

CORRODING GOLD

patches of welcome greenery, but the side on which the infant mistress looked out was the quarter of the working hive—a labyrinth of mean streets whence the unhygienic infants sprang.

An immense disgust of it all, coupled with a strange weariness of life, oppressed Estelle Rodney, and she turned round and round on her finger a small, thin, old-fashioned ring, as if asking from it some solution of the problem of her life.

She was twenty-six years of age, and had looks of a kind. In another sphere she might have been spoken of as a Diana or a Juno, being tall and generously built, with a handsome figure, a clever, intellectual face, comprising a broad brow, thoughtful, if a trifle hard, grey eyes, and a firm and well-modelled mouth. Her garb was severely simple and eminently suited to her occupation—a neat, well-cut skirt of dark, serviceable tweed, and a shirt-blouse of Viyella flannel not too light in hue, trimly belted to her waist and finished with a knotted black tie, in which shone a plain gold safety-pin. Her hair was abundant and becomingly arranged, if a little severe in style.

The effect was perhaps a trifle drab, but at the moment it was in keeping with her mood. She was thinking of her future, and mentally looking down the vista of the years that she fully expected to spend in the school—years probably going on until she had reached the mature age of some of the other teachers, one of whom she knew for a fact to be forty-three. And it was an open secret that that teacher was only suffered to remain on the staff because the Board had some compunction with regard to dismissing a middle-aged woman who had nothing to live on except what she could earn, and who, if bereft of her post there, would probably fail to find another anywhere.

What the ratepayers might have had to say to this