

whole of life less bankrupt of hope, mocked her with a phrase of warning that on her attitude in this first encounter depended the whole of her future ; by letting Freddie touch her, take her in his arms, kiss her quavering lips, press her to him till her heart beat out its hammer-strokes on his chest, she was yielding a position which she would never be able to recapture. Like every other surrender, this one was worth while to a tired brain and spirit in that it dispensed them from further struggle and further thought ; as drowsiness descended upon her in the warm security of his embrace, she wondered why she had not yielded before and what he had done to win this forgiveness.

*"We shall see very little of them." . . .*

In some way Gloria was to understand that she had achieved vindication and could afford to forget the earlier wounds to her pride. A circle in her life had been completed ; once before, in the dawn of their days together, she had rested with her cheek against Freddie's, crying softly at the death of an old love ; now, after weary trudging, she had returned to find herself justified and her choice approved.

The long secret struggle with Norman and Margery had ended in their annihilation : their hateful dignity was in the mud ; never again would either of them, knowing what she knew, dare to look her in the eyes.

"I accept it, Freddie, . . . your bargain. . . . We'll . . . begin again from the beginning. . . . It's time I had a little happiness."

"It's more than time . . . for us both."

"Let me go now. I'm *dizzy* with want of sleep. Freddie, what will you do when you see Norman ? You can't pretend that he doesn't know."

"Why not wait till we see him ? It won't be for some years. He'll go abroad. . . . Now I'm going to put you to bed ; and you're not to get up till dinner-time."

"I must have my bath first. You may come and see if I'm asleep in half-an-hour."

When she reached her bathroom, Gloria found that the water was long chilled. As it ran away to make room for the hot, she stood at the window, looking down once more on the sober, deserted roadway of Carlton Gardens. A policeman stood at the corner ; and, more from habit than expectation, she looked towards Pall Mall for the form of Norman Cartwright, hesitating in the tortures of suspicion, or hurrying in vengeful certainty, or shambling away in dazed helplessness.

*"That's twice he's done me down !"*