

“And after all—after that night—after what I have done—you can still love me, still forgive me? Say it again, George. I can't believe it—I can't realize it. Say it again.”

“Again and again, and ten thousand times again, my own dear wife—my poor, tortured, half-maddened girl! I forgive you, I love you—I never knew how dearly until now. I know all, Magdalen—how you strove to save us at the last. I know the exposure was Willie's doing, not yours. And he deserved it. He owned it himself, and died knowing his sentence to be just.”

“And he is dead?”

“Dead, and—forgiven, let us hope. Died with his wife beside him, thankful to have her there. And I have come here, never to leave you again, my darling, never to let anything come between us more.”

She covered her eyes with one wasted hand, her heart too full for words. She had not deserved such mercy as this.

“And Fanny?” she whispered, after a pause.

“Fanny is in New York, with the Tompkins family. She won't break her heart, believe me,” George answered, rather cynically.

“And Aunt Lydia?”

“Bears it, as she has borne all the sorrows of her life, nobly. Caroline is with her—will never leave her now; and when you are sufficiently restored [to leave this, Rachel and little Laura will find their future home at Golden Willows. With Laura in the house, she will be almost happy. And we will leave her with them, my own Magdalen, and start for that trip to the old land we have looked forward to so long. Think of Venice, and Naples, and Rome, and the rest of it, Magdalen, and make haste and get well. This shall be our wedding-tour—a happier one than our last.”

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Three weeks later, and with Rachel and Laura statelyly transplanted to Golden Willows, George and Magdalen found themselves in New York, their passage taken in the steamer that was to bear them away on the first stage of their long, pleasant tour.

They had called upon Miss Winters, at the residence of the paternal Tompkins, and found that young lady looking very nice, and fresh, and rosy, in her new mourning. It was a little awkward, the first meeting between Magdalen and Fanny; but it wore away presently, and Fanny was expatiating in the old, breathless way upon the delights of the Empire City.

“I never can live in the country again, after being here,