

CORRODING GOLD

Tinayre. How did he manage ever to save enough to take him back to France?"

"He saved it by semi-starvation. In the last two years I know for certain that he never permitted himself on any occasion more than two meals a day."

"Happy France, to have won so much devotion from one of her sons!" said Estelle lightly. "Is there an Englishman anywhere who would cheat his stomach for the sake of his country?"

"There may be one or two, I hope, but I shouldn't like to be sure," said Woods, with his queer, slow smile. "How you hit the nail on the head, Estelle! You are a perfect joy to me!"

"A sledge-hammer sort of joy, eh? And where is it Monsieur Tinayre has gone?"

"To Provence, to sit in the vineyards of his boyhood. That is how he expresses it."

"I wish him joy of them, and I hope they will come up to expectation when he gets there. To struggle for something so frightfully must mean that possession, when it at length comes, will disappoint, I think, for that is life."

Woods looked at the strong, fine face beside him with much feeling in his eyes. But Estelle had forgotten him. She seemed to be pursuing some train of thought suggested by Eugene's mention of the Frenchman's projected return to the land of his birth.

"If I have to stop much longer at Romsey Road, I shall behold in myself a second edition of Eliza Inman—wasted, worn, starved in body and in soul," she said presently. "The life of a teacher is no life for a woman. But Miss Inman is meek and good, while I am merely rebellious."

"It's one of the injustices of our time that women have to work as you do," said Woods passionately. "That is not what they were created for."