

**A
REALIZED IDEAL**

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A Realized Ideal by Julia Magruder

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JULIA MAGRUDER

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BY

Julia Magruder

AUTHOR OF "THE VIOLET"
"THE PRINCESS SONIA"
"MISS AVE OF VIRGINIA"



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A Realized Ideal

I

"Really, Philip—"

The speaker, who had uttered these two words with energy, suddenly broke off. It was Gertrude Hill, and she was speaking to her husband's cousin, Philip Drury, who lay in a hammock and smoked while she sat upright and mended stockings. These were of various sizes, to cover the feet of both big and little children. Mrs. Hill truly adored her children, but it was sometimes thought that she was somewhat ostentatiously domestic. There were others to mend stockings for her, but she liked the feeling it gave.

"Well?" said Drury, and waited.

"What's the use!" exclaimed his com

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panion. "I was about to begin, for the thousandth time, to remonstrate with you, when I remembered what a waste of breath it was. I wish I could make up my mind to give you up and let you alone."

"Please do n't! You are almost the only one who has n't, and I look to you to save me yet. Do go on with what you were going to say. 'Really, Philip'—what?"

"You know already what it is I have always on my mind to say to you, but I've said it so often, and you've given me so little satisfaction, that I wonder at my own persistency."

"So do I, and I love you for it, too! You're a dear. Try me once more and see if I do n't do better. I'm in a mood of grim honesty to-day, and if you want to get to the bottom of things and of me, now is your chance. This morning's post brought me a letter which has set me to thinking. George Churchill is going to be married!"

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"Well!" exclaimed his companion, with an intonation in which satisfaction triumphed over wonder.

"Of course you're delighted. I knew you would be. Marrying is the straight road to your favor always. It's a different thing with me, though. George Churchill, though much younger than I am, is about the most companionable fellow that I know. We were to have gone to Africa together. There is nothing left for me now but to go back alone."

"Philip Drury!" exclaimed his companion, sitting upright in her wicker chair, and gesticulating with a hand tightly cased in a black stocking. "Go back to Africa, indeed! A man has no right to fly straight into the face of Providence like that! What George Churchill is doing is the one right and proper thing for a man to do. Instead of taking him for an example, as you should, you propose to fly right off to that heathenish and outrageous existence from which a kind Providence

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has delivered you once. What do you want to go to Africa for?"

"Big game."

"Big fiddlesticks! Much you care for the big game when you get it. Come, now, you promised to be honest."

"So I did. Thank you for reminding me. I ought to confess, then, that I have had hopes of doing some real service as an explorer. And besides, one is able to throw off trouble there as one cannot do here."

"Trouble, indeed! You do irritate me. What trouble is there in the life of a man, young, healthy, popular, rich, and with everything on earth to make him happy, except a wife to preside over his beautiful home—and that to be had for the asking?"

"But suppose one sees no woman whom one is inclined to ask?"

"Nonsense!"

"Not nonsense at all, my dear Gerty, as far as I am concerned—experience!"

"Do you mean to tell me you have never been in love?"

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“Well, not exactly that, since we have agreed that we are in the Palace of Truth; but I mean to tell you very emphatically that I never saw a woman whom I wished to marry.”

“And why?”

He hesitated a moment, and then said, seriously:

“As often as I have had that question put by my friends and well-wishers—Why I do not seek a wife?—I have never given the real answer. I wonder whether you will believe me if I give it to you now! I have promised to be honest, and I will. The reason is simply this: I have carried about with me, ever since I came to man's estate, and even before, a certain ideal—distinct and definite, but so far unrealized. Where I got it, when I got it, how I got it, I do not know. I cannot remember the time when I had not the consciousness of that supreme woman in my soul, but she reigns there with the sway of an autocrat, and has never given any sign of