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WRESTLED WITH INTENDED HIS AN EXTRAORDINARY CONTEST REPORTED FROM PARIS.

THE ST. LOUIS REPUBLIC MAGAZINE SECTION

AN Athletic Countess, Who Is Proud of Her Strength, Defeated by Her Fiance.

Special Correspondence of The Sunday Republic.

Paris, Feb. 2.—An extraordinary wrestling match, in which an American girl, now Countess Beckers von Westereitton, was a principal, was conducted here the other day, and, as is fit, the Countess was vanquished, her opponent being her intended husband.

Countess Helen von Beckers is one of the most popular women of the American colony. Tall, well built, ruddy of face and bright of eye, she impresses one as a girl eminently fond of outdoor exercise. As a swordswoman, equestrienne, bareback and fancy rider, rower, swimmer and skater she has no equal in Paris or out, while her feats on the bicycle have kept our newspapers busy ever since she moved to this city after obtaining a divorce from her husband, a Hungarian nobleman of note.

But what she really prides herself on is her strength, her muscle. Her boudoir in Place des Etats-Unis is a well-appointed gymnasium with parallel bars, masts, ropes, triangles and trapeze, ladder, a wooden horse and flying course. The Countess spent thousands of francs on apparatus, all of which is constructed after the latest pattern of light but strong wood with silver or nickel plating. If she comes home late at night, after an evening at the opera, of night-riding or in the ballroom, she climbs the most half a dozen times and amuses herself at the triangle and trapeze. Then she takes a turn on the rope ladder and, if she has been sitting down a great deal, exercises for ten minutes or longer on the inclined plane to get her arms, legs and feet back into trim.

These gymnastics increased the Countess's physical powers; her interest, her courage. In French society she is looked upon as the embodiment of independence, alertness and presence of mind, and when, some little time ago, her engagement to Mr. Nelson Smyth, a new arrival in Paris and an American, was announced, the "colony" wondered how the young fellow would fare with his athletic intended. As Smyth himself was uncommunicative on the subject, they decided to find out for themselves.

With this end in view several men and women commenced teasing him at the Americans' favorite place of rendezvous, the Cafe Anglaise. "I would be afraid of a woman of muscle such as the Countess," said one. "No doubt, if ever a dispute arises, Helen will floor you by one of her famous right-handers," exclaimed a New Yorker.

A third reminded Smyth that a disciple of the renowned Henri, once champion wrestler of France, had instructed Countess Beckers in the noble art of "catch-as-catch-can," while a fourth counseled him to dismantle the gymnasium if he desired peace in the household.

Maintaining an amused silence, Smyth stood these taunts for quite awhile, but finally, pushing his brandy and soda away, he said:

"What if I were a bit of a wrestler and all-around sport myself?"

"Prove it," cried the girl in the box seat and square-toed boots.

"Nothing easier than that," replied Smyth. "I am willing to meet Helen in the ring any day; yourself shall judge which is the best man." The announcement was greeted with wild enthusiasm, and all set out for Place des Etats-Unis to hear what Countess Beckers had to say. Smyth having been told her of his sporting proclivities, she was fairly beside herself with joy and more than eager to put his ability to the test.

A match was arranged for the following day at 10 sharp, the contestants and twenty select friends of both sexes to assemble in the gymnasium. Furthermore, it was decided that the contest be conducted according to Cumberland and Westmoreland rules, with which both are familiar.

The Contest.

As your correspondent happened to arrive a little ahead of the other invited guests, she had occasion for a chat with Countess von Beckers, who said that she had never attempted to master the so-called science of wrestling, or of any other kind of athletics, practices having always been a strong point with her.

The Countess appeared in a long cloak, under which was a costume of striped silk tights, a snug-fitting blue silk jersey and satin knickerbockers of the same color. Her arms were bare and her short blond hair becomingly curled. She had no jewelry save a wild cat's head with blazing green eyes, which held the yellow ribbons together. It is said to be a talisman, but one of the kind that doesn't always work.

Nelson Smyth wore an exact copy of the Countess's costume, save he wore no shoes, and that his colors were red and white. Like his partner, he was good to look at.

As the pair stepped upon the carpet the spectators, occupying elevated seats at three sides of the ring, broke into shouts of admiration. The Countess Helen had always been noted for her fine figure, but the unique costume revealed a charm and grace that no one had given the strong woman credit for. Count Lantree was chosen referee.

At the conclusion of the reading of rules the Countess and Mr. Smyth threw their silk capes into the ring, signifying that the challenge was accepted under the conditions named.

The First Bout—As the wrestlers took hold of each other it became apparent at once that Smyth was a skilled wrestler. While the Countess leaned so much to the left as to endanger her success, her adversary secured a most advantageous hold of her shoulders. Aside from that, the contestants' attitude was the customary one.

The Countess started in without a second's delay. Making a couple of looks out of her hands by placing all the fingers

of one hand into the other, she severely worried the small of Smyth's back by pressing it with the back of her right hand, while Smyth merely clasped hands, which method never tends to a secure grip.

The Second Bout—Countess Beckers succeeded to floor Smyth by an adroit maneuver known as the "back-bend"; that is, she placed her left foot behind Smyth's right heel on the outside, near the ankle, and tried to jerk him backward. While succeeding, she saved herself for just what she was in danger of being swung by Smyth.

The Third Bout—Smyth was seen to lean forward to obtain a better hold, and was just in time for Helen, assuming the offensive, whirled around, "clicked" his right leg with her left on the inside and tried hard to pull him back. If successful she would have fallen upon him with all the weight of her 150 pounds.

The Fourth Bout—But nothing daunted, the aggressive young woman renewed her tight hold on Smyth, jerking him a step forward. Then, as he was steadying himself, she tried another, throwing all her weight into the effort.

The Fifth Bout—After that, suddenly loosening her grip, she threw both hands on Smyth's shoulders, while Smyth appeared to be evidently unwilling to assert his strength except by shrewd resistance. It was very funny to see the spunky little woman trying to get the big fellow from the ground.

After several of these attempts Smyth lost patience and took a hand in the lifting game on his own account. He could have thrown the Countess over his right shoulder, but smilingly resisted the temptation.

The Sixth Bout—But Countess Helen was not at the end of her tricks yet. Her next move, sudden as ever, was to lift Smyth by great effort on his feet and doing her best to fall backward. But Smyth rolled her.

The Seventh Bout—Finally Smyth seemed to get tired of the game. Drawing himself up to full height, he threw the Countess against the outside of her chair, and she fell at once. While the referee was calling Helen tried to pull it, but without avail. The bout had lasted twenty minutes and the Countess smilingly acknowledged defeat.

The second effort was shorter by five minutes, but the result was the same; the Countess was defeated. "I was to expect, rather enjoyed it," she said, "but my husband is stronger than I am, and I wouldn't starry him."

After the performance the contestants gazed street clothes and all of us were driven to the Cafe Anglaise, where a feast was ordered. The spread was laid in a private room in the rear of the big house, and passed off very pleasantly. HELOISE, COMTESSE D'ALEMBOURT.



CMBIGGERS

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DID THE GOVERNMENT OF FRANCE GET NO MONEY FOR THE LOUISIANA TERRITORY?

It is a curious fact, brought out recently by M. Leon Say, that there is no trace whatever in the French archives of the receipt of the \$15,000,000 paid by the United States for the purchase of Louisiana. Napoleon probably appropriated it to his own use. It has been surmised that he treated directly through Marbois, rather than through his Minister, Talleyrand, because of his fears of the latter's well-known rapacity.—"Adams's Neutrality in America."

The Magnificent New BATTLESHIP MISSOURI Soon to Be Launched.

Special Correspondence of The Sunday Republic.

Washington, Feb. 15.—The launch of the new battleship Missouri can now be predicted with reasonable certainty. This magnificent vessel, designed under the supervision of Rear Admiral Highborn, Chief Constructor of the United States Navy and Chief of the Bureau of Construction and Repair, Navy Department, is being built at the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Yards, Virginia, and in all probability will reach her native element in the presence of the President of the United States about the middle of October, 1901. As a warship she is inferior to none and the peer of any naval vessel in the world. The principal data in relation to the Missouri may be stated as follows:

Material—Steel.
Length on load-water line..... 350 ft. 9 in.
Breadth, extreme..... 72 ft. 2 1/2 in.
Draft, mean..... 22 ft. 6 in.
Displacement..... 12,500 tons
Full-load displacement..... 13,200 tons
Tonnage..... 7,284 1/2 tons
Speed..... 18 knots
Indicated horse power..... 15,000
Normal coal supply..... 1,000 tons
Range (coal)..... 2,000 sea miles
Battery.....

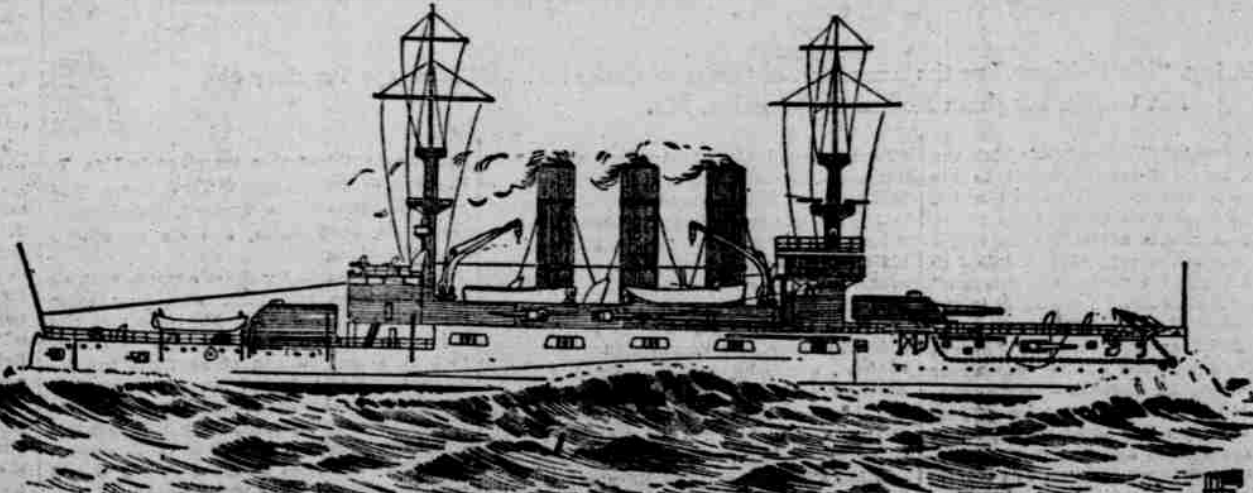
15 6-inch rapid-firing rifled guns. Secondary battery, 6 5-inch rapid-firing guns; 8 6-pounder rapid-firing guns; 4 1-pound rapid-firing guns; 3 Colt machine guns; 2 3-inch rapid-firing 50-cal. guns; also 2 submerged torpedo tubes.

Water-line belt, maximum thickness..... 11 inches
Turrets, maximum thickness..... 13 inches
Barbettes, maximum thickness..... 13 inches
Protective deck, maximum thickness..... 4 inches
Complement—Officers, 35; crew, 511. Total, 546.
Contract price for hull and machinery, \$2,100,000.

The keel of the Missouri was laid February 7, 1900, and she is reported to be now 25 per cent completed. When launched the progress will show 60 per cent of construction.

The vessel is propelled by twin-screw, vertical, triple-expansion engines, supplied with steam from twelve Thornycroft boilers.

The armament has been arranged with a view of not "over-battering" the vessel, and at the same time allowing sufficient for a vessel of this class. The 12-inch guns are arranged in pairs, two guns in each of the Highborn balanced turrets, capable of being revolved at the rate of 20 degrees per minute, while the 6-inch guns form a



THE BATTLESHIP MISSOURI.
From sketch furnished by the U. S. Naval Bureau of Construction. Her Sister Ships are the new Maine and the Ohio.

rapid-fire broadside battery. The rate of ammunition supply controlled by electric motors will be for 6-inch guns, six rounds per minute; 6-pounder guns, thirty rounds per minute, and 1-pounder guns at the rate of 100 rounds per minute; illustrating without further comment, the terrible execution of this type of vessel.

Two military masts are provided for lookout, searchlight and small rapid-fire gun purposes. Two conning towers are provided, one forward with a maximum thickness of 10 inches, and one aft of 8 inches thickness, connected in the most improved manner, with the steam steering gear, and in communication with all working parts of the ship.

The watertight doors throughout, below the waterline portions of the vessel, are operated from a central station, so that in case of grounding or other accident, the ship is immediately made tight. Complete distilling and refrigerating plants are to be installed. The inclosure and rooms of the officers are to be built of metal and all wood, wherever used, is to be fireproofed, thereby reducing to a minimum any chance of destruction by fire. Every possible

means has been arranged for the health and comfort of the crew, the best thought has been exercised in the ship's design, and it seems unnecessary to say that the builders will display the same care and good workmanship in the construction of the Missouri that has characterized all their work, so that the State whose name she bears may find in her not only a namesake, but one of which it may justly be proud.

The New Ship Will Have
a Speed of 18 Knots
an Hour, Will Be 388
Feet Long and 72 Feet
Wide.