HAROLD MACGRATH

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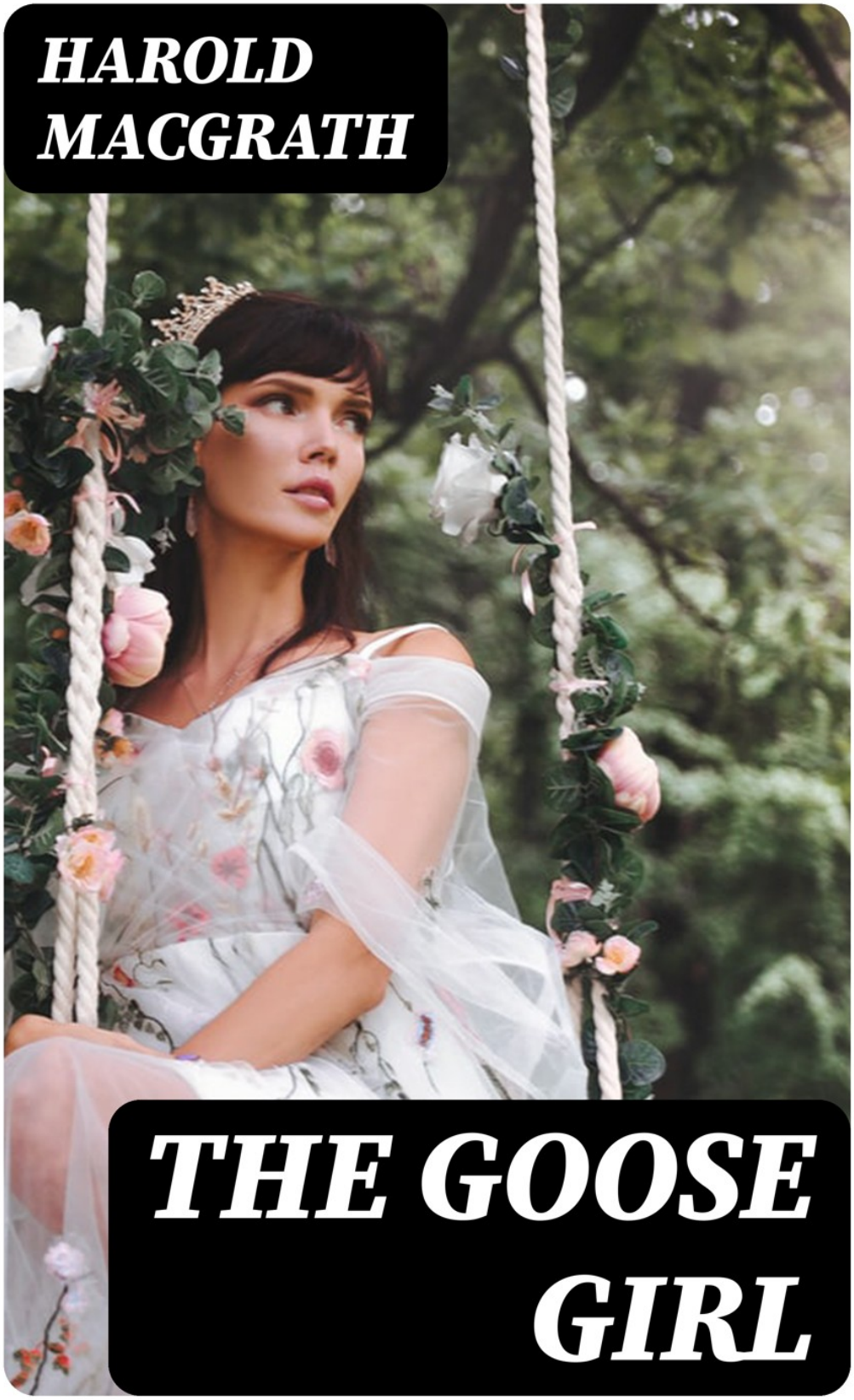

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Harold MacGrath

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CHAPTER I

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SOME IN RAGS

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An old man, clothed in picturesque patches and tatters, paused and leaned on his stout oak staff. He was tired. He drew off his rusty felt hat, swept a sleeve across his forehead, and sighed. He had walked many miles that day, and even now the journey's end, near as it really was, seemed far away. Ah, but he would sleep soundly that night, whether the bed were of earth or of straw. 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, of a man who watches the shadows in the forest at night or the dim, wavering lines on the horizon at daytime; things near or far or roundabout. His brow was high, his nose large and bridged; a face of more angles than contours, bristling with gray spikes, like one who has gone unshaven several days. His hands, folded over the round, polished knuckle of his staff, were tanned and soiled, but they were long and slender, and the callouses were pink, a certain indication that they were fresh.

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 five hundred feet or more above him to the ancient city of Dreiberg. It was not a steep road, but a long and weary one, a steady, enervating, unbroken climb. To the left the mighty cliff reared its granite

side to the hanging city, broke in a wide plain, and then went on up several thousand feet to the ledges of dragon-green ice and snow. To the right sparkled and flashed a wild mountain stream on its way to the broad, fertile valley, which, mistily green and brown and yellow with vineyards and hops and corn, spread out and on to the north, stopping abruptly at the base of the more formidable chain of mountains.

Across this lofty jumble of barren rock and glacial cleft, now purpling and darkening as the sun mellowed in its decline, lay the kingdom of Jugendheit; and toward this the wayfarer gazed meditatively, absorbing little or nothing of the exquisite panorama. By and by his gaze wavered, and that particular patch in the valley, brown from the beating of many iron-shod horses, caught and chained his interest for a space. It was the military field, and it glittered and scintillated as squadron after squadron of cavalry dashed from side to side or wheeled in bewildering circles.

"The philosophy of war is to prepare for it," mused the old man, with a jerk of his shoulders. "France! So the mutter runs. There is a Napoleon in France, but no Bonaparte. Clatter-clatter! Bang-bang!" He laughed ironically and cautiously glanced at his watch, an article which must have cost him many and many a potato-patch. He pulled his hat over his eyes, scratched the irritating stubble on his chin, and 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. He had never been close enough to distinguish her features.

The galloping of soldiers up and down the road from time to time disturbed her flock, but she was evidently a patient soul, and relied valiantly upon her stick of willow. Once or twice he had been inclined to hasten his steps, to join her, to talk, to hear the grateful sound of his own voice, which he had not heard since he passed the frontier customs; yet each time he had subdued the desire and continued to lessen none of the distance between them.

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.

On the two went, the old man in tatters, the goose-girl in wooden shoes. The man listened; she was singing brightly, and the voice was sweet and strong and true.

"She is happy; that is some recompense. She is richer than I am." And the peasant fell into a reverie.

Presently there was a clatter of horses, a jingle of bit and spur and saber. The old man stepped to the side of the road and sat down on the stone parapet. It would be wiser now to wait till the dust settled. 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 Ducwitz, 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. They were laughing and chatting amiably, for the grand duke of Ehrenstein bothered himself about formalities only at formal times. The outsider watched them regretfully as they went by, and there was some envy in his heart, too.

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. One landed, full-winged, against the grand duke's chest and swept his vizored cap off his head and rolled it into the dust. The duke signed to his companions to draw up; to proceed in this undignified manner was impossible. All laughed heartily, however; all excepting the goose-girl. To her it was far from being a laughing matter. It would take half an hour to calm her stupid charges. And she was *so* tired.

"Stupids!" she cried despairingly.

"From pigs and chickens, good Lord deliver us!" shouted the civilian, sliding from his horse and recovering the duke's cap.

Now, the duke was a kind-hearted, thoughtful man, notwithstanding his large and complex affairs of state; as he ceased laughing, he searched a pocket, and tossed a couple of coins to the forlorn goose-girl.

"I am sorry, little one," he said gravely. "I hope none of your geese is hurt."

"Oh, Highness!" cried the girl, breathless from her recent endeavors and overcome with the grandeur of the two ducal effigies in her hand. She had seen the grand duke times without number, but she had never yet been so near to him. And now he had actually spoken to her. It was a miracle. She would tell them all that night in the dark old Krumerweg. And for the moment his prospect overshadowed all thought of her geese.

The civilian dusted the royal cap with his sleeve, returned it, and mounted. He then 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."

"Whenever there's a pretty face about," supplemented Ducwitz.

"I certainly shouldn't trouble to look at a homely one," the American retorted.

"Pretty figure, too," said one of the aides, 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, but her eyes wavered not the breadth of a hair. It was the colonel who finally was forced to turn his gaze elsewhere, chagrined. His face was not unfamiliar to her.

"Beauty is a fickle goddess," remarked Ducwitz tritely, settling himself firmly in the saddle. "In giving, she is as blind as a bat. I know a duchess now—but never mind."

"Let us be going forward," interrupted the duke. There were more vital matters under hand than the beauty of a strolling goose-girl.

So the troop proceeded with dust and small thunder, and shortly passed the city gates, which in modern times were never closed. It traversed the lumpy cobbles of the narrow streets, under hanging gables, past dim little shops and markets, often unintentionally crowding pedestrians into doorways or against the walls. One among those so inconvenienced was a youth dressed as a vintner. He was tall, pliantly 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."

He ventured forth presently, none of the perturbation, however, gone from his face. He ran his hand across his chin; yes, he would let his beard grow.

The duke and his escort turned into the broad and restful sweep of the König Strasse, with its fashionable residences, shops, cafés and hotels. At the end of the *Strasse* was the Ehrenstein Platz, the great square round which ran the

palaces and the royal and public gardens. On the way many times the duke raised his hand in salutations; for, while not exactly loved, he was liked for his rare clean living, his sound sense of justice and his honest efforts to do what was right. Opera-singers came and went, but none had ever penetrated into the private suites of the palace. The halt was made in the courtyard, and all 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. Having a moderately comfortable income of his own, he naturally preferred living at the Grand Hotel.

Where had he seen that young vintner before?

Meanwhile, the goose-girl set resolutely about the task of remarshaling her awkward squad. With a soft, clucking sound she moved hither and thither. A feather or two drifted lazily about in the air. At last she gathered them in, all but one foolish, blank-eyed gander, which, poising on a large boulder, threatened to dive headforemost into the torrent. She coaxed him gently, then severely, but without success. The old man in patches came up.

"Let me get him for you, *Kindchen*," he volunteered.

The good-fellowship in his voice impressed her far more than the humble state of his dress. But she smiled and shook her head.

"It is dangerous," she affirmed. "It will be wiser to wait. In a little while he will come down of his own accord."

"Bah!" cried the old man. "It is nothing; I am a mountaineer."

In spite of his weariness, he proved himself to be a dexterous climber. Foot by foot he crawled up the side of the huge stone. A slip, and his life would not have been worth one of the floating feathers. The gander saw him coming and stirred uneasily. Nearer and nearer came this human spider. The gander flapped its wings, but hesitated to take the leap. Instantly a brown hand shot up and caught the scaly yellow legs. There was much squawking on the way down, but when his gandership saw his more tractable

brothers and sisters peacefully waddling up the road, he subsided and took his place in the ranks without more ado.

"You are a brave man, Herr." There was admiration in the girl's eyes.

"To court danger and to overcome obstacles is a part of my regular business. I do not know what giddiness is. You are welcome to the service. It is a long walk from the valley."

"I have walked it many times this summer. But this is the last day. To-morrow I sell the geese in the market to the hotels. They have all fine livers"—lightly touching a goose with her willow stick.

"What, the hotels?"—humorously.

"No, no, my geese!"

"What was that song you were singing before the horses came up?"

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

He stared at her with a rudeness not at all intentional.

"Heine? Can you read?"

"Yes, Herr."

The other walked along beside her in silence. After all, why not? Why should he be surprised? From one end of the world to the other printer's ink was spreading and bringing light. But 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?" This was easier for the other to understand. "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, and many things besides. 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. Sometimes I find a newspaper, and I read it all through."

"History?"

"A little, and geography."

"With all this wide learning you ought to be something better than a tender of geese."

"It is honest work, and that is good."

"I meant nothing wrong, *Kindchen*. But you would find it easier in a milliner's shop, as a lady's maid, something of that order."

"With these?"—holding out her hands.

"It would not take long to whiten them. 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;

now I am taking care of her. She has always been good to me. And what might your name be?"

"Ludwig."

"Ludwig what?"—inquisitive in her turn.

"Oh, the other does not matter. I am a mountaineer from Jugendheit."

"Jugendheit?" She paused to look at him more closely. "We are not friendly with your country."

"More's the pity. It is a grave blunder on the part of the grand duke. There is a mote in his eye."

"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. He is wrong, he was always wrong." The old man spoke with feeling. "What is this new-found princess like?"

"She is beautiful and kind."

"So?"

The geese were behaving, and only occasionally was she obliged to use her stick. And as her companion asked no more questions, she devoted her attention to the flock, proud of their broad backs and full breasts.

On his part, he observed her critically, for he was more than curious now, he was interested. She was not tall, but her lithe slenderness gave her the appearance of tallness. Her hands, rough-nailed and sunburnt, were small and shapely; the bare foot in the wooden shoe might have worn without trouble Cinderella's magic slipper. Her clothes, coarse and homespun, were clean and variously mended. 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, according to whether

the sky was clear or overcast. And there was something above and beyond all these things, a modesty, a gentleness and a purity; none of the bold, rollicking, knowing manner so common in handsome peasant girls. He contemplated her through half-closed eyes and gave her in fancy the triffing furbelows of a woman of fashion; she would have been beautiful.

"How old are you, Gretchen?"

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

Again they went forward in silence. By the time they reached the gates the sun was no longer visible on the horizon, but it had gone down ruddy and uncrowned by any cloud, giving promise of a fair day on the morrow. The afterglow on the mountains across the valley was now in its prime glory; and once the two wayfarers paused and commented upon it. Once more the mountaineer was agreeably surprised; the average peasant is impervious to atmospheric splendor, beauty carries no message.

Arriving at length in the city, they passed through the crooked streets, sometimes so narrow that the geese were packed from wall to wall. Oft some jovial soldier sent a jest or a query to them across the now gray backs of the geese. But Gretchen looked on ahead, purely and serenely.

"Gretchen, where shall I find the Adlergasse?"

"We pass through it shortly. I will show you. You are also a stranger in Dreiberg?"

"Yes."

They took the next turn, and the weather-beaten sign *Zum Schwartzen Adler*, hanging in front of a frame house of

many gables, caused the mountaineer to breathe gratefully.

"Here my journey ends, Gretchen. The Black Eagle," he added, in an undertone; "it is unchanged these twenty years. Heaven send that the beds are softer than aforetime!"

They were passing a clock-mender's shop. The man from Jugendheit peered in the window, which had not been cleaned in an age, 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. It touched up his face with grotesque lights. Here was age, mused the man outside the window; nothing less than fourscore years rested upon those rounded shoulders. The face was corrugated with wrinkles, like a frosted road; eyes heavily spectacled, a ragged thatch of hair on the head, a ragged beard on the chin. Aware of a shadow between him and the fading daylight, the clock-mender looked up from his work. The eyes of the two men met, but only for a moment.

The mountaineer, who felt rejuvenated by this contrast, straightened his shoulders and started to cross the street to the tavern.

"Good night, Gretchen. Good luck to you."

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

"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; two crowns from the grand duke and a piece of gold from this old man in peasant clothes. Instinctively she knew that he was not a peasant. But what could he be? Comparison would have made him a king. She was too tired and hungry to make further deductions.

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.

"What a penurious government it must be! Two weeks, tramping about the country in this unholy 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.

CHAPTER II

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AN AMERICAN CONSUL

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The nights in Dreiberg during September are often chill. The heavy mists from the mountain slip down the granite clifts and spread over the city, melting all sharp outlines, enfeebling the gas-lamps, and changing the moon, if there happens to be one, into something less than a moon and something more than a pewter disk. And so it was this night.

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 abetter 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 railed at himself bitterly and satirically.

He sighed and teetered his legs. A sigh moves nothing forward, yet it is as essential as life itself. It is the safety-valve to every emotion; it is the last thing in laughter, the last thing in tears. One sighs in entering the world and in leaving it, perhaps in protest. A child sighs for the moon because it knows no better. Carmichael sighed for the

Princess Hildegarde, understanding. It was sigh or curse, and the latter mode of expression wastes more vitality. Oh, yes; they made over him, as the world goes; they dined and wined him and elected him honorary member to their clubs; they patted him on the back and called him captain; but it was all in a negligent toleration that turned every pleasure into rust.

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 baned 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 forebears 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 fought his way to a captaincy. He was wounded five times and imprisoned twice. His right eye was still weak from the effects of a powder explosion; and whenever it bothered him he wore a single glass, abominating, as all soldiers do, the burden of spectacles. At the end of the conflict he returned to Washington.

And then the inherent curse put a hand on his shoulder; he must be moving. His parents were dead; there was no anchor, nor had lying ambition enmeshed him. There was a little property, the income from which was enough for his wants. 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. He had been in the service some two years by now, and those who knew him well rather wondered at his sedative turn of mind. 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*.

He knew that his case would never be tried in court nor settled out of it; and he realized that it would be far better to weigh anchor and set his course for other parts. But no man ever quite forsakes his dream-woman; and he had endued a princess with all the shining attributes of an angel, when, had he known it, she was only angelic.

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. Outside these temporary lapses, Carmichael was a keen, shrewd, far-sighted young man, close-lipped and observant, never forgetting faces, never forgetting benefits, loving a fight but never provoking one. So he and the world were friends.

Diplomacy has its synonym in tact, and he was an able tactician, for all that an Irishman is generally likened to a bull in a china-shop.

"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. They are playing dirges to-night, and anything funereal will be a light and happy tonic to my present state of mind."

He was standing on the curb in front of the hotel, his decision still unrounded, when he noticed a closed carriage hard by the fountain in the Platz. The driver dozed on his box.

"Humph! There's a man who is never troubled with counting the fool's beads. Silver and copper are his gods and goddesses. 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, and he tumbled off the box, alive and hearty. There seemed to be a short interchange of words of mutual satisfaction. The lady stepped into the carriage, the driver woke up his ancient Bucephalus, and went clickety-clack down the König Strasse toward the town.

To Carmichael it was less than an incident. He twirled his cane and walked toward the public gardens. Here he strolled about, watching the people, numerous but orderly, with a bright military patch here and there. The band struck up again, and he drifted with the crowd toward the pavilion. The penny-chairs were occupied, so he selected a spot off-side, near enough for all auditual purposes. One after

another he carelessly scanned the faces of those nearest. He was something of an amateur physiognomist, but he seldom made the mistakes of the tyro.

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, as well as any rider is able to notice a pedestrian. But that afternoon her beauty came home to him suddenly and unexpectedly. Had she been other than what she was, a woman well-gowned, for instance, riding in her carriage, his interest would have waned in the passing. But it had come with the same definite surprise as when one finds a rare and charming story in a dilapidated book.

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

With a friendly smile on his lips, he took a step toward her, but instantly paused. Colonel von Wallenstein of the general staff approached her from the other side, and Carmichael was curious to find out what that officer's object was. 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. It was incredible; his excellency could not possibly have intended any wrong, it was only a harmless pleasantry. Gretchen's lips quivered; the law of redress in Ebrenstein had no niche for the goose-girl.

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

The colonel pulled his mustache in chagrin, but he did not give Carmichael the credit for bringing about this cheapening sense. For the time being Gretchen was freed from annoyance. The colonel certainly could not rush off to her and give this keen-eyed American an opportunity to witness a further rebuff.

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

"Paris is full of them just now," continued Carmichael.

"Paris? Would you like a riot in the gardens?" asked the colonel, amused.

"A riot?" said Carmichael derisively. "Why, nothing short of a bombshell would cause a riot among your phlegmatic Germans."

"I believe you love your Paris better than your Dreiberg."

"Not a bit of doubt. And down in your heart you do, too. Think of the lights, the theaters, the cafés and the pretty women!" Carmichael's cane described a flourish as if to draw a picture of these things.

"Yes, yes," agreed the colonel reminiscently; "you are right. There is no other night equal to a Parisian night. *Ach, Gott!* But think of the mornings, think of the mornings!"—dolefully.

"On the contrary, let us not think of them!"—with a mock shudder.

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.

"I believe I stepped on his toe that time," said Carmichael to himself.

Then he looked round for Gretchen. She was still at the side of the policeman. She had watched the scene between the two men, but was quite unconscious that it had been set for her benefit. She came back. Carmichael stepped confidently to her side and raised his hat.

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

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

"They were only frightened. But his highness"—eagerly—"was he very angry?"

"Angry? Not the least. He was amused. But he was nearly knocked off his horse. If you lived in America now, you might reap a goodly profit from that goose."

"America? How?"

"You could put him in a museum and exhibit him as an intimate friend of the grand duke of Ehrenstein."

But Gretchen did not laugh. It was a serious thing to talk lightly of so grand a person as the duke. Still, the magic word America, where the gold came from, flamed her curiosity.

"You are from America?"

"Yes."

"Are you rich?"

"In fancy, in dreams"—humorously.

"Oh! I thought they were all rich."

"Only one or two of us."

"Is it very large, this America?"

"France, Spain, Prussia would be lonesome if set down in America. Only Russia has anything to boast of."

"Did you fight in the war?"

"Yes. Do you like music?"

"Were you ever wounded?"

"A scratch or two, nothing to speak of. 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 diffident, with a vocabulary of few words, ignorant of art or music or where the world lay.

"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: "You have some one who reads to you?"

"No, Herr. I can read and write and do sums in addition."