

CORRODING GOLD

it was a deep-rooted and strong affection which had developed slowly, and which nothing would destroy or even diminish.

"Of course, I know I have little to offer," he began again.

But Estelle stopped him with uplifted finger.

"It isn't that, Eugene. You yourself must know that, if a woman cared at all, she wouldn't think of that. It's a poor kind of love that would weigh up everything and would only be concerned as to what it was going to get out of marriage. No, no; you deserve something better! I can't give it to you. Let us be friends and comrades as we've always been. I don't want you to go out of my life," she added kindly.

This was a crumb of comfort, to which Woods clung desperately.

"I shan't. You needn't be afraid of that. I'm in it for all time," he said quietly. "I'll stand by, then, and work—heavens! how I shall work!—till I have something worth while to show."

She shook her head rather disconsolately, for that was not the point at all.

"It isn't what you can offer that would weigh with me," she reminded him. "If I felt like marrying you, it would make no difference to me whether you had one hundred or two hundred a year. Don't let us talk any more about it. And I hope what has been said won't make any difference—specially to our Saturday evenings at home. I'll expect you as usual on that day. Well, here's my bus. Good-bye."

She nodded brightly, told him to put on his hat, as people were staring at him, and darted off.

Once inside the bus, she closed her eyes and permitted her thoughts to dwell for a little while on the episode of the afternoon.

It had cheered her undoubtedly, for a woman past