

I couldn't bear it. I flirted with Mr. Congdon; not only that but I took advantage of his distress over his father's efforts to estrange you two to counsel him to lead a reckless, devil-may-care existence. And I tried the same thing on Mr. Bennett, only he was much more susceptible than your husband and took me more seriously. I want you, one and all, to be sure that I hate myself most cordially!"

"The end justified the means, I think," said Mrs. Congdon.

"I found a friend I'm not going to lose as one result," said Putney. "And if the sick man across the bay recovers I hope I have another lifelong friend there."

"Oh, it's all so strange!" cried Mrs. Congdon. "One might think that we must suffer tribulation before we know what perfect happiness is! And I never expect to understand all that has happened to you men. Is it possible that you'll ever settle down again?"

"That depends —" Archie remarked, glancing meaningfully at Isabel, — a glance which Mrs. Congdon detected and appraised with that prescience which makes every woman a match-maker.

On the wharf they lingered, like a company of old friends reluctant for even a brief parting; Ruth, lantern in hand, stood beside Mrs. Graybill, looking like a child beside the stately woman. As Archie cried "All aboard," Julia caught Ruth in her arms and kissed her.

"Good night, little girl!" she said softly.

It was like a benediction and the very graciousness of act and word lightened Archie's vigil as all night he watched outside the Governor's door.