

CORRODING GOLD

"Not for that purpose only, but a good many ladies do pass up and down it. For instance, there are all the young ladies engaged as typists and clerks in this neighbourhood. You know that pretty often they have come in and asked for gloves and handkerchiefs."

"Occasionally they have, I admit; but I dislike the idea, John—I dislike it intensely. It would alter the whole character of Rodneys—take away its flavour, so to speak. But I am quite willing to talk it over with Mrs. Rodney—in fact, I will do so to-night. Perhaps you had better come home with me to supper to-night, John, so as to be ready to bring forward your arguments in favour of this tremendous change."

A sort of eager, pleased look leaped in the young man's eyes, but a moment after he seemed a trifle reluctant to accept the invitation.

"If you wish it, sir, certainly; and if you think Mrs. Rodney would be pleased to see me," he stammered.

"Why, of course she will! What a strange thing to say!" observed Rodney hastily, as he slid off his high stool which, covered in ancient black hair-cloth, had stood in front of that desk for nearly a hundred years. "You haven't been at The Laurels for a long time, John."

"Not since September, sir—just after you returned from Clacton," answered Glide, who had a very lively recollection of Mrs. Rodney's icy reception of him on that occasion.

Her coolness towards him had arisen from the fact that during the family's absence at the seaside he had ventured to escort Kathleen twice to the play—an attention which Mrs. Rodney considered presumptuous and of which she highly disapproved.

Kathleen liked John Glide; deep down in her heart she even loved him; but at the present time she was passing through sundry mental phases which may be ex-