

CORRODING GOLD

"Nothing matters to me except just this," he said quite simply. "Now, will you tell me precisely what you thought of the performance?"

"Don't call it a performance," she said in quick reproof. "It was something very much higher and finer—an achievement, if you like. It was a splendid ideal. Oh, if only it could be carried into effect and practice, all these frightful problems we have in the City and you in East Breen would be solved!"

"It will come," he said, as he took off his hat and laid it on the seat beside him. "It is coming. Men are better, Estelle. They are beginning to wake up. Brotherhood is coming!"

"You will bring it faster," said Estelle in a low, full voice. "Tell me, why didn't you bring your father and mother here to-day? How proud they would have been!"

"They are helping and sympathising and praying at home," he said simply. "They would not have come."

Estelle was moved, because she felt that Bygrave and she were drifting close to the heart of things, and that very soon the barrier between them must be swept away.

The next moment Bygrave's hands had thrown it down for ever.

"If you approved what I said to-day, Estelle, if you think there is anything in my life worth taking, will you take it? I love you. I always have, and—and I think if I had you by my side much might be possible."

Estelle had no answer ready, and he went on. "You know what I have to offer—a meagre future, as the world counts it—but I have the courage, because I know what you are and what are the things that count with you. The new age that is coming is to be the woman's age, I believe, but it is only such women as you who will bring it to pass and make it a reality. I never thought I should care for a woman. Long ago I vowed I never should