

UNION-ENDICOTT NEWS.

A JOURNAL DEVOTED TO THE BEST INTERESTS OF HUMANITY.

VOL 58. NO. 34.

UNION, N. Y., WEDNESDAY SEPT. 21, 1910

\$1.00 Per Annum in Advance.

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Time Tables on Fourth Page.

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J. P. BOSWORTH

The Goose Girl

By HAROLD MACGRATH

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(CONTINUED.)

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

"An affair?"

"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 and the driver drove off towards the town. To Carmichael it was less than an accident. He twisted 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 repress 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 opera 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 gloves 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 come 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?"

"Where you ever wounded?"

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

"Very much. When they play Beethoven, Bach or Meyerbeer—ah, 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 aversing peasant's ignorant child, 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.

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 this man Bismarck's plans. He was certainly puzzled, but a glance at her hands dissolved his doubts. These hands were used to toll. They were in no way disgraced.

"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 here?" Gretchen. "And might you be read what might you be doing here in Breslau, 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?"

"Should I speak to him?"

"Would it really do any good?" she asked.

"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—it is 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 winter whom Carmichael had pushed against the wall that day."

"Err, 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 warily.

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

"Why, indeed?"

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

"DON'T, must I tell you again not to broach that subject? There can be no alliance between Ehrenstein and Jugendheft."

"Why?" asked Count von Herbeck, chancellor.

"One of my reasons is that I do not want any alliance with a country so perfidious as Jugendheft. What I make overtures—I, who have been so cruelly wronged all these years. You are mad."

"But what positive evidence have you that Jugendheft wronged you?"

"Positive? Have I eyes and ears? Have I not seen and read and heard?"

"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 averting 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, impenetrable 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. But—mildly—who may say that it is not a cunning forgery?"

"Forgery?" roared the duke. "Read this from the letter of Jugendheft to Arnsberg then if you will doubt."

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

"The duke compared the two. "There is no doubt of this."

"The king'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."

Gretchen thrilled.

"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 hood envelope created and sealed.

"Your highness, here is a letter from the prince regent of Jugendheft 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. Temporarily. 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 Jugendheft, 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 Jugendheft might precipitate war."

"Have you any, 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 Jugendheft asks for your hand."

"Then I am to marry the king of Jugendheft?" 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 have no one yet, and a rich, politically speaking, it would be a great match."

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

The duke was poignantly disappointed. Why did she not refuse outright, as became one of the house 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—nobody—any man—"

"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."

"Very well, but weigh the matter carefully. There is never any retracing a step of this kind." He paused and then said:

"You are all I have left."

"My father!" She stroked his cheek.

The restoration of the Princess Hildegarde of Ehrenstein had been the sensation of Europe, as had been in the earlier days her remarkable abduction. For sixteen years the search had gone on fruitlessly in a garret in Dresden the agents of Herbeck found her, a singer in the chorus of the opera. The newspapers and illustrated weeklies raged about her for awhile, elaborated the story of her struggles, the mysterious remittances which had from time to time saved her from direct poverty, her ambition, her education, which by dint of hard work she had acquired. The duke accused Franz of Jugendheft Search as they would, the duke and the chancellor never traced the source of the remittances. The duke held stubbornly that the sender of these benefactions was moved by the impulse of a guilty conscience and that this guilty conscience was in Jugendheft.

And was the girl happy with all her new grandeur with all these luxuries and attentions and environs? Some times she longed for the freedom and luck care of her Dresden garret, her musician friends, the studios, the crash and glitter of the opera.

She was lovely enough to inspire fervor and homage and love to all unselecting minds. She was witty and clever. Carmichael said she was one of the most beautiful women in all Europe.

She was still in the window seat when the chancellor was announced.

"Your highness," he said. "I am come to announce to you that there waits for you a high place in the affairs of the world."

"The second crown in Jugendheft?"

"Your father?"

"Yes. He leaves the matter wholly in my hands."

"It is for the good of the state. A princess like yourself must never wed an inferior."

"Would a man who was brave and kind and resourceful, but without a title—would he be an inferior?"

"Assuredly politically. And I regret to say that your marriage could never be else than a matter of politics."

I am then simply a certificate of exchange."

"The king of Jugendheft is young. I do not see how he can help loving you the moment he knows you. Who can?"

And the chancellor smiled.

"But he may not be heart whole."

He will be politically.

"Politics, politics—how I hate the word. Sometimes I regret my garret."

The chancellor arched his lips.

"Will you consent to this marriage?"

"Would it do any good to reject it?"

"On the contrary it would do Ehrenstein great harm."

"Give me a week's respite."

"A week?" There was joy on the chancellor's face. He unmasked his concealed. "Oh when the moment comes that I see the crown of Jugendheft on your beautiful head all my work shall not have been in vain. There is one thing more your highness."

"And that?"

"There must not be so many rides in the morning with his excellency Herr Carmichael."

There was a sinister note of warning in the chancellor's voice.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

RULES FOR THE WIFE

Your husband comes home tired at night and wants to throw himself on the sofa after dinner and rest, don't let him insist on his putting on evening clothes and going somewhere. He needs a change, not rest.

Encourage his buying new clothes in every way in your power. This will always furnish you with an excuse to do the same.

If you have an engagement to meet him at a given place at a given hour, remember that promptness is an invaluable asset and never be more than twenty minutes or half an hour late.

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Do not burst into tears ever, unless you feel that it is absolutely unnecessary.

Have a scrap with him at regular intervals, in order not to let the good old home traditions die out.

If you have passed middle age, and have lost the charm of youth, always insist that your husband kiss you when, after a visit away from home you alight from a railway train.

If he has some little imperfection which annoys him the rule is to remind him of it six times, in quick succession, then skip three then six and so on—Life.

IT IS SAID:

Woman is like a honeycomb—full of cells. Beware