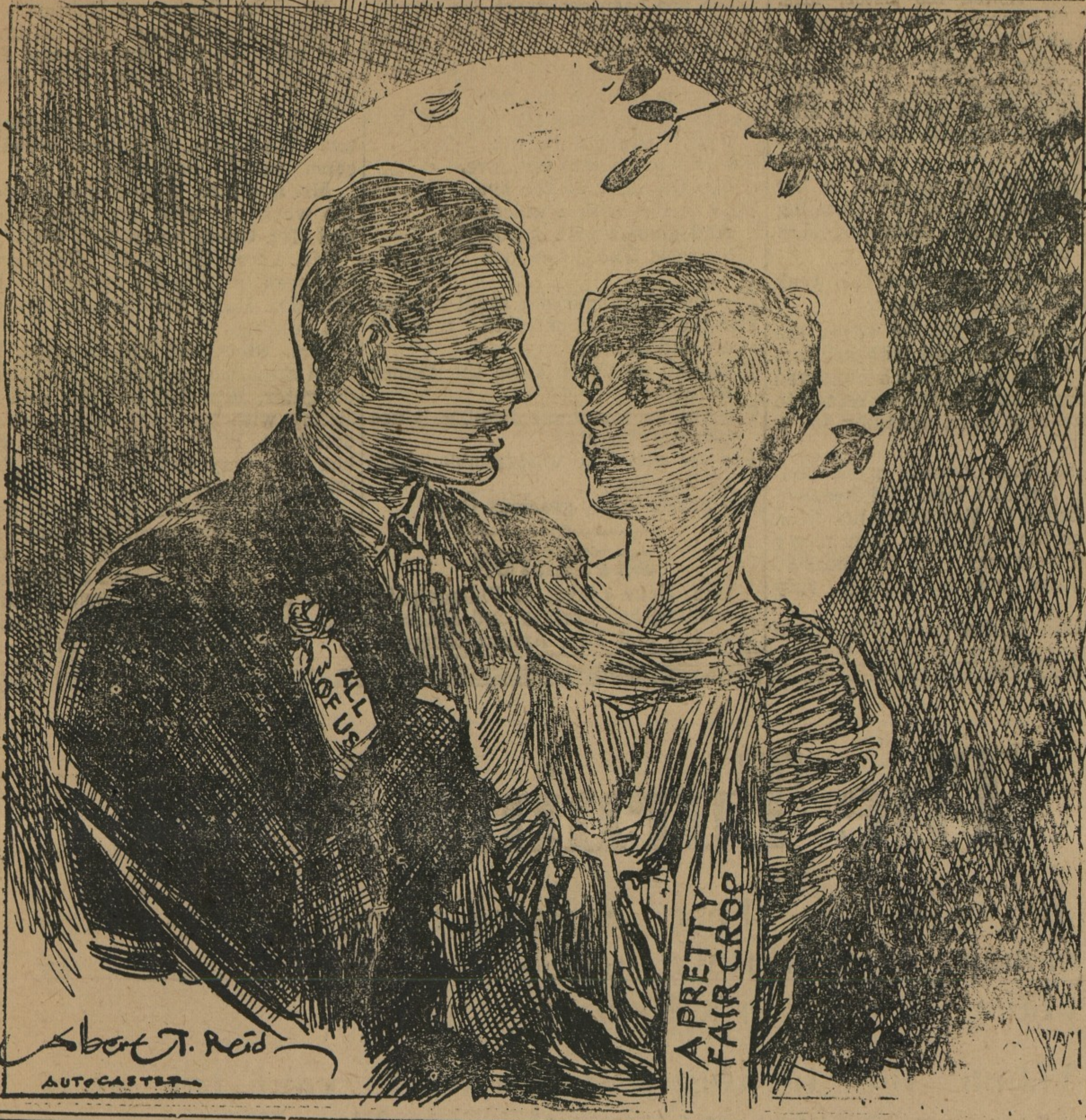


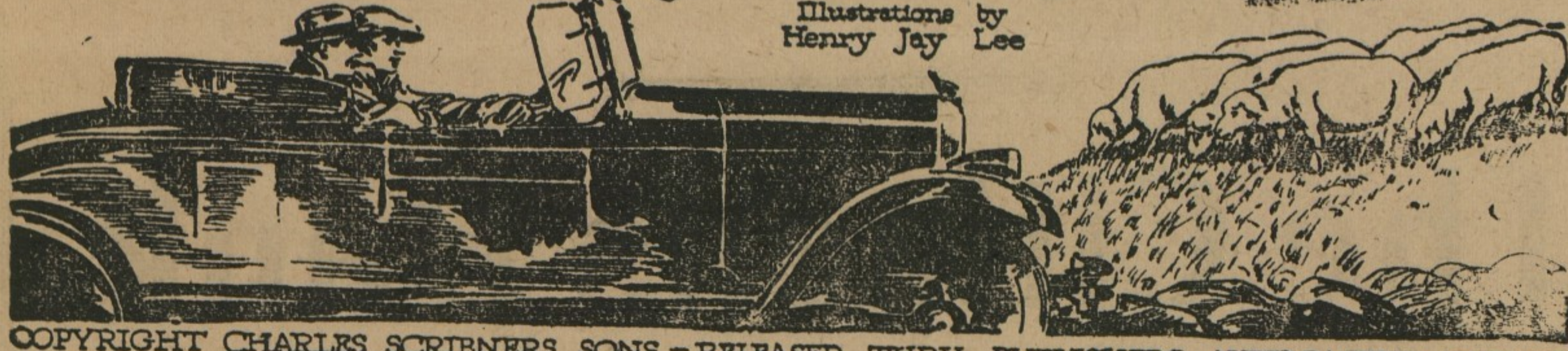
The Harvest Moon

By Albert T. Reid



BLACKSHEEP!

By Meredith Nicholson



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Archibald Bennett, wealthy bachelor, travels constantly in the interest of his health. He meets Isabel Perry, who recommends a life of crime, adventure, romance and excitement as a cure for his nerves. Archie goes to Bailey Harbor to investigate a summer house for his sister. A heavy storm forces him to spend the night there. During the night he is awakened by footsteps, and in an encounter with the intruder, who sees Archie's figure reflected in the mirror and shoots Archie in the back, wounding the intruder, who makes his escape. Archie plans flight to evade publicity. He starts cross-country afoot in the night. At dawn he is stopped on a lonely country road by "The Governor," master-mind criminal who mistakes him for a fellow criminal. Archie, fleeing, is afraid to tell the truth—falls in with "The Governor," who is whisked across country in a stolen car. Sees story in newspaper of killing at Bailey Harbor and, frightened, decides to say nothing but stick with his strange friend and await developments. At Cornford, N. H., Archie comes upon Isabel Perry at the hotel desk but she refuses to recognize him. The Governor, by a clever plan, switches stolen money for good money. Archie used as decoy—making love to niece of agent sent to meet eccentric Congdon here next day. Archie and the Governor drive away without creating suspicion and speed across state to deliver the \$60,000 to train-robber Leary at Walker's farm, where Archie gets new insight into workings of the crime world. At the first opportunity Walker's daughter appeals to Archie to help her elope with a young farmhand. He decides to assist, cutting away from the Governor and taking the couple across state in a wild night ride. Seeing Sally onto the train—he is rewarded with a fond farewell kiss—and he turns to find Isabel Perry had witnessed the whole scene. Now read on—whole scene. Isabel is not pleased at meeting Archie again and accuses him of spying upon her. She tells him that if he has really shot Putney Congdon as he claims, he has ruined everything. Archie returns to the hotel greatly mystified. Next morning the Governor arrives—explains to Archie that he has aided Sallie to marry a notorious diamond thief—and that Sallie had deceived him concerning the whole affair. They proceed to New York to the Governor's home, where they are visited by Julia, the Governor's sister. Julia explains to Archie that her brother is passing through a strange phase—caused by a cruel shock some time before. Now read on:

INTRODUCTION  
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He tore open the envelope and his fingers trembled as he held the note to the light. He read the two lines to himself eagerly; then demanded a second match and read aloud:

CHAPTER VI  
Refreshed by a nap and a shower, Archie was dressed and waiting for the Governor at seven, who arrived a few minutes later. "Here's an extra I picked up downtown. The scream of the evening is kidnapping—most deplorable line of business." While Archie waited for the Governor to dress, he carefully read the park. The police had not yet learned that the two most important witnesses had given fictitious names. In spite of the Governor's frequent avowed assertion that he wished to know nothing about him, Archie felt strongly impelled to make a clean breast of the Bailey Harbor affair, the two encounters with Isabel and his meeting with Mrs. Congdon. His resolution strengthened when the Governor appeared, dressed with his usual care and exhilarated by his day's adventures. Baring retired after the dinner had been served, and the Governor, in cizy accord with his mixer, remarked suddenly: "Odd, you might almost say singular! I've crossed old man Congdon's trail again! You recall him—the old boy we left to the tender mercies of Seebrook and Walters'. Well, I met today one of the most remarkable of all the men I know who camp outside the park. Perky is his name—a jeweler by trade, he fell from his high estate and went on the road as a yegg—then entered into the game of boring neat holes in the rim of twenty-dollar gold pieces, leaving only the outer shell and filling 'em up with a composition he invented that made the coin ring like a marriage bell. While he was still experimenting he ran into old Eliphail sitting with his famous umbrella on a bench in Boston Common. Perky thought Eliphail was a stool pigeon for a con outfit, but explanations followed and it was a case of infatuation on both sides. The old man was as tickled with the scheme as a boy with a new dog. He assists Perky to circulate the spurious medium of exchange. Perky says he's a wonderful ally, endowed with all the qualities of a first class crook."

"You'll appreciate that better," said Archie, "when you hear what I know about the Congdon family. You've been mighty decent in not pressing me for any account of myself, but you've got to hear my story now. We'll probably both be more comfortable if I don't tell you my name, but you shall have that, too, if you care for it. So many things have happened since I left Bailey Harbor that you don't know about, things that I haven't dared tell you, that I'm going to spout it all now and here. If you want to chuck me when you've heard it, well enough; but I don't mind saying that to part with you would hurt me terribly. I never felt so dependent on any man as I do on you, and I've grown mighty fond of you, old man." "Thank you, lad," said the Governor. He listened patiently, nodding occasionally or throwing in a question. When Archie finished he rose and clapped him on the shoulder. "By Jove, you've tossed my stars around like so many dice! I've got to consult the oracles immediately." He darted from the room, and the Governor was poring over a map of the heavens. "Your Isabel's all tangled up in our affairs!" declared the Governor with mock resentment. She will soon—I feel it coming. Our next move is outlined—we must go to Rochester." "Would you mind telling me just what Rochester has to do with all this?" demanded Archie testily. "My dear boy, Rochester is one of the suburbs of Paradise. You may recall that I told you of a certain tile in a summer house where my adored promised to leave a message for me if her heart softened or she needed me. Well, the secret incommunicable visits her aunt and to be there. And if you knew the way of the stars and could understand my calculations you'd see that your Isabel is likely to have some business in that neighborhood just now." "Rubbish! I happen to know that her business was all to be in northern Michigan this summer. Your stars have certainly made a monkey of you this time! You talk like a nonsense book! How much luggage are we taking?" The Governor rang for Timmons to do their packing and fell upon a time table. They wrote themselves down on the hotel register at Rochester as Salisbury and Comly and were quickly in the rooms the Governor had engaged by wire. A short time later Archie found himself whisked away to a handsome resi-

drive to the Altmore, ladies' entrance. He walked through the main door and took another taxi. I'm only sorry your name had to be brought into it." "You needn't bother about that at all," Archie replied with a reassuring smile. "The name and address I gave were both false." He looked at her covertly and they laughed with the mirth of children planning mischief in secret. "The little girl," he ventured; "you are not apprehensive about her?" "Not in the slightest. My father-in-law is most disagreeably eccentric, but he is very fond of my children. It was quite like him to attempt to carry off the little girl, always a particular pet of his. I was shocked, of course, when it happened. But I am not worried. I meant to put the children quite out of my husband's way. It's rather odd, as I think of it, that my husband didn't personally try to take the child away from me."

This, uttered musingly, gave Archie a perturbed moment. But the car had reached the Altmore, and he lifted out the boy and accompanied them to the door. "Thank you, very much," she said, in a tone that dismissed him. CHAPTER VII  
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denial area where the Governor dismissed the driver at a corner and continued afoot for several blocks. The Governor ran his stick along the top of a wall that grimly guarded the rear of the premises. He caught the edge and was quickly on top. When Archie hung back the Governor grasped him by the arms and swung him up and dropped him into a dark corner of the garden. Then he left him with the injunction to remain where he was. "Archie! Oh, Archie!" the Governor whispered excitedly, brushing an envelope across the bewildered Archie's face. "Strike a match before I perish." He tore open the envelope and his fingers trembled as he held the note to the light. He read the two sheets to himself eagerly; then demanded a second match and read aloud: "If this reaches you, remain near at hand until I can see you. Please understand that I promise nothing, but it is very possible that you may be able to serve me. My aunt is giving a party for me Thursday night. I must leave it to you as to how best to arrange for a short interview the day following. A very dear friend needs help. The matter is urgent. The match curled and fell upon Archie's fingers. A tense silence lay upon the garden. The Governor clasped Archie's hand tightly. "It has come as I always knew it would come! And something tells me I am near the end. Even with all my faith, boy, it's staggering. And this is the very night of the dance." "It's about time for us to clear out," Archie remarked. "What! Leave this sacred soil when she's here? Not on your life, Archie! I shall not leave till I've had speech with her." The festive occasion offered an ideal opportunity for the meeting! It's going to be a big affair and we can merge with the happy throng and trust to our wits to get us out alive. He urged Archie, still resisting, through the grounds to the front entrance, where they were admitted with several other guests who arrived at the moment. The stately old lady in the drawing room lifted a lognette as they approached, smiled affably and gave the Governor her hand. "Mrs. Lindsay, my friend, Mr. Comly. He arrived unexpectedly an hour ago and I thought you wouldn't mind my bringing him along."

"I should have been displeased if you had hesitated a moment—any friend of yours, you know!" Other arrivals facilitated their escape, and as they stepped into the conservatory the music ceased and there was a flutter as the dancers sought seats, or stepped out upon the lawn. Archie, acutely uncomfortable, heard the Governor stifle an exclamation. "That is she! Stand by me now! That chap's just left her. This is our chance!" A young woman was just seating herself in a chair at the farther end of the conservatory. The Governor moved toward her quickly. Archie saw her lift her head suddenly and her lips parted as though she was about to make an outcry. Then the Governor bowed low over her hand, uttering explanations in a low tone. Her surprise had yielded to what Archie, loitering behind, thought an expression of relief and satisfaction. He moved forward as the Governor turned toward him. "Miss Hastings, Mr. Comly." "My name here," the Governor was saying, "is Salisbury." "I think," said Archie, "that the moment has come for me to retire." "We shall not turn you adrift!" cried Ruth. "I have a very dear friend I must introduce you to." "Oh, Isabel!" Following her gaze he was glad of the slight pressure of her hand on his arm. Here at least was something tangible in a world that tottered to detaching chaos. For it was Isabel Perry who turned at the sound of Ruth's voice. "Miss Perry, Mr. Comly!" "Oh, Mr. Comly!" There was the slightest stress on the assumed name. "After this dance—" She slipped away, leaving him staring, and Archie, in a daze, led Ruth back to the Governor. At the conclusion of the number, Isabel remained to Archie's discomfort, at the farther end of the platform, and when he hurried forward in the hope of detaching her from the group that surrounded her she did not see him at all, which was wholly discouraging. A partner sought her for the next dance and as the music struck up he made bold to accost her. "I am not to be eluded!" he said. "I must have at least one dance!" "My card is filled—but I am reserving a boon for you! You shall have the intermission." He passed Ruth, returning to put herself in the path of her next partner. "This is your punishment for coming late!" laughed the girl. There was happiness in her eyes. "How perfectly ridiculous you two men are!" "Suppose we talk a bit," said the Governor when they had found a bench on the lawn. "It's nearing the end" he said solemnly. "There are other changes and changes, perhaps, but the end is in sight. The whole thing was unalterable from the beginning; it makes little difference what we do now. And it's you—its you that have brought it all about. We are bound together by ties not of earthly making." "You are beginning to believe at last?" "I don't know what to believe," Archie answered slowly. "Just how much do you understand of it?" "Precious little! Your Isabel and my Ruth are friends, quite intimate friends indeed. That's news to you, isn't it?" "Most astonishing news!" "And now I'll prepare you a little for what I prefer you should hear from Isabel—I got it from Ruth—you're not quite finished yet with

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