

**BARBARA DERING:  
IN TWO VOLUMES**

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Barbara Dering; in two volumes by Amélie Rives

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**AMÉLIE RIVES**

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# BARBARA DERING

BY

AMÉLIE RIVES

AUTHOR OF 'THE QUICK OR THE DEAD?' ETC.

—Life teaches us  
To be less strict with others and ourselves :  
Thou'lt learn the lesson, too. So wonderful  
Is human nature, and its varied ties  
Are so involved and complicate, that none  
May hope to keep his inmost spirit calm  
And walk without perplexity through life.

GOETHE : *Epitaphia*



IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

London

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1892

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'SOCRATES. . . . Every discourse, once written, is tossed about from hand to hand, equally among those who understand it and those for whom it is in no wise fitted; and it does not know to whom it ought, and to whom it ought not, to speak. And when misunderstood and unjustly attacked, it always needs its parent to help it; for, unaided, it can neither retaliate nor defend itself.'—PLATO: 'Phaedrus.'





## BARBARA DERING

### I.

MORE than two years had passed since Dering left Rosemary. There was a soft, gold-gray mist over everything; the tulip-tree leaves glimmered a pale yellow against the dark evergreens on the lawn; the Indian-corn, standing in great tasselled shocks, gave forth a dry rustle now and then as a field-creature scampered through it; a crow could be heard sometimes very faintly, as though drowsing on its listless, slow-moving wings; but, except for such noises, the warm autumn day was silent and the air still.

Barbara was walking through the cornfield, reading as she went. Her figure, in its dimly-tinted gown, looked thinner. She was pale, and her mouth had a tired bend at its fine corners.

Under her broad hat her hair was gathered into a

sleekly-plaited great knot, like that of a school-girl. She looked younger, and at the same time there was an expression of deeper experience in her large eyes, as she lifted them gravely from her book to the murky blue of the hills or the rich colouring of the meadows through which she was passing.

Presently she came to some words which seemed to her like a personal message :

*'As long as suffering seems grievous to thee and thou seekest to fly from it, so long will it be ill with thee, and the tribulation from which thou fliest will everywhere follow thee.'*

*'If thou set thyself to do what thou oughtest, that is, to suffer and to die to thyself, it will quickly be better with thee, and thou wilt find peace.'*

'I do try,' she said aloud, as though speaking to some invisible presence. Her lip quivered a little, like that of a child when it wishes to signify that it means to be good, and she looked up appealingly into the calm sky above her, which seemed like a symbol of the peace for which she yearned.

Barbara had outgrown much of her old, wayward impulsiveness in these long lonely months. She seemed to herself to have faded mentally, as pastel portraits

fade sometimes, until their once vivid colours are only dull half-tones. She seemed to have lost even her power of suffering keenly. The pain that haunted her was scarcely more than that sense of heaviness with which a narcotic veils physical anguish. Usually, when she thought of Dering, it was with a pitying regret for the misery which she had caused him—sometimes with a swift, fleeting desire to have him with her. She was very lonely.

'He hates me, I suppose,' she told herself. 'He thinks dreadful things of me; but I deserve it. It is only what I ought to bear. I ought to have been brave and to have borne what I brought upon myself. After all, life is so very, very short. I am nearly twenty-nine now. I believe women change a great deal between twenty-six and thirty. I could have made him happy if I could only have conquered my miserable self. How morbid I was! It seemed to me that Val was following me and laughing at me with someone else. As if the great wise dead could condescend to such pettiness! It was very awful. I seem to have passed through a furnace. There is no sap of life left in me. And yet one longs so for love, for companionship.' Her eyes filled slowly with tears which did not fall. She