

The GOOSE GIRL

By HAROLD MacGRATH

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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."

"Goethe used it." "So he did." Carmichael ably concealed his surprise. "I am going 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 this man Bismarck'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 Dreieberg, 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 it. 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

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 yet vintage. What do you do?"

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

CHAPTER II
FOR HER COUNTRY.

COUNT, must I tell you again not to broach that subject? There can be no alliance between Ehrenstein and I. Your highness knows that I look only to the welfare of the country. In the old days it was a foregone conclusion that this alliance was to be formed. Now, you persist in averring that the late king was the chief conspirator in abducting her serene highness, aided by Arnsberg, whose successor I have the honor to be. I have never yet seen any proofs. Show me something which absolutely convicts them and I'll surrender."

"On your honor?" "My word."

The duke struck a bell. "My secretary and tell him to bring me the packet marked A. He will understand."

The duke was frank in his likes and dislikes. He hated secrets, and he loved an opponent who engaged him in the open. It was this extraordinary rectitude which made the duke so powerful an aid to Bismarck in the days that followed. The man of iron needed this sort of character as a cover and a buckler to his own duplicities.

Herbeck was an excellent foil. He was as silent and secretive as sand. He moved, as it were, in circles, thus always eluding dangerous corners. He was tall, angular, with a thin, immobile countenance, well guarded by his gray eyes and straight lips. He was a born financier, with almost limitless ambition, though only he himself knew how far this ambition reached. Twice had he saved Ehrenstein from the dragnet of war and with honor.

The secretary came in and laid a thin packet of papers on the chancellor's desk.

The secretary bowed and withdrew. The duke stirred the papers angrily, took one of them and spread it out with a rasp.

"Look at that. Whose writing, I ask?"

Herbeck ran over it several times. At length he opened a drawer in his desk, sorted some papers and brought out a yellow letter. This he laid down beside the other.

"Yes, they are alike. This will be Arnsberg. Right?"—mildly—

"IT MIGHT BE FRIENDLY TOWARD ME," HE SAID. "SPEAK TO YOU, GENTLEMEN! I KNOW THEM ALL BY NAME. Ah, how I love you!"

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"FORGERY!" ROARED THE DUKE. "who may say that it is not a cunning forgery?"

"Forgery!" roared the duke. "Read this one from the late king of Jugendheit to Arnsberg then if you still doubt."

Herbeck read slowly and carefully. Then he rose and walked to the nearest window, studying the letter again in the sharper light.

Herbeck returned to his chair. "I wish that you had shown me these long ago. You accused the king?" "Certainly, but he denied it."

"In a letter?" "Yes. Here, read it."

Herbeck compared the two. "Where did you find these?" "In Arnsberg's desk," returned the duke—"Arnsberg, my boyhood playmate, the man I loved and trusted and advanced to the highest office in my power. Is that not the way? Well, dead or alive, 10,000 crowns to him who brings Arnsberg to me dead or alive."

"You are very bitter," said Herbeck. "And have I not cause? Did not my wife die of a broken heart, and did I not become a broken man? You do not know all, Herbeck—not quite all. Franz also sought the hand of the Princess Sofia. He, too, loved her, but I won. Well, his revenge must have been sweet to him."

"But your daughter has been restored to her own."

"Due to your indefatigable efforts alone. Ah, Herbeck, nothing will ever fill up the gap between, nothing will ever restore the mother." The duke bowed his head.

Herbeck opened another drawer and took forth a long hooded envelope crested and sealed.

"Your highness, here is a letter from the prince regent of Jugendheit formally asking the hand of the Princess Hildegarde for his nephew Frederick, who will shortly be crowned. My advice is to accept, to let bygones be bygones."

"Write the prince that I respectfully decline."

"Do nothing in haste, your highness. Temporize. Say that you desire some time to think about the matter. You can change your mind at any time. A reply like this commits you to nothing, whereas your abrupt refusal will only widen the breach."

"The wider the breach the better." "No, no, your highness; the past has disturbed you. We can stand war, and it is possible that we might win, even against Jugendheit, but war at this late day would be a colossal blunder. Victory would leave us where we began thirty years ago. And an insult to Jugendheit might precipitate war."

"Have your way, then." The duke departed, stirred as he had not been since the restoration of the princess. He sought his daughter. She was in the music room. "My child," he began, taking Hildegarde's hand and drawing her toward a window seat. "The king of Jugendheit asks for your hand."

"Then I am to marry the king of Jugendheit?" There was little joy in her voice.

"Ah, we have not gone so far as that! The king, through his uncle, has simply made a proposal."

"It is for you to decide, father. Whatever your decision is I shall abide by it."

"It is a hard lesson we have to learn, my child. We cannot always marry where we love. Diplomacy and politics make other plans. But fortunately for you you love no one yet, and the king is young, handsome, they say, and rich. Politically speaking, it would be a great match."

"I am in your hands. You know what is best."

The duke was potently disappointed. Why did she not refuse outright, as became one of the nature of Ehrenstein?

"What is he like?" she asked. "That no one seems to know. He has been to his capital but twice in ten years. The young king has been in Paris most of the time. That's the way they educate kings these days. They teach them all the vices. Your father loves you, and if you are inclined toward his majesty, if it is in your heart to become a queen, I shall not let my prejudices stand in the way."

She caught up his hand with a strange passion and kissed it.

"Father, I do not want to marry any one," wistfully. "But a queen?" she added thoughtfully. "Would it be for the good of the state?"

Here was reason. "Yes; my objections are merely personal," said the duke.

"For the good of my country I am ready to make any sacrifice."



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Gretchen sought the kitchen and found an apron and cap. These half-crowns were fine things to pick up occasionally, for it was only upon occasions that she worked at the Black Eagle. In an obscure corner sat the young vintner. His face brightened as he saw the goose girl. In the very corner itself was the mountaineer who possessed a Swiss watch and gave golden coins to goose girls. He was busily engaged in gnawing the leg of a chicken.

Carmichael was often a visitor at the Black Eagle. Later he stepped into the big hall in his evening clothes. "Good evening, Fran Wirtin."

"Good evening, your excellency." She was quite flattered when this fine young man spoke to her. "What is on your mind?"

"Many things." He saw Gretchen. "The goose girl," he murmured suddenly. "Is Gretchen one of your waitresses?"

"She comes in once in a while. She's a good girl. I'm glad to help her."

Gretchen saw Carmichael and nodded.

"I shall be at yonder table," he said, indicating the vacant chair. Carmichael made his way to the table. Across the room he had not recognized the vintner, but now he remembered. He had crowded him against a wall



"ALL AMERICANS ARE RICH," SHE SAID SOBERLY.

two or three days before. The vintner turned back the lid of his stein and drank slowly.

Carmichael sat down. Now, this vintner's face was something familiar. Carmichael stirred his memory. It was not in Dreieberg that he had seen him before. But where?

Gretchen arrived with the tankard, which she set down at Carmichael's elbow.

(To be continued.)

FENELON FALLS RESIDENT DEAD

Fenelon Falls, Feb. 28—Mr. A. Clark, of Lindsay, spent Monday in town, having been in attendance on his father, Mr. Alex. Clark, sr., who suffered a stroke of paralysis on Sunday afternoon, from the effect of which he has not rallied up to the present. The many friends of the family sympathize with them in their hour of trial. Mrs. Dr. White, of Kinmount, a daughter, is also in attendance at the bedside of her father.

Later—Mr. Clark passed away this morning.

Mr. Geo. Whistle, another old and respected resident, is also seriously ill, and but slight hopes are held out for his recovery, although all that medical skill and excellent nursing can avail are being done in his behalf.

JOSEPH KNOX CANAL OVERSEER

Times: Mr. Clem Gordon, formerly overseer of the Trent Canal, who some time ago sent in his resignation, received advice yesterday that his resignation had been accepted. Clem will be missed along the canal.

Mr. Joseph Knox, of Havelock has been appointed in his place, and will enter upon his duties at once. Mr. Knox is well known in this city and will be welcomed here.

Chance to Win Badge

Military orders just issued announce that there will be badges awarded to the best shot in each regiment or squadron of cavalry, regiment or battery of artillery, company of engineers, regiment of infantry and company of the Army Service Corps of the active militia. The badge will be awarded to the man obtaining the highest figure of merit, which will be arrived at by dividing the total number of points obtained by the number of rounds fired.

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