovable young woman for her stepbrother, who goes away suddenly, leaving the impression among all that he has stolen a large sum of money from the bank which had employed him. The circumstances are so convincing that even his invalid mother believes him guilty. Margaret Alford, the sister, a character of exceptional beauty and strength, undertakes to pay off the indebtedness to the bank and so stop the prosecution of her brother. She is finally the means of clearing her brother's name and unwittingly fixing the crime upon a cowardly youth who was her brother's associate in the bank.

The threads of the story are not tied up until the last chapter, and interest in the lives of these plain, natural people, with their few bright hours and a larger proportion of dark days than usually fall to the lot of one family, is fully sustained to the last. The brother, who ran away because of some racing debts, comes home after a long illness in the bush, and Margaret is to marry the junior partner of the banking firm which had sought to send the youth to the penitentiary.

It is altogether a story which touches the heart, quickens the sympathies with those who bear their own and the burdens of others, and, without letting the secret out, teaches a warmer, readler human kindness toward all.