

The GOOSE GIRL

By HAROLD MacGRATH

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CHAPTER I.

SOME IN RAGS.

An old man clothed in picturesque patches and tatters paused and leaned on his stout oak staff. He had walked many miles that day. His peasant garb rather enhanced his fine head. His eyes were blue and clear and far-seeing, the eyes of a hunter or a woodsman.

The afternoon glow of the September sun burned along the dusty white highway. From where he stood the road trailed off miles behind and wound up 500 feet or more above him to the ancient city of Dreiberg.

Across a lofty jumble of barren rock and glacial cleft, now purpling and darkening as the sun mellowed in its decline, lay the kingdom of Jugendheit. By and by his gaze wavered, and one particular patch in the valley, brown from the beating of many ironshod horses, caught and chained his interest for a space. It was the military field, and it glittered and scintillated with squadron after squadron of cavalry.

"The philosophy of war is to prepare for it," mused the old man, with a jerk of his shoulders. "France! So the matter runs. There is a Napoleon in France, but no Bonaparte." He laughed ironically and cautiously glanced at his watch, an article which must have cost him many and many a potato patch. He stepped forward. He had followed yonder goose girl ever since the incline began. Oft the little wooden shoes had lagged, but here they were, still a hundred yards or more ahead of him.

The little goose girl was indeed tired, and the little wooden shoes grew heavier and heavier, and the little bare feet ached dully, but her heart was light and her mind sweet with happiness. Day after day she had tended the geese in the valley and trudged back at evening alone, all told a matter of twelve miles, and now she was bringing them into the city to sell in the market on the morrow. After that she would have little to do save an hour or two at night in a tavern called the Black Eagle, where she waited on patrons.

Presently there was a clatter of horses, a jingle of bit and spur and saber. Half a dozen mounted officers trotted past. The peasant on the parapet instantly recognized one of the men. He saluted with a humbleness which lacked sincerity. It was the grand duke himself. There was General Duewitz, too, and some of his staff, and a smooth faced, handsome young man in civilian riding clothes, who though he rode like a cavalryman, was obviously of foreign birth, an Englishman or an American.

When the cavalcade reached the goose girl the peace of the scene vanished forthwith. Confusion took up the scepter. The silly geese, instead of remaining on the left of the road in safety, straightway determined that their haven of refuge was on the opposite side. Gonk, gonk! Quack, quack! They scrambled, they blundered, they flew. Some tried to go over the horses, some endeavored to go under.

The civilian looked casually at the girl. "By George!" he exclaimed in English. "What is it?" asked the duke, gathering up the reins.

"The girl's face. It is beautiful." The duke, after a glance, readily agreed. "You Americans are always observant."

"Pretty figure, too," said one of the aids, a colonel. But his eye held none of the abstract admiration which characterized the American's.

The goose girl had seen this look in other men's eyes. She knew. A faint color grew under her tan and waned.

The troop proceeded with dust and small thunder and shortly passed the city gates. It traversed the lumpy cobbles of the narrow streets, often crowding pedestrians. One among those so inconvenienced was a youth dressed as a vintner. He was tall, plainly built, blond as a viking, possessing a singular beauty of the masculine order. He was forced to flatten himself against the wall of a house, his arms extended on either side in a kind of temporary crucifixion. Even then the stirrup of the American touched him slightly. But it was not the touch of the stirrup that startled him. It was the dark, clean cut face of the rider. Once they were by the youth darted into a doorway.

"He? What can he be doing here? No, it is utterly impossible. It is merely a likeness."

dismounted. The American thanked the duke gratefully for the use of the horse. "You are welcome to a mount at all times, Mr. Carmichael," replied the duke pleasantly. "A man who rides as well as yourself may be trusted anywhere with any kind of a horse."

The group looked admiringly at the object of this marked attention. Here was one who had seen two years of constant and terrible warfare, who had ridden horses under fire and who bore on his body many honorable scars, for the great civil strife in America had come to its close but two years before and Europe was still captive to her amazement at the military prowess of the erstwhile inconsiderable American.

As Carmichael saluted and turned to leave the courtyard he threw a swift, searching glance at one of the palace windows. Did the curtain stir? He could not say. He continued on, crossing the Platz, toward the Grand Hotel. He was a bachelor, so he might easily have had his quarters at the consulate, but as usual with American consulates—even to the present time—it was situated in an undesirable part of the town, over a bierhalle frequented by farmers and the middle class.

Where had he seen that young vintner before? Meanwhile the goose girl, now joined by the old man, marshaled her geese and proceeded.

"What was that song you were singing before the horses came up?" he asked her.

"That? It was from the poet Heine"—simply.

He stared at her.

"Heine? Can you read?"

"Yes, herr."

A goose girl who read Heine? "And the music?" he inquired presently.

"That is mine"—with the first sign of diffidence. "Melodies are always running through my head. Sometimes they make me forget things I ought to remember."

"Your own music? An impresario will be discovering you some fine day, and your fortune will be made."

The light irony did not escape her. "I am only a goose girl."

He felt disarmed. "What is your name?"

"Gretchen."

"What else?"

"Nothing else," wistfully. "I never knew any father or mother."

"So? But who taught you to read?"

"A priest. Once I lived in the mountains at an inn. He used to come in evenings when the snow was not too deep. He taught me to read and write. I know that Italy has all the works of art, that France has the most interesting history, that Germany has all the philosophers and America all the money," adding a smile. "I should like to see America."

"Do you live alone?"

"No. I live with my foster mother, who is very old. I call her grandmother. She took me in when I was a foundling. And what might your name be?"

"Ludwig. I am a mountaineer from Jugendheit."

"We are not friendly with your country."

"More's the pity. It is a grave blunder on the part of the grand duke."

"Wasn't it all about the grand duke's daughter?"

"Yes. But she has been found. Yet the duke is as bitter as of old. What is this new found princess like?"

"She is beautiful and kind."

"The girl was behaving, and only occasionally was she obliged to use her stick."

He observed her critically, for he was interested. She was not tall, but her lithe slenderness gave her the appearance of tallness. Her hands, rough nipped and sunburnt, were small and shapely. Her hair, in a thick braid, was the tone of the heart of a chestnut bur, and her eyes were of that mystifying hazel, sometimes brown, sometimes gray.

"How old are you, Gretchen?"

"I do not know," she answered, "perhaps eighteen, perhaps twenty."

Arriving at length in the city, they passed through the crooked streets.

"Gretchen, where shall I find the Adlersgasse?"

"I will show you. You are also a stranger in Dreiberg?"

"Yes."

They took the next turn, and the weather beaten sign Zum Schwarzen Adler, hanging in front of a frame house of many gables, caused the mountaineer to breathe gratefully.

"Here my journey ends, Gretchen, at the Black Eagle," he said.

They were passing a clock mender's shop. The man from Jugendheit peered in the window, but there was no clock in sight to give him warning of the time, and he dared not now look at his watch. He had a glimpse of the ancient clock mender himself, however, huddled over a table upon which sputtered a candle. The eyes of the two men met, but only for a moment. The mountaineer started to cross the street to the tavern.

"Good night, Gretchen. Good luck to you and your geese tomorrow."

"Thanks, Herr Ludwig. And will you be long in the city?"

"That depends; perhaps," adding a grim smile in answer to a grim thought.

He offered his hand, which she accepted trustfully. He was a strange old man, but she liked him. When she withdrew her hand something cold and hard remained in her palm. Wonders of all the world, it was a piece of gold! Her eyes went up quickly, but the giver smiled reassuringly and put a finger against his lips.

"But, herr," she remonstrated.

"Keep it. I give it to you. Do not question Providence, and I am her handmaiden just now. Go along with you."

So Gretchen in a mild state of stupefaction turned away. Clat-clat! sang the little wooden shoes. A plaintive gonk rose as she prodded a laggard from the dank gutter. A piece of gold! Clat-clat! Clat-clat! Surely this had been a day of marvels.

She was regarded with kindly eyes till the dark jaws of the Krumerweg swallowed up both her and her geese.

"Poor little goose girl!" he thought. "If she but knew she could make a bonfire of a thousand hearts. A fine day!" He eyed again the battered sign. It was then that he discerned another leaning from the ledge of the first story of the house adjoining the tavern. It was the tarnished shield of the United States.

Two weeks tramping about the country in this unlovely garb, following false trails half the time, living on crusts and cold meats! Ah, you have led me a merry dance, nephew, but I shall not forget!"

He entered the tavern and applied for a room, haggling over the price.

The nights were chilly. Carmichael in order to finish his cigar on the little balcony fronting his window found it necessary to put on his light overcoat, though he perfectly knew that he was in no manner forced to smoke on the balcony. But the truth was he wanted a clear vision of the palace and the lighted windows thereof and of one in particular. He had no more sense than Tom Fool, the abettor of follies. She was as far removed from him as the most alien of the planets, but the magnet shall ever draw the needle, and a woman shall ever draw a man. He knew that it was impossible, that it grew more impossible day by day, and he raved at himself bitterly and satirically.

He sighed and feathered his legs. Carmichael sighed for the Princess Hildegarde, mistress of many hearts, rich or poor, and the latter mode of expression worked more vitality.

Arthur Carmichael was Irish. He was born in America, educated there and elsewhere—a little while in Paris, a little while at Bonn—and, like all Irishmen, he was banished with the wandering foot, for the man who is homeless by choice has a subtle poison in his blood. He was at Bonn when the civil war came. He went back to America and threw himself into the fight with all the ardor that had made his forbears famous in the service of the worthless Stuarts. It wasn't a question with him of the mere love of fighting, of tossing the penny. He knew with which side he wished to fight. He joined the cavalry of the north and hammered and tumbled his way to a captaincy. He was wounded five times and imprisoned twice. At the end of the conflict he returned to Washington.

Without any influence whatever save his pleasing address and his wide education he blarneyed the state department out of a consulate. They sent him to Ehrenstein at a salary not worth mentioning, with the diplomatic halo of dignity as a tail to the kite. Two years in any one place was not in reckoning as regarded Carmichael, yet here he was, caring neither for promotion nor exchange. So, then, all logical deductions simmered down to one—cherchez la femme.

The dreamer is invariably tripping over his illusions, and Carmichael was rather boyish in his dreams. What absurd romances he was always weaving round her! What exploits on her behalf! But never anything happened, and never was the grand duke called upon to offer his benediction.

It was all very foolish and romantic and impossible, and no one recognized this more readily than he. No American ever married a princess of a reigning house, and no American ever will. This law is as immovable as the law of gravitation. Still, man is master of his dreams, and he may do as he pleases in the confines of this small circle.

"How the deuce will it end?" musing half aloud. "I'll forget myself some day and trip so hard that they'll be asking Washington for my recall. I'll go over to the gardens and listen to the band."

He was standing in front of the hotel when he noticed a closed carriage hard by the fountain in the Platz.

"Ha, a fare?"

A woman in black, thoroughly veiled and cloaked, came round from the opposite side of the fountain. She spoke to the driver. The lady stepped into the carriage, the driver woke up his ancient Bucephalus and went creakety-clack down the Konigsstrasse toward the town. To Carmichael it was less than an accident. He twirled his cane and walked toward the public gardens.

The band struck up again, and he drifted with the crowd toward the pavilion.

Within a dozen feet of him, her arms folded across her breast, her eyes half shut in the luxury of the senses, stood the goose girl. He smiled as he recalled the encounter of that afternoon. It was his habit to ride to the maneuvers every day, and several times he had noticed her and her beauty.

"Why couldn't I have fallen in love with some one like this?" he cogitated.

Colonel von Wallenstein of the general staff approached her from the other side. Wallenstein was a capital soldier and a jolly fellow round a board, but beyond that Carmichael had no real liking for him. There were too many scented notes stuck in his pockets.

The colonel dropped his cigarette, leaned over Gretchen's shoulder and spoke a few words. At first she gave no heed. The colonel persisted. Without a word in reply she resolutely sought the nearest policeman. Wallenstein, remaining where he was, laughed. Meantime the policeman frowned. His excellency could not possibly have intended any wrong. The law of redress in Ehrenstein had no niche for the goose girl.

"Good evening, colonel," said Carmichael pleasantly. "Why can't your bandmaster give us light opera once in awhile?"

The colonel pulled his mustache in chagrin.

"Light operas are rare at present," he replied, accepting his defeat amiably enough.

And then a pretty woman rose from a chair near by. She nodded brightly at the colonel, who bowed, excused himself to Carmichael and made off after her.

Carmichael looked round for Gretchen. She was still at the side of the policeman. She came back.

"Did you get your geese together without mishap?" he asked of her.

The instinct of the child always remains with the woman. Gretchen smiled. This young man would be different, she knew.

"They were only frightened."

"We don't have goose girls in America," he said.

The magic word America, where the gold came from, flamed her curiosity.

"You are from America?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Are you rich?"

"In fancy, in dreams," humorously. "Oh, I thought they were all rich. Did you fight in the war?"

"Yes. Do you like music?"

"Were you ever wounded?"

"A scratch or two. But do you like music?"

"Very, very much. When they play Beethoven, Bach or Meyerbeer—ach, I seem to live in another country. I hear music in everything—in the leaves, the rain, the wind, the stream."

It seemed strange to him that he had not noticed it at first, the almost Hanoverian purity of her speech and the freedom with which she spoke. The average peasant is ignorant, diffident, with a vocabulary of few words.

"What is your name?"

"Gretchen."

"It is a good name. It is famous too."

"So he did." Carmichael ably concealed his surprise.

He was willing to swear that she was making fun of him. Was she a simple goose girl? Was she not something more, something deeper? War clouds were forming in the skies. They might gather and strike at any time. And who but the French could produce such a woman spy? Ehrenstein was not Prussia, it was true, but the duchy, with its 20,000 troops, was one of the many pulses that beat in unison with the man Eisenack's plans. He was certainly puzzled, but a glance at her hands dissolved his doubts. These hands were used to toil. They were in no way disguised.

"You have been to school?"

"After a manner. My teacher was a kind priest. But he never knew that, with knowledge, he was to open the gates of discontent."

"Then you are not happy with your lot?"

"Is any one, herr?" quietly. "And who might you be and what might you be doing here in Dreiberg, riding with the grand duke?"

"I am the American consul."

Gretchen took a step back.

"What did Colonel Wallenstein say to you?" he asked.

"Nothing of importance. I am used to you. I am perfectly able to take care of myself," she answered.

"What did the policeman say?"

"What would he say to a goose girl?"

"Shall I speak to him?"

"Would it really do any good?" skeptically.

"It might. The duke is friendly toward me, and I am certain he would not tolerate such conduct in his police. My name is Carmichael. Now, listen, Gretchen—if at any time you are in trouble you will find me at the Grand hotel or at the consulate next door to the Black Eagle."

"I shall remember. Sometimes I work in the Black Eagle."

"Good night," he said.

Gretchen extended her hand, and Carmichael took it in his own, inspecting it.

"It is a good hand. It is strong too," he said.

"It has to be strong, herr. Good night."

Carmichael raised his hat again, and Gretchen breathed contentedly as she saw him disappear in the crowd. Suddenly she felt an arm slip through hers. Her head went round.

"Leo!" she whispered.

It was the young vintner whom Carmichael had pushed against the wall that day.

"Who was that?" he asked.

"Herr Carmichael, the American consul."

"Carmichael?" he gasped.

"What is it, Leo?"

"Nothing. Only I grow mad with rage when any of these gentlemen speak to you. Gentlemen! I know them all to well. Ah, how I love you!"

Gretchen thrilled.

"To me the world began but two weeks ago. I have just begun to live," he whispered warmly.

"I am sad and lonely tonight," she said gloomily.

"Why, indeed?"

"Leo, as much as I love you, there is always a shadow."

"What shadow?"

"It is always at night that I see you, rarely in the bright daytime. What do you do during the day? It is not your vintage. What do you do?"

"Will you trust me a little longer Gretchen, just a little longer?"

(Continued next issue.)

Dies Very Suddenly.

Yesterday afternoon Ben Hart who has been a county charge for some time went down to Murray and while visiting at Dr. Gilmore's residence suddenly expired.

Hart formerly worked near Murray and for a long time was in the employ of Dr. Gilmore and yesterday had gone to Murray to visit former acquaintance and had gone to the residence of Dr. Gilmore expecting to find the doctor there. It happened that the doctor was in the country and Hart sat down to visit a few moments and was talking to Mrs. Gilmore and her sister, Miss Margery Walker when he was suddenly attacked with heart failure and died before anyone could be summoned.

Mrs. Gilmore phoned the sheriff who called up the Hild undertaking rooms for some one to take care of Hart's remains. Mr. J. P. Sattler went out and got the body and returned to Plattsmouth last night with it, arriving shortly before the rain.

Departed for Malvern.

Frank Gobleman, the secretary and treasurer of the Plattsmouth Base Ball team, left this morning with the team for Malvern, where the team plays ball three successive days. Mrs. Gobleman accompanied her husband. Ed. Brantner and wife went to Malvern yesterday to make arrangements for lodging the team. The members going this morning were: William Fitzgerald, Fred McCauley, Will Mason, Clarence Beal, Peter Herold, Barney Bardwell, Amos FINDER, Emil Droege and Steve Hulfish. There will be a number of Plattsmouth, people going over to encourage the Plattsmouth team in winning the heavy prize.

At the Picture Show.

Last night was amateur night at the moving picture show and the audience was delighted with light weight six round bout for honors and a purse, the participants being James Lindsey and Bert Lamphere. The sparring was lively, each of the boxers taking a fall, and at the end of the sixth round the fight was declared a draw by the referee. The writer regrets that he cannot give the fight by rounds, but pace was swift and entirely satisfactory to the spectators. The referee's plan of rendering his decision was unique, calling for the audience to applaud which was about equal, he at once decided that the bout was a draw.

Injured at Shops.

Two minor accidents occurred at the shops yesterday. Mr. A. Sharp had the great toe on one foot badly smashed by having a wheelbarrow loaded with coal run over the injured foot.

H. D. Stanton received a blow on the face from a timber in the plaining mill. Both parties went to the surgeon to have their injuries dressed, but neither man will lay off, both going back to work.

John Crabill was called to Omaha this afternoon on business.

SEEKS TO ENJOIN COUNTY BOARD

John S. Hall Seeks to Secure Bids For Heating Infirmary

J. S. Hall who was one of the bidders for the contract to furnish the hot water heating plant for the county farm, has become aggrieved at the decision of the commissioners letting the bid to John Bauer, and has resorted to the courts to obtain relief.

The suit filed is entitled: John S. Hall vs. Martin L. Friederich, L. D. Switzer and Charles R. Jordan, as the board of county commissioners and John Bauer, defendants.

In his petition the plaintiff alleges in substance that he has been a resident and citizen of Plattsmouth for more than twenty years and has been engaged in the plumbing business for a long time. That the defendants are commissioners of Cass county and that defendant, John Bauer, is a bidder and interested in furnishing a heating plant for the county poor farm.

That in the spring of 1910 plaintiff was solicited by a member of the board of commissioners to prepare measurements and drawing, plans and specifications for a hot water heating plant for the poor house on the county farm, and in compliance therewith he did as requested and filed the same with the clerk of Cass county. That afterwards, the commissioners advertised for bids for the constructing and placing of said plant, which bids were advertised, to be filed not later than August 1, 1910, and in compliance with such advertisement plaintiff prepared his bid and filed same with the clerk of the county on the date named, and that John Bauer did not file his bid until August 2, 1910, after the board had met to consider the bids filed.

Plaintiff alleges on information and belief that the bid of said John Bauer was collusively procured by the commissioners or one of them and was so obtained to be accepted without regard to whether the same was the lowest and best bid. That on the 2nd day of August, 1910, when the bids for placing and constructing and furnishing such heating plant were opened by the board, it developed that the bid of plaintiff was the lowest bid, being \$825.60 while that of Bauer was next lowest, being \$850.

That plaintiff was ready to comply with his bid and furnish security required and was ready to complete and furnish such heating plant in accordance with his bid and stipulations.

The prayer of the petition is that the defendants, each of them, be enjoined and restrained from their attempted effort and plan of construction of such heating plant; that the court decree that the plaintiff's bid is the lowest and best bid for such contract and work, and that the board be immediately ordered to declare plaintiffs bid the lowest and best bid therefor, and that plaintiff be awarded the contract for placing constructing and furnishing such heating plant. The writ was issued returnable August 10th at 9 o'clock a. m.

The case is a very interesting one and has developed some peculiar features, and there are technical questions involved, no doubt, which only the court can solve.

Charles Beach in Town.

Charles Beach, an old time Plattsmouth and Weeping Water boy, is in the city the guest of Kelly Fox and other friends. Mr. Beach is now in the office of the chief clerk of the railway mail service at Lincoln in which position he has served for six years. Formerly, Mr. Beach was in the mail service travelling out of Lincoln, but has been located at Plattsmouth in his present position for six years. While in town, Charles made the Journal office a call and renewed old acquaintances. We are always glad to welcome such pleasant gentlemen as we find Mr. Beach to be.

Allowed by County Board.

The commissioners allowed the following amounts on the road fund prior to their adjournment today:

City Treasurer Plattsmouth city road dist. No. 17... \$700 00

John Rubge, village treasurer of Avoca, road dist No. 23 500 00

Village treasurer, Union, road dist No. 22 800 00

City Treasurer Plattsmouth road dist No. 17 300 00

The board then adjourned to meet August 18, 1910.

William and Ed. Wolf of Avoca precinct with their parents autted to Plattsmouth today and spent the day at the William Hunter home.



IT MIGHT. THE DUKE IS FRIENDLY TOWARD ME.