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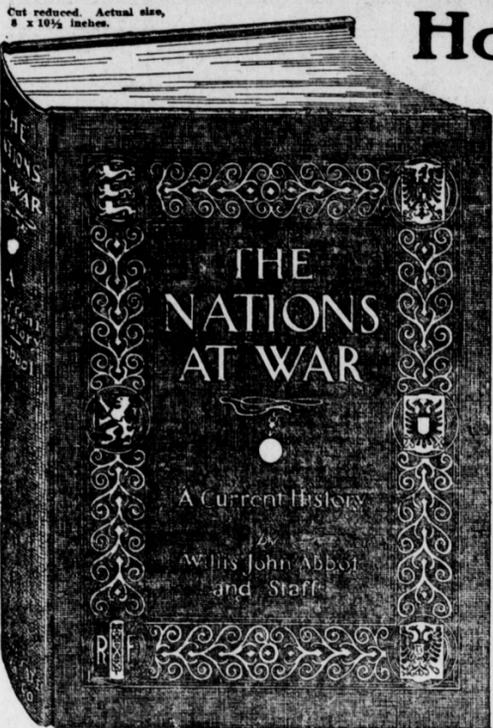
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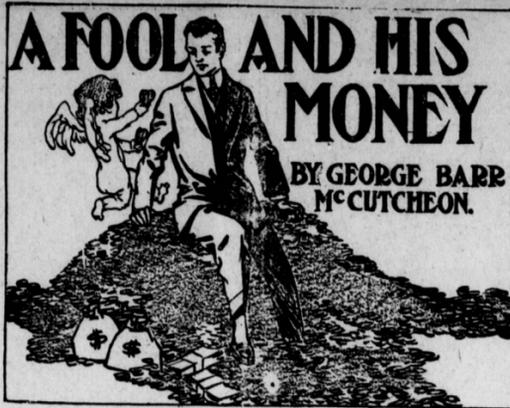
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CONTINUED
"Have you been discussing her most sacred affairs with her, you blithering—"
"No, sir," said he, with dignity. "She has been discussing them with me."
I have no recollection of what I said as I stalked out of the room. He called out after me, somewhat pleadingly. I thought:
"Ask Britton what he has to say about it."

Things had come to a pretty pass! Couldn't a gentleman be polite and agreeable to a young and charming lady whom circumstances had thrown in his way without having his motives misconstrued by a lot of snooping, idiotic menials whose only zest in life sprung from a temperamental tendency to belittle the big things and enlarge upon the small ones?
Unexpectedly I met Britton!
"Britton, what's all this gossip I hear going the rounds of the castle behind my back?" I exclaimed.

Confound him, he looked pleased! "It's quite true, sir; quite true."
"Quite true?" I roared. "What's quite true, sir?"
"Isn't it, sir?" he asked, dismayed.
"Isn't what?"
"I mean to say, sir, isn't it true?"
"My God!" I cried, throwing up my hands in hopeless despair. "You—you—wait! I'm going to get to the bottom of this. I want the truth, Britton. Who put it into that confounded head of yours that I am—in love with the countess? Speak! Who did it?"

He lowered his voice, presumably because I had dropped mine to a very loud whisper. I also had glanced over both shoulders.
"Begging your pardon, sir, but I must be honest, sir. It was you as first put it into my 'ead, sir."
"!" My face went the color of a cardinal's cap.
"You, sir. It's as plain as the nose on your—"

"That will do, Britton," I commanded. He remained discreetly silent. "That will do, I say," I repeated some what testily. "Do you hear, sir?"
"Yes, sir," he responded. "That will do, you says."
"Ahem! I—ahem!"

Five minutes later I was at her door my heart in my mouth. A sudden inexplicable form of panic took possession of me.
After some deliberation I came to a decision. The proper thing for me to do was to show all of them that their ridiculous suspicions were wrong. Resolutely I marched downstairs.

For some two long and extremely monotonous days I toiled. I could not deny to myself that I was missing those pleasant hours with the countess. I did miss them. I missed Rosemary and Jinko and Helen Marie Louise Antoinette and Blake.

Blatchford came to the door.
"A note for you, sir, if you please," said he. He was holding the salver almost on a level with his nose.
My heart—my incomprehensible heart—gave a leap that sent the blood rushing to my face.

"Thank you, Blatchford; that will do."
"I beg your pardon, sir, but there is to be an answer."
"Oh!" said I.
I tore open the envelope.

I managed to dash off a brief note in a fairly nonchalant manner. Blatchford almost committed the unpardonable crime of slamming the door behind him. He was in such a hurry to be off with the message.
Then I went over and stood above Mr. Poopenlydyke.
"Mr. Poopenlydyke," said I slowly, darkly, "what do you know about those violets?"

He quailed. "I hope you don't mind, Mr. Smart. It's all right. I put one of your cards in so that there couldn't be any mistake."
Halfway up the winding stairways I paused in some astonishment. It had just occurred to me that I was going up the steps two at a time and that my heart was beating like mad.

I reflected. Here was I racing along like a schoolboy, and for what? What occasion was there for such unseemly haste? In the first place, it was now but a few minutes after 11, and she had asked me for luncheon. There was no getting around that. At best luncheon was two hours off. So why was I galloping like this? The series of self-inflicted questions found me utterly unprepared. I couldn't answer one of them.

After ten minutes of serious, undisturbed consideration of the matter I came to the final conclusion that it was not love, but pity, that had driven me to such abnormal activity. It was nonsense to even argue the point.
For an hour and a half by my watch, but five or six by my nerves, I paced the lonely, sequestered halls in the lower regions of the castle. Two or three times I was sure that my watch had stopped, the hands seemed so stationary. The third time I tried to wind it I broke the mainspring, but as it was nearly 1 o'clock not much harm was done.

That one little sentence, "Have you deserted me?" grew to be a voluminous

indictment. I could think of nothing else. There was something ineffably sad and pathetic about it. Had she been unhappy because of my beastly behavior?

At last I approached her door. Upon my soul, my legs were trembling! I experienced a silly sensation of fear. I hesitated; then, plucking up my courage and putting all silly questions behind me, I rapped resoundingly on the door.
The excellent Hawkes opened it. I started back in dismay. He stood aside impressively.

"Mr. Smart!" he announced.
I caught sight of the countess. She was arranging some flowers on the table. Blatchford was placing the knives and forks. Helen Marie Louise Antoinette stood beside her mistress holding a box of flowers in her hands.
What was it that I had been thinking out there in those gloomy halls? That she would greet me with a pathetic, hurt look and—



I Came to the Final Conclusion That It Was Not Love, but Pity.

"Good morning!" she cried gayly. "So glad to see you again. Hawkes has told me how busy you've been."
"Awfully, awfully busy," I murmured. Was it relief at finding her so happy and unconcerned that swept through me? I am morally but shamelessly certain it wasn't.

"Don't you think the roses are lovely in that old silver bowl?"
"Exquisite!"
"Blatchford found it in the plate vault," she said, standing off to admire the effect. "Do you mind if I go on arranging them?" she asked, and without waiting for an answer resumed her employment.

"Bon jour, m'sieur," said Helen Marie Louise Antoinette over her mistress' shoulder. One never knows whether a French maid is polite or merely spiteful.
"It seems ages since I saw you last," said the countess in a matter of fact tone, jiggling a rose into position and then standing off to study the effect. Her head cocked prettily at an angle of inquiry.

It suddenly occurred to me that she had got on very well without me during the ages. The discovery irritated me. She was not behaving at all as I had expected.
"There hasn't been a great deal of news," I said.
She dropped a long stemmed rose and waited for me to pick it up.

"Thank you," she said. "Oh, did it prick you?"
"Yes," said I flatly. Then we both gave the closest attention to the end of my thumb, while I triumphantly squeezed a tiny drop of blood out of it. I sucked it. The incident was closed. She was no longer interested in the laceration.

"So you thought I had deserted you?" I said, and was a little surprised at the gruffness in my voice.
"The violets appeased me," she said, with a smile. For the first time I noticed that she was wearing a large bunch of them. "You will be bankrupt, Mr. Smart, if you keep on buying roses and violets and orchids for me."
So the roses were mine also! I shot a swift glance at the mantelpiece. Irresistibly moved by some mysterious force. There were two bowls of orchids there.

"But they are lovely!" she cried, noting the expression in my face and misconstruing it. "You are an angel."
That was the last straw. "I am nothing of the sort!" I exclaimed, very hot and uncomfortable.
"You are," was her retort. "There! Isn't it a lovely centerpiece? Now, you must come and see Rosemary. She adores the new elephant you sent

to her."
"Ele"—I began, blinking my eyes. "Oh—oh, yes, yes! Ha, ha! The elephant!" Good heavens! Had that idiotic Poopenlydyke started a menagerie in my castle?
I was vastly relieved to find that the elephant was made of felt and not too large to keep Rosemary from wielding it skillfully in an assault upon the hapless Jinko.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Count and Herr Schwartzmuller.

OUR luncheon was not as gay nor as unconventional as others that had preceded it. The countess vainly tried to make it as sprightly as its predecessors, but gave over in despair in the face of my taciturnity. Her spirits drooped. She became strangely uneasy and, I thought, preoccupied.
"What is on your mind, countess?" I asked rather gruffly, after a painful silence of some duration.

She regarded me fixedly for a moment. She seemed to be searching my thoughts. "You," she said very succinctly. "Why are you so quiet, so funereal?" I observed a faint tinge of red in her cheeks and an ominous steadiness in her gaze. Was there anger also?

I apologized for my manners and assured her that my work was responsible. Would I come to see her the next day?
"But don't think of coming, Mr. Smart," she declared, "if you feel you cannot spare the time away from your work."
"My dear countess," I exclaimed, displaying a livelier interest than at any time before. "I shall be delighted to come. Permit me to add that my work may go hang."
Her face brightened. "But men must work," she objected.
"Not when women are willing to play," I said.

To Be Continued

For Coughs That "Hang On"
Lingering colds, bronchial coughs, in grippe colds and similar ailments that "hang on" until May are likely to last all summer if not cured. Foley's Honey and Tar Compound will play inflammation, clear stopped passages, relieve distressing discharges at the source, banish stuffy, wheezy breathing and heal and soothe raw nasal and bronchial passages. It is prompt in action; safe and sure. Contains no opiates. Geo. A. Gargas, 16 N. Third St. and P. R. Station.—Adv.

Ten Graduate at Marietta
Marietta, May 8.—The commencement exercises of the Marietta High school were held yesterday in Acri's theatre, and a class of ten, the largest in many years, was given their diplomas by the principal, George Farrell. Brill's orchestra furnished the music. The orator of the evening was Dr. Charles H. Gordiner, of the faculty of the Millersville State Normal School. The salutatorian was Miss Elizabeth Johnson and the valedictorian Henry S. Rich, Jr.

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HOUSEHOLD TALKS

Henrietta D. Grauel

Asparagus

In selecting asparagus, give preference to slender, bright green stalks that feel crisp and cool to the touch. Care must be given to cleansing the spikes, for often they are full of grit; if at all wilted or if time must elapse before the vegetable is cooked, they may be washed in cold salted water and wrapped in wet brown paper.
Like all vegetables, asparagus should be cooked as soon after gathering as possible.
The asparagus tips are the dainty, fine tasting parts, and as they cook very quickly the following plan is good: After washing the stalks with a soft brush and much water, tie them in bunches with the heads together and the ends even. Set the bunches, tips up, in a deep sauce pan, and pour on enough boiling salted water to almost cover the bunch and cook fifteen minutes. By keeping the bunches upright in this way the tender tops are steamed and the thick stalks are boiled.
Asparagus is served on hot, well buttered toast with or without sauce. It is also served in souffle, in omelette, and with a dressing of hot vinegar and butter, but however it appears finally, it must first be boiled as directed.
Asparagus mold is a handsome garnish for planked meats: Cook and drain the plant and cut it in short lengths and place in small buttered molds with alternate layers of green peas. Let the last layer be of peas and hard boiled eggs, the latter being pressed through a sieve. Cover with a rich, plain white sauce and steam in a pan of water in a hot oven forty minutes. After the meat is planked, invert the molds around it and the garnish will come out smoothly. Duchess potatoes or steamed carrot

rings may be used if an elaborately trimmed plank is desired.
White sauce for vegetables: Blend one tablespoonful of butter with two tablespoons of flour; heat but do not brown; add cream and cook to desired thickness, season with salt and pepper. Stir this all the time it is cooking.
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
"In our town we have a woman's club that is interested with home topics. We desire to close our year's work in June and would like you to suggest some entertainment that would be amusing, inexpensive and suitable to invite the men in our families to. We can have our town hall or a church for the occasion.—Married."
Reply.—As June is the great month for wedding anniversaries and you are all well acquainted, why not have a party, by any means, but has been tried out in several towns and provides opportunity for "a big spend" in the way of a supper and quantities of fun.
"Will you please tell me what to do with a fireless cooker that does not cook? I read so much about how helpful these things were that I was persuaded to buy one. I was told things would come out of them piping hot; instead they come out piping cold, and I am disgusted. I put beets in on Saturday night and when I opened the cooker on Monday they were the same as at first.—Nora B."
Reply.—The cooker is doubtless all right, but you do not understand it. You had better write to the firm who made it for a book of directions for using it.

DROPS DEAD WINNING DASH

Bursts Blood Vessel As He Breasts Tape in School Meet
Frederick, Md., May 8.—Leslie Rensburg, 18 years old, a pupil at the Middletown High school, dropped dead just as he breasted the tape in the 220-yard dash in the annual school meet yesterday afternoon. He had made a tremendous spurt in an endeavor to outdistance the other competitors and physicians state his death was due to a ruptured blood vessel.
Albert I. Rensburg, his brother, died ten months ago in the same manner, while lifting a heavy milk can.

MRS. RINEHART HURT

For a sturdy spring drink, try Fink's Wurzburger.—Adv.
Author Fell From Horse While Riding Near Her Home
Pittsburgh, May 8.—Mrs. Mary Roberts Rinehart, well known author, who returned from the war zone recently, was severely bruised about the body when she fell from her mount while horseback riding with her husband, Dr. S. M. Rinehart, in Sewickley Heights, Thursday.

Quarry Fireman Killed

Pen Argyll, May 8.—John Roth, foreman in the Parsons Brothers' slate quarry, was instantly killed yesterday afternoon when a runaway car on an incline tossed him over an embankment to the quarry hole many feet below. His skull was fractured and many other bones were broken.

Lemon Meringue Kills Prize Bird

Lewistown, May 8.—Eating lemon meringue pie left over from the P. O. S. of A. banquet here, a prize blue ribbon rooster owned by Sydney Lynch, died of indigestion soon afterward.

Theodore Von Moltke Dies

San Francisco, May 8.—Word was received yesterday from Anderson, Cal., of the death there at the age of 82 of Theodore von Moltke, said to be a first cousin of Count von Moltke.

CARPENTERS LEAD LABOR WAR

Tie Up Other Building Trades At Reading
Reading, May 8.—The decision by the Carpenters' Union to strike means a local labor war. The union finally rejected, after a series of conferences with contractors yesterday afternoon, the offer of the latter for 42 cents an hour for three years. The present rate is 45 cents.
Bricklayers, stone masons, plasterers, slaters and many other trades are affected and much work has been tied up.

Sunbury Man Dies in Hospital

Sunbury, May 8.—John H. Heim, 78 years old, died at a Philadelphia hospital yesterday of diabetes. He had been in ill health for several years. He was a son of Major Daniel Heim, a pioneer business man here. Mr. Heim was in the jewelry business here for many years. Ten years ago he retired. He was a veteran of the Civil war and an active member of the Zion Lutheran church, Sunbury.

Woman Dies in Pottsville Hospital

Pottsville, May 8.—Mrs. J. W. Moyer died here yesterday following an operation at the Pottsville hospital. Her husband was formerly secretary of the Democratic State committee and has been chairman of the Democratic county committee frequently. Mrs. Moyer was actively associated with the International Bible Association.

Hundreds Witness Baptism in River

Manor, May 8.—Yesterday afternoon hundreds of people of all denominations were present at the immersion which took place in the river near here, when a large number were immersed. The Rev. M. Hostetter, of the Mennonite church, was in charge and assisted by the Rev. Jacob Heisey, of Creswell.

Built Carriages Before Civil War

Millersville, May 8.—Abraham B. Greenawalt, 76 years old, a retired coachmaker, and who built carriages before the Civil war, died yesterday from old age. He served in the Civil war and saw hard service. He was a charter member of the Lutheran church and was affiliated with a number of secret organizations.

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