

CORRODING GOLD

in order by a special brand of brilliantine. A band of black velvet and a bow on top completed her coiffure, which was considered eminently suitable.

Estelle nodded pleasantly to the assembled party, and then fixed her eyes on her mother's face.

"There is someone waiting to see you in the dining-room, mother."

Mrs. Rodney looked startled.

"Very awkward time to call," she said. "Who is it, Estelle? Couldn't you have asked her business?"

"It's a gentleman, and he wishes to see you particularly."

Her mother betrayed signs of perturbation, and the ladies sat forward eagerly, much interested in this most unusual break into the precedent of the afternoon programme.

Mrs. Rodney wiped her mouth with one of the Japanese serviettes, provided at sevenpence a hundred, which saved the laundry bill and were considered rather smart at Camberwell teas that winter. Then she rose with a rustle of skirts.

"You'll excuse me, won't you?" she said. "Probably it is somebody who wishes to see Mr. Rodney. You are quite sure he asked for me, Estelle?"

"Oh, quite. I asked him twice."

"And you are quite sure that it is not somebody selling tea, or sewing machines, or combined washers and wringers, etc.?" she asked severely.

"I don't think it is anybody of that kind," answered Estelle, smiling as she walked to the door, pulling off her coat as she went and handing it to her mother. "Please, put that down somewhere, mother. I suppose I had better stop here till you come back?"

"Of course. And see that everybody has a second cup, and ring for Julia if more tea is needed," she said, glancing with disapproval at Estelle's working garb.