

CORRODING GOLD

five degrees all the afternoon, and look—my fingers are blue with cold!”

Miss Inman's circulation was bad owing to the insufficiency of the exercise she took and the inferior quality of the food she ate, whereas Estelle was a full-blooded creature who could endure any physical discomfort except that caused by lack of fresh air.

“I'm deadly sick of life at this moment, Miss Inman. As I was trying to impart some highly uninteresting information this afternoon, I couldn't help asking myself whether the Almighty could ever have created me or any sensible, capable woman for such a destiny.”

Miss Inman giggled, and her pince-nez fell off in the process and, to her great distress, alighted on the stone passage and were broken!

Estelle quickly stooped and picked them up.

“I'm sorry, Miss Inman, and, as it was I who caused you to break them, I'll take them with me and leave them at Mason's as I go by. I dare say he can have them repaired by to-morrow morning.”

It was because she was so capable and so alert of thought that Estelle commanded respect. In certain directions she had great qualities of head and heart. What she wanted was more scope, a freer air, a life unhampered in its movements by system and curriculum. She felt her nature narrowing as the years were going by, and her whole being revolting against the process.

When she had put on her neat coat and her serviceable hat, and had thrown her warm, fleecy Shetland scarf about her neck, she looked even older than her years.

“I needn't wait, as you don't go home my way, Miss Inman. So I'll bid you good afternoon.”

“Just wait a minute, and I'll go across the playground with you,” said Miss Inman, struggling into a raincoat that had neither heat nor protection in it.