

CORRODING GOLD

it by bedtime to-night—most of them before even father has heard it."

"Could I help that? Your father is at business—so please be reasonable. Now, I wonder when Kathie will be home? She is the one who always understands things and takes the proper view. I think your nature is hardening, Estelle. Perhaps that is due to your kind of work, but it is regrettable. A woman should be kind and tender and not hard and critical, as you are."

"I don't mean to be, mother. But, somehow, I hate the idea of all these people discussing us and our affairs to-night over their supper, and wondering what we shall do with the money! Perhaps, after all, there might be some mistake, or some hitch. Then think how cheap we should all feel!"

"There can be no mistake or hitch. Mr. Underwood spoke quite positively. I don't suppose you are very observant, or you might have noticed that he was a very superior kind of man—one evidently of high professional standing. And he was very respectful and deferential to me, and most anxious to be of use. I'm to call at the office of the firm to-morrow morning with your father."

"Of course, he would be all that you say, hoping that you will continue to be his rich client," said Estelle with a smile. "Well, I do wish that father would come home! Don't you think he has looked rather worried of late, mummy?"

Just very occasionally the old childish name for her mother would slip out, though Mrs. Rodney had forbidden its use since her children had grown up. She allowed it, however, to pass unchecked this time.

"Of course he has," she replied. "Business has not been good of late, and it has worried him dreadfully, because he feels that he really ought to dismiss John Glide. He is very fond of John, of course, but he really can't afford to pay him his salary."