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Princess Virginia

By C. N. and A. M. WILLIAMSON, Authors of "66 Lightning Conductor," "Rosemary in Search of a Father." Etc. Je Je

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ity was satisfied.

happiest girl on earth."

thing before we part,"

stone of the situation."

gether."

visit here after tonight."

"Why, what has he said?"

when I want you again."

ter, have you anything to tell me?"

"One whole long, beautiful day to-

what you will consider the-the key-

"Only for him to say that he loves

me," Virginia confessed. "If I'm right,

if I've brought something new into his

life, something which has shown him

head, then there will come a moment

me.' Then when that moment comes

too, and I shall tell him all the truth."

man in the world for me; because,

my mind that I must win him first

through love or live single all my

"What if he should be vexed at the

ou know, darling, we shall be in a

what we did is that our real position

is a hundred times higher than the

one we assumed, and all those to

characters at the end. But Leopold is

a man, not a romantic girl, as you

are. He has always had a reputation

before he would let himself be gener-

ous, and it may be that to one of his

"You think of him as he was before

we met, not as he is now, if you fancy

of him any more. Tonight I've no

"Many women would be satisfied

with Rhaetia," was the practical re-

sponse which jumped into the mind

of the grand duchess, but she would

throw no more cold water upon the

rose flame of her daughter's exaltation.

She kissed the girl on the forehead,

breathing a few words of motherly

sympathy, but when the princess had

flown off to her own room to dress she

shook her diamond starred head doubt-

Virginia's plan sounded poetical and

as easy to carry out as to turn a

To be sure, the princess had so far

end, and the grand duchess felt as she

she was that night at dinner, and Egon

Egon glanced very often at Leopold,

fully.

"You'll tell him who we really are?"

[CONTINUED.]

egon rose with alacrity to obey. He was rather thoughtful, for his brother had put an entirely new and exciting idea into his head.

Presently the red volume was discovered and laid on the desk before the chancellor, who turned the leaves over until he found the page desired. As his eye fell upon the long line of Mowbrays his face changed, and the bristling brows came together in a grizzled line. Apparently the women were not adventuresses, at least in

the ordinary acceptation of the term. There they were. His square tipped finger pressed down upon the printed names with a dig that might have signified his disposition toward their rep-

resentatives. "The girl's mother is the widow of

Reginald, sixth Baron Mowbray," the old man muttered half aloud; "son, Reginald Edward, fifteen years of age daughter, Helen Agusta, twenty-eight Aha! She's no chicken, this young lady. She ought to be a woman of the world."

"Twenty-eight!" replied Egon. "I'll eat my hat if she's twenty-eight." "Doesn't she look it by daylight?"

"Not an hour over nineteen; might be younger. Jove, I was never so surprised to learn a woman's age! By the bye, I heard her telling Baron von Lyndal last night, apropos of our great Rhaetian victory, that she was eleven years old on the day it took place. Tu... would make her about twenty now. When she spoke I remember she gave a look at her mother across the room as though she were frightened. I suppose she was hoping there was no copy of this big red book at Lyndalberg."

"That thought might have been in her mind," assented the chancellor, "or else she"- He left his sentence unfinished and sat with unseeing eyes fixed in an owlish stare on the open page of Burke.

"I should like to know if you really meant what you said about my marriage a little while ago"-Egon ventured to attract his brother's attention -"because if you did"-"If I did"-

"I might try very hard to please you in my choice of a wife."

"Be a little more explicit. You mean you would try to prove to Miss Mow. days." bray that a captain of cavalry in the hand is worth an emperor in the bush bramble bush at that, eh?

"Yes; I would do my best. And, as rather curious position when everyyou say, I'm not without advantages," thing comes out, as we have made all "You are not. I was on the point of our friends here under the name of suggesting that you made the most of Mowbray. Of course the excuse for them in Miss Mowbray's eyes until you brought me this red book."

The large forefinger tapped the page of Mowbrays, while two lines which whom we've been introduced would might have meant amusement or a be delighted to know us in our own sneer scored themselves on either side of the chancellor's mouth.

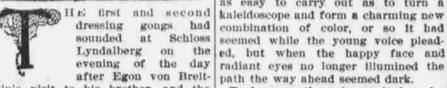
"And now you've changed your mind?" There was disappointment in for pride and austerity, for being just Egon's voice.

"I don't say that. I say only wait. Make yourself as agreeable to the lady nature a wild whim like yours". as you like. But don't pledge yourself, and don't count upon my promise or Phones-Office 214. Res. 205 my money until you hear again. By he could be hard with a woman he NEBRASKA that time-well, we shall see what we really loved," said Virginia eagerly. shall see. Keep your hand in. But "He'll forgive me, dear. I've no fear wait-wait."

"How long am I to wait? If the fear of anything. He loves me-andthing's to be done at all it must be I'm empress of the world." done soon, for meanwhile the emperor makes all the running."

The chancellor looked up again from the red book, his fist still covering the Mowbrays as if they were to be extinguished. "You are to wait," he said, "until I've had answers to a couple of telegrams I shall send tonight."

CHAPTER TENS



evening of the day radiant eyes no longer illumined the after Egon von Breit- path the way shead seemed dark. stein's visit to his brother, and the grand duchess was beginning to won- walked triumphantly along the highder uneasily what kept her daughter road to success, but it was not always when ringed fingers tapped on the panel a good beginning which led to a good

of the door. "Come in!" she answered, and Vir- rang for Ernestine that her nerves ginia appeared, still in the white ten- would be strained to the breaking point nis dress she had worn that afternoon. She stood for an instant without speak- for better or for worse. ing, her face so radiantly beautiful that her mother thought it seemed illumined from a light within.

It had been on the lips of the grand duchess to scold the girl for her tardi- gredient. Until yesterday he had said ness, since to be late was an unpardon- to himself, "If she be not fair to me, by," able offense with an imperial majesty what care I how fair she be?" But in the house. But in that radiance the now there was a vague idea that she words died.

"Virginia, what is it? You look-I searcely know how you look. But you he was falling in love with a girl who make me feel that something has hap- had captured the emperor's heart. pened.

The princess came slowly across the room, smiling softly, with an air of unfavorably with his own. The emscious of what she did, she sank down cast of feature, while Egon's face kept in a big chair and sat resting her el- the color and youthfulness of the early bows on her knees, her chin nestling twenties. He was older than Leopold. between her two paims, like a pink but he looked a boy. Alma-Tadema white rose in its calyx.

nd set him down on a marble bench gainst a burning sapphire sky, where be would have appeared more suitably ad than in the stiff blue and silver niform of a crack Rhaetian regiment.

Leopold, on the contrary, would nevbe painted except as a soldier, and seemed to Egon that no normal girl ould help thinking him a far hand- ers and a night for lovers. omer fellow than the emperor. For the moment, of course, Miss Mowbray did not notice him because his imperial majesty loomed large in the forechancellor had evidently a plan in his head for removing that stately obstacle into the dim perspective.

Egon had not heard Miss Mowbray grand duchess to her maid. "I'll ring spoken of as an heiress. Therefore, even had there been no emperor in the The elaborate process of waving and way, he would not have worshiped at dressing her still abundant hair had the shrine. But now behold the shrine, fortunately come to a successful end, attractive before, newly and alluringand Ernestine had just caused a dialy decked! Egon wondered much over mond star to rise above her forehead. his half brother's apparently impulsive She was in a robe de chambre, and the offer and the contradictory command, critical eye. rest of her tollet could wait till curioswhich had a little later enjoined wait-

But Virginia still sat dreaming, her He was delighted, however, that he happy eyes far away. The grand duchhad not been forbidden to make himess had to speak twice before the girl self agreeable, and his idea was as heard and started a little. "My daughsoon as dinner should be over to find a place at Miss Mowbray's side before The princess roused herself, "Nothany other man should have time to ing, mother, really, except that I'm the take it. But, unluckly for this plan, Baron von Lyndal detained him for a few moments with praise of a new "Not one word that any one mightn't remedy which might cure the chanhave listened to. But I know. He does cellor's gout, and when he escaped care. And I think he will say somefrom his host to look for Miss Mowbray in the white drawing room she "There's only one more day of his was not there.

From the music room adjoining, however, came sounds which drew him toward the door. He knew Miss Mow-"But, after all, dearest," argued her bray's soft, coaxing touch on the plmother, "what do you expect? If in ano, She was there "playing in a truth you were only Miss Mowbray, whisper," as he had heard her call marriage between you and the emperor it. Perhaps she was going to sing, as would be out of the question. You've she had done once or twice before, and never gone into the subject of your would need some one to turn the pages feelings about this quite thoroughly of her music. Egon thought that he with me, and I do wish I knew pre- would much like to be the some one risely what you hope for from him. and was in the act of parting the white velvet portieres that covered the doorway when his hostess smilingly beck-

oned him away. "The emperor has just asked Miss Mowbray to teach him some old fashloned Scotch or English air (I'm afraid that his heart's as important as his I don't quite know the difference) called 'Annie Laurie,'" the baroness exwhen he can keep silence no longer. plained. "He was charmed with it when he'll be forced to say, 'I love you. when she sang the other evening, and dear, and because we can't belong to I've been assuring him that the song each other day is turned into night for would exactly suit his voice. mustn't disturb them while the lesson the tide of my fortune will be at its is going on. Tell me-I've hardly had flood. I shall tell him that I love him, a moment to ask you-how did you find the chancellor?"

Chained to a forced allegiance, Egon "Yes, and why I've been masquermechanically answered the questions ading-that it was because, ever since of the baroness without making absurd I was a little girl, he'd been the one mistakes, the while his ears burned to hear what was going on behind the when our marriage was suggested white curtains. through official channels, I made up

Everybody knew of the music lesson now and chatted in tones of tactful monotony, never speaking too loudly to disturb the singers, never too cautiously, lest they should seem to deception and refuse to forgive you? listen. Once, and then again, the tenor that was almost a baritone sang conscientiously through the verses of "Annie Laurie" from beginning to end. Then a few desultory chords were struck on the piano, and at last there was silence behind the white curtains in the music room.

Were the two still there? To interrupt such a tete-a-tete seemed out of the question, but not to know what was happening Egon found too hard to bear, and the arrival of a telegram for Lady Mowbray came as opportunely as if Providence had had his special needs in mind.

Evidently it was not a pleasant telegram, for as she read it the Dresden china lady showed plainly that she was disconcerted. Her pretty face lost its color; her eyes dilated as if she had



"Playing in a whisper."

tasted a drop of belladonna on sugar; she patted her lips with her lace handkerchief and finally rose from her chair, looking dazed and distressed.

"I've had rather bad news," she admitted to Baroness von Lyndal, who was all solicitude-"oh, nothing really serious, I trust, but still disquieting. until matters were definitely settled It is from a dear friend. I think I had better go to my room and talk things Virginia had never been lovelier than over with Helen. Would you be kind enough to tell her when she comes in von Breitstein's admiration for her that she's to follow me there? Don't beauty had in it a fascinating new insend for her till then; it's not necessary. Rut I shall want her by and

It was clear that Lady Mowbray did not wish her daughter to be disturbed. might, after all, be for him, and he took Still, Egon von Breitstein thought he enormous pleasure in the thought that might fairly let his anxiety run away with him. As the baroness accompanied her guest to the door he took it upon himself to search for Miss Mowcontrasting his sovereign's appearance bray, for now if the emperor should curse him for a spoil-sport he would one who walks in sleep. Hardly con- peror was thin and dark, with a grave have the best of excuses. Lady Mowbray was in need of her daughter.

He lifted the white curtains and peeped through a small antechamber into the music room beyond. It was empty. would have wreathed him with vine but one of the long windows leading "You may go, Ernestine," said the leaves, draped him with tiger skins into the rose garden was wide open.

The month of September was dying, and away in the Rhaetlan mountains winter had begun. Yet in the lap of the low country summer lingered. The air was soft and sweet with the perfume of roses-roses living and roses dead in a potpourri of scattered petals on the grass. It was a garden for lov-

Egon went to the open window and looked out, but dared not let his feet take the direction of his eyes, though he was sure that somewhere in the ground of her imagination, but the garden Miss Mowbray and the emperor were to be found.

"They will come in again this way." he said to himself, "for they will want people to think they have never left the music room, and for that very reason they won't stop too long. They must have some regard for the conventions. If I wait"-

He did not finish the sentence in his mind. Nevertheless be examined the resources of the window niche with a

There was a deep inclosure between the window frame and the long, straight curtains of olive green satin which matched the decoration of the music room. By drawing the curtains a few inches farther forward one could make a screen which would hide one from observation by any person in the room or outside in the garden. So Egon did draw the curtain, and, framed in his shelter like a saint in a niche, he stood peering into the silver night.

The moon was rising over the lake, and long, pale rays of level light were stealing up the paths like the fingers of a blind child that caress gropingly the features of a beloved face.

Egon could not see the whole garden or all the paths among the roses. But if the emperor and his companion came back by the way they had gone he would know presently whether they walked in the attitude of friends or lovers. It was so necessary for his plans to know this that he thought it worth while to exercise a little patience in waiting. Of course, if they were lovers, goodby to his hopes, and he would never have so good a chance as this to make sure.

All things in the garden that were not white were gray as a dove's wings, Even the shadows were not black, and the sky was gray, with the soft gray of velvet under a crust of diamonds which flashed as the spangles on a woman's fan flash when it trembles in her hand.

White moths, happily ignorant that summer would come no more for them, drifted out from the shadows like rose petals blown by the soft wind. On a trellis a crowding sisterhood of pale roses drooped their heads downward n memento mori. It was a silver night, a night of enchantment.

Leopold had meant to take Virginia out only to see the moon rise over the water, turning the great smooth sheet of jet into a silver shield, for there had been clouds or spurts of rain on other nights, and he had said to himself that never again perhaps would they two stand together under the white spell of the moon. He had meant to keep her for five minutes, or ten at the most, and then to bring her back, but they had walked down to the path which girdled the cliff above the lake. The moon touched her golden hair and her pure face like a benediction. He dared not look at her thus for long, and when there came a sudden quick rustling in the grass at their feet he bent down, glad of any change in the current of his thoughts,"

Some tiny winged thing of the night sought a lodging in a bell shaped flower whose blue color the moon had drunk, and as Leopold steeped the same impulse made Virginia bend. He stretched out his hand to gather

the low growing branch of blossoms, which he would give the girl as a souvenir of this hour, and their fingers met. Lake and garden swam before the eyes of the princess as the emperor's hand closed over hers.

Her great moment had come, yet now that it was here, womanlike, she wished it away, not gone forever-oh. no-but waiting just round the corner of the future. "The flowers are yours-I give them

to you," she laughed, as if she fancled it was in eagerness to grasp the disputed spray that he had pressed her fingers. "You are the one flower I want-

flower of all the world," he answered in a choked voice, speaking words he had not meant to speak. But the ice barriers that held back the torrent of which he had told her had melted long ago and now had been swept away. Other barriers which he had built up in their place-his convictions, his duty as a man at the head of a nationwere gone too. "I love you," he stammered. "I love you far better than my life, which you saved. I've loved you ever since our first hour together on the mountain, but every day my love has grown a thousandfold until now it's greater and higher than any mountain. I can fight against myself no longer. I thought I was strong, but this love is stronger than I am. Say that you care for me-only say that.'

"I do care," Virginia whispered. She had prayed for this, lived for this, and she was drowning in happiness. Yet she had pictured a different scene, a scene of storm and stress. She had heard in fancy broken words of sorrow and noble renunciation on his lips, and in anticipating his suffering she had felt the joy her revelation would give. "I care-so much, so much! How hard it will be to part!"

"If you care, then, we shall not be

parted," said Leopold. The princess looked up at him in wonder, holding back as he would have caught her in his arms. What could be mean? What plan was in his mind that, believing her to be Helen Mowbray, yet made it possible for him to reassure her so?

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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