



SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Richard Derring, returning from a winter in the woods to his mother's farm home, is overtaken by his uncle, accompanied by his eccentric wife, coming to pay a visit at the farm.
CHAPTER II.—Aunt Jerusha's questions about Emily Fulton, supposed to be Richard's sweetheart, bring out the fact that she is to marry a merchant, Edwards.
CHAPTER III.—Derring's disappointment stimulates his ambition and under the advice of Seth Kinney, a hermit of the woods, he resolves to fit himself for college. Kinney promises to teach him Greek.
CHAPTER IV.—Derring tells his mother his resolve, and in his grandfather's old laboratory begins the study of Greek.
CHAPTER V.—Seth Kinney hears Richard's Greek recitation in the woods while he and Tom Bishop ply the cross-cut saw.
CHAPTER VI.—Derring learns that he can look indifferently upon the loss of Emily. He visits Aunt Jerusha, who volunteers to help him through college, making him a gift of \$100.
CHAPTER VII.—The Greek learned in the woods carries Richard triumphantly through entrance examinations, wins approval from the professor and insures his popularity among his fellows.
CHAPTER VIII.—Four years in college obliterates the memory of Emily. Derring begins his journalistic work in Chicago.
CHAPTER IX.—Derring meets Helen Gordon in her studio, where he goes to fill an assignment.
CHAPTER X.—Derring's promotion to art critic on his paper makes him more secure financially. He makes rapid progress in comradeship with Helen. The discovery of an old love episode in her life reveals to him that he loves her.
CHAPTER XI.—Helen refuses to marry Richard and his career and her own. They enter into a compact which permits only companionship with "no promises" on either side.
CHAPTER XII.—Both find happiness in the undefined relation. Helen finds Richard's suggestions very helpful in her work.
CHAPTER XIII.—Helen suffers ill effects from sketching on the lake shore in January. A slight illness brings her into closer relations with Richard.
CHAPTER XIV.—Richard discovers a sixth sense which warns him of any danger or discomfort to Helen. He is called home by the illness of Seth Kinney and determines to test the strength of this peculiar power of communication.
CHAPTER XV.—Seth Kinney is dying, and Richard resolves to remain to the end. Seth hears the story of Richard's western experience and reveals the story of his own wanted life.
CHAPTER XVI.—Dying in the spring, Seth leaves Derring a small fortune, which enables him to place his mother in comfortable circumstances. He returns to Chicago. Helen starts on a visit to her home in the east and is killed in a railway accident. She leaves a message for Richard, saying: "I shall come back to you if I can. But if not—"
CHAPTER XVII.—Derring threw himself into work with the intensity of despair. He worked early and late. He dared not give himself time to think. Beauty had gone from the world—interest from life. Work was the only thing left. He plodded on in a dull, monotonous fashion. It served to kill time, and there was the chance of losing himself, for a little while, in his task.
 He would work for days with feverish eagerness, for the sake of these few minutes of working oblivion, in which he could lose himself, until the dull pain that always preceded his return to consciousness became too strong to be ignored. When he turned to question its meaning, memory stood always at hand to place the burden once more on his shoulders.
 Except for these brief minutes there was not an hour in the day when his loss did not press upon him. To his tortured imagination he was like a man torn in two, one-half to be buried out of sight, the other to live on, suffering and enduring, till the jagged wound should heal. At every turn his thoughts went out to her—only to be met by the hopeless blank of her death. For months the thought of her had been the last in his mind at night, the first to greet him on waking. Now he sat up until worn out with work and loss of sleep. And if then sleep would not come, he counted sheep jumping over a wall, watched water falling from a high precipice down—down—until it reached out his hand for the opiate that stood always at hand. Anything was better than the hopelessness of memory.
 Perhaps the hardest part was the utter loneliness of it all. He had turned to Helen with every pleasure or sorrow. Now he was called upon to face the greatest sorrow of his life alone—absolutely alone. He seemed to have lost the sense of human kinship.
 Sometimes a sudden sight would touch his heart—two lovers walking together. He would follow them as long as he dared, noting every glance and gesture between them. It comforted him to feel that love was still in the world—although it had gone from his own life.
 Except for this slight link he was cut off from his fellow-beings—adrift on a shoreless sea. He did not feel that others suffered as he was suffering. That many a gallant ship that

had died to bring a ray of light to men. He began to understand, dimly, that the sins of the world may be laid on one man. But with the understanding came a conviction of the hopelessness. Every true man must suffer, must stoop to take the burden on his shoulders—some to bear it even to a cruel death—but never must one dare hope that because he suffered another should be free.
 For himself, as the years went by, he questioned no more. Life and its meaning had reduced itself to this—to help those that are in trouble—this much he had gathered from the wreck. He knew that it was only a fragment, a negative sort of comfort. But it was better than the blank apathy of indifference. It was something to live for.
 But happiness—living, thrilling happiness—was for him a thing of the past. That it could ever come to him again he did not for a moment dream. Life was upon him. He must endure it as bravely, as helpfully as he might. But never might he hope for a joy that should make it perfect, or for a reason that should justify the suffering.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The day had been unusually warm in the office, but otherwise no different from other days.
 When Derring came home at night he threw himself on the bed to rest before dressing for dinner. It had become a common thing for him to stop to rest now and then during the day—how common, even he himself did not realize. He was less introspective than formerly. He worked instead of speculating or dreaming. When he found himself too tired to work he rested for a little, as he was doing now.
 It had taken him long to learn the art of resting. But he had at last gained the power to turn aside at any moment from the rush of life and yield himself, body and mind, to a quiet restfulness.
 As he lay in the half-darkened room, his eyes closed, his breath coming and going lightly between parted lips, it was easy to see that the past ten years had not all been as peaceful as this. The thick hair, pushed carelessly back, was streaked with gray. The exuberant vitality of the face and frame had given place to a worn look of passive strength. Ten years should not so change a face were it not that ten years, as men count time, are sometimes a cycle.
 Derring was not thinking of the past, however, nor of himself. He was resting, gaining strength for the next work that lay before him.
 At last he rose and began to move about the room, making ready for dinner. Suddenly he stopped, bewildered, putting his hand to his head. What had happened? A change too subtle to be put in words had come over him while he rested. He looked at his face in the mirror, half expecting to see some sign. It was not there. But deep in his heart he felt it throbbing—thrilling. Life was, after all, worth living! Nay, more, it was a wonderful, beautiful thing. The feeling did not take words. It was too pervasive, too complete, for that. No mere thought could have carried such weight of conviction. It was too simple for a chain of reasoning. Yet it carried belief. He had reasoned carefully and logically to the opposite conclusion. How was it?—Life could not be worth living. Since there is no permanent happiness, existence has no reason for being rather than for not being, and no certainty of an outcome that shall justify suffering. He smiled at his careful logic, swept away by the force of pure conviction—Life was worth living!
 It lay before him simple as daylight, and as clear. His mind ran ahead. He must find the work he could do well, and do it. Herein lay happiness. Then let him help others to find their place. He would have joy of heart and the purpose that makes life reasonable. It mattered little about the immortality of the soul. Three-score years and ten was immortality. The structure of the universe betrayed a master plan. To live in unison with this plan, to aid in its execution—if only for a few years—was enough.
 He turned to the window and, drawing up the shade, looked across the broken lines of chimney-pots and roofs to the western sky. His heart leaped to meet it. Beauty had come back to the earth. He stood drinking it in with the eagerness of a traveler who sees home at last. He had not known how his artist nature had hungered for it through the years. The tears came into his eyes as he looked. A tangle of chimneys and gables against a twilight sky, but full of subtle beauty. Would it stay with him?—Where had it been? There in the outer world—but hidden from him because he was unworthy? Or in his own soul languishing with its sickness? Then in a moment it came to him—it was not in the world, nor in his soul! It was the soul itself coming to consciousness, recognizing itself, behold its own features, as in a glass—existence reaching its highest form in the consciousness of the soul. He stood awed before it. It seemed to stretch away into space, wonderful, lofty, but close about him.
 He went down to dinner with an eager interest. Everything had become transformed. Men and women were no longer machines wound up to run through a definite term of pain, and calling on his sympathy and help. They were divine—capable of the highest happiness. He felt like leaping, exulting, crying aloud in fulness of joy at the beauty of life and human kinship.
 "Derring was more like himself tonight than he has been for years," remarked an elderly man to his com-

panion as Derring passed from the room where they sat smoking after dinner.
 The speaker was a quiet, thoughtful man with observant gray eyes. He was the only one left of those who had been in the house ten years before. "He always used to be like that," he went on, "full of life and a kind of magnetism. He drew you."
 Derring passed out of the house and down the street, walking with swift, eager feet. He felt cords of sympathy drawing him to those he met. He walked until late at night, seeking out the busiest streets and pressing in close among those who thronged them. He was intoxicated with humanity and the joy of life. He must come close to it. He was thrilling with a sense of exultation—all this living, surging crowd, capable of perfect development of the divinest joy!
 When he returned to his room, he did not retire immediately. There were letters that must be written before he slept. He had thought, as he walked, of two or three young men whom a word from him might help to better positions. He must not miss his opportunity. Life was short. He longed to bring happiness to the world.

He fell asleep, planning for the coming day. It seemed strange to look forward to the morrow with anything except a sense of dull endurance.
 When he awakened he could not, for a moment, account for the feeling that it seemed to stretch away into space.
 Wakened with him. Like a child, half awake, he groped in memory to recall the gift that yesterday made him so happy. Then it came to him. It had not failed him. It was not a passing mood. He was awake, alive, in a world full of beauty and love.

CHAPTER XIX.

The morning sun was streaming into Derring's private office. Two young men were waiting for him. They had come to consult him about a piece of work in the slums.
 Derring himself kept out of slum work. He always answered, when pressed to give himself to it, that he had no call that way—and a man needed a very strong call or a great deal of cheek to thrust himself unasked into a man's home—even though the home happened to be a poor one. A man's castle might be only one corner of a room, but it was his castle still, fortified by all the laws of identity and individuality. For himself, Derring declared, he had not the courage to invade it. If a man had a genuine call to the work, let him do it and thank the Lord that called him.
 For the dilettante philanthropists who posed amid the picturesque squalor of the slums he had only the keenest shaft of ridicule. It was his insight that made those who were taking up the work in earnest seek his advice. While he had not gone into it in person, he was cognizant of every step taken, and often, by his shrewd counsel, balanced the sentimentality of over-enthusiasm.
 The young men were waiting to consult him as to the best way of dealing with a pair of philanthropic cranks who persisted in thrusting themselves into the work and who, by their obtuseness, were undoing the best results of the past year. While waiting for Derring and discussing the situation, they had drifted into talking of his fitness for the work and of the strange delicacy that kept him from it.
 "He stands ready enough to help any of us fellows that come to him. But I suppose that's just it—these people don't get in his way and we do. Lucky for me, I did!"
 A laugh rippled the undercurrent of the speaker's words. He was seated in an office-chair, his hat thrust back, a shock of reddish-brown hair rising straight above the broad white forehead. He looked as if he might be the driver of an express cart or of any vehicle that rumbled and rattled. In reality, he was an artist of much promise. His sketches had in them depth of sentiment that gave even greater promise than their technique. Three years ago no one had believed that he would ever be anything more than a dabbler in art. He had had plenty of money and was leading a free, devil-may-care life, sowing to the wind and complacently looking forward to the whirlwind. Now his success was spoken of as a thing assured. He had, as he put it, "got in Derring's way," and, once there, he had found surrender easier than escape.

"I wonder," he went on, thoughtfully, "what it is about him that holds you so? He doesn't seem to do anything in particular. But somehow

after you once know him you can't get along without him."
 His companion sat lost in thought. "I think it is because Derring needs us," he said at last.
 "Needs us?"
 "Yes. I never knew a man that needed people as he does. He gives himself and never asks. But a love like that must carry with it a need. If Derring so much as lays his hand on my arm, I feel a power between us—a sort of spiritual magnetism that I can no more resist than I can resist my own heart. It somehow asks as well as gives."
 "Oh, well, Conway, you're a poet. You can't expect a mere artist like me to understand anything that can't be put into black and white. But he's good enough for me."
 "For your philanthropic cranks," said Derring as they laid the case before him, "you must have an organization."
 They protested in one breath.
 "I know. You think that as soon as a movement has taken on organization it has lost its vitality. That is a mistaken view of the case, my young friends. Organizations were invented to give employment to cranks. You must make offices and put them in. They will have so much to do running the offices that they will let 'the poor' alone for awhile. When a movement is well under way it must have an organization as a life-preserver."
 "I suppose it must," said the artist with a sigh. "Can you help us about the constitution if we come around to-morrow?"
 "Come to my room at ten. I'll be free then."
 They rose to go. But the poet lingered a minute.
 Derring looked at him inquiringly. "It's nothing," he said, smiling, "I was only wondering if I might come a little early?"
 "To-night?"
 "There's something I want to ask you about—if I may."
 "Of course. Come—" He paused. "I was going to take a walk before-hand," he said. "Why couldn't you?"
 "Meet you?"
 "At the breakwater—yes. At nine-thirty."
 The poet's face lighted. "I will be there. It's something I can't decide for myself—"
 "Then don't expect me to."
 "No. You will help me to see it. I am not sure of myself."



It Seemed to Stretch Away into Space.

CHAPTER XX.

The night was warm, but a breeze came from the lake, stiffly. It greeted Derring as he opened the door of his room after dinner.
 Groping his way to the droplight on his desk, he had a sense, as he went, of displacing. In the darkness, other forms and personalities. He often felt at in coming into a vacant room—always if the room was dark or half lighted—that sense of other forms giving way to his, retreating, gliding past, with noiseless being. Always for a minute they jostled him, as if unable to escape. Then, in a breath, his presence filled the room—to the furthest living corner. There was no one there.
 He found the droplight and reached for a match. The breeze stirred again and blew against the hand that held the match to the droplight. He shaded it with his other hand, and the light flared up into his tired face. His eyes smiled absently. He was thinking of the poet and his troubles.
 Derring had more than half guessed them. He had been revolving in his mind all day what he should say to him. The woman was a strange creature. Derring had studied her face the night before at the play. It was heavy, with deep lines, but there was something fine in the eyes. He recalled them now—wistful and magnetic.
 He pushed back the papers on his desk with a little sigh. Why should they come to him with their troubles? He was strangely tired. But with it all, underneath, bent a sense of coming release. Groping for it, as he seated himself at the desk, he took up his pen and threw off the depression with an effort. He was only tired. He would go away next week for a rest. Meantime—reaching for a sheet of paper he began to write.
 He wrote rapidly, referring now and then to the letters he had pushed aside, sealing each note as it was finished and laying it on the pile at hand. When the last one was done, he ran over the scattered letters before him, filing some for reference, tearing others across and throwing



"For Your Philanthropic Cranks," Said Derring.

them into the waste-basket.
 He looked at his watch—nine o'clock—half an hour yet. Rising he stretched himself and looked about the room. He moved to the window. It was a moonlight night and shadows hung luminous everywhere, irradiating bricks and tiles and trees. From a tower near by the clock sounded, spreading sonorously in the still air. The curtain swayed a little in the breeze and he looped it back. Returning to his desk and moving the droplight to the table he drew a big chair beside it. He searched among the books on the table and took up a volume of poems.
 The poems were Conway's. He had seen most of them before—in manuscript. But he wanted to read them again. He had not decided what to say to his visitor. The room was very still. Something burred at the screen, tapping it with light touches—a June bug, perhaps. Derring paid no heed. He was absorbed in the page before him. The light fluttered a little and he looked up impatiently. He turned it down, glancing towards the open window. He took up the book again. But the poems had lost their hold. His eye was on the page, but about him, around him, something stirred. He raised his eyes slowly,

CHAPTER XXI.

He Sank Back—the Face Was Gone.

looking towards the window. Against the screen, faint against the moonlight, he saw it—her face—smiling to him, the eyes shining mistily. He half rose, stretching out his hands to her. He sank back. The face was gone. But her voice, softly, was speaking to him through the distance: "You are coming—coming—coming—" With a quick exclamation he turned. The light at his side had gone out. The room lay in darkness. He stared before him. She was not there. No one was there. It was the common prosaic darkness of a June night.
 (To be Continued)

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