

"ENCHANTRESS" BEWITCHES ALL AT MURDER TRIAL.

Even the Judge Is Not Proof Against the Fascinations of the Countess Tarnovsky in Venice's Sensational Case.



Nicholas Naumoff, Accused of Shooting Count Kamarovsky, in Charge of an Officer.



M. Prilukoff Said to be in the Murder Plot.

FOR just twenty days the tribunal of St. Mark has been trying to establish the respective responsibility of the Countess Tarnovsky, Prilukoff, the Moscow lawyer, Naumoff, the Orel official, and Elise Perrier, the Countess's maid, in the murder of Count Kamarovsky at his Venetian villa in September, 1907.

Naumoff fired the fatal shot. There is no doubt of that. The truth that the tribunal is seeking to establish is who conceived the diabolical plot. Both Naumoff and Prilukoff assert that the Countess did; that both were the victims of her fatal fascination. The Countess declares Prilukoff to have been the creator and instigator of the whole affair, and that Naumoff acted partly as the tool of Prilukoff and partly through a misinterpretation of her wishes to have the Count removed. Another month, possibly two months, will be occupied with this question.

The position of the Countess is anomalous. She is defending herself by that very fascination which she denies having exercised upon Prilukoff and Naumoff.

And she is succeeding both with the people and with her judges. Insults and cries of "Death to the murderess" are no longer heaped upon her by the crowd as she passes in the gondola from the prison to the hall of justice. No longer the face of the President wears a forbidding frown when she speaks. Her transcendent beauty and the loveliness of her position first aroused an unconscious wave of sympathy. Her talents and her subtle charm of manner have turned this sympathy into pity and admiration—a pity that is a reproach to her accusers—an admiration that fearlessly ignores legal justice.

Gabriele D'Annunzio, the scene of whose novel, "Il Fuoco," is laid here, said the other day: "She is the most remarkable woman I have ever seen. Her mind, her beauty, and her charm defy history and romance alike. You are happier in believing what she says she is than in believing what you fear she is. It is no wonder that men have been willing to sin and die for her smiles."

For a fortnight past the Duke of the Abruzzi has been in constant attendance at court, coming every day in a friend's gondola, quietly taking a seat in the reserved tribune, and listening with rapt attention to the proceedings. The call of the Countess is filled with flowers. Notes of sympathy, of love, and offers of aid have poured in upon her, many bearing the noblest names in Venice.

Meanwhile the trial has become a combat of wits. The prisoners debate, dispute, and make speeches with slight restraint on the part of the President. The Countess persistently ignores her counsel and appeals directly to the President. Often she emerges triumphant from a hot duel of words. The President nods approval and by a question opens the way to another victory. The other day the prosecuting attorney ironically advised that an interpreter be employed for the Countess, as he had difficulty in understanding her Italian.

"Possibly," quickly returned the Countess, "as you come from Bologna."

As the strong Bolognese accent of the attorney had not been lost on the spectators, they laughed. The President smiled and said: "I have no difficulty in understanding Tarnovsky."

Thereupon he leaned over and politely requested the Countess to raise her veil so that she could be heard to better advantage. Women in the reserved tribune at once arose to their feet in order to get a better view. The President waved them down, and, noticing their magnificent toilettes, remarked: "This place is neither the theatre nor the opera."

After the sitting he gave orders to have all cards of admission to the reserved tribune that had been issued to women canceled. The next morning, while scrutinizing the general public at the back of the court, he recognized Countess Elena Papadopoli, the millionaire wife of a well-known Senator, who was without a hat and was wearing the shawl of a working woman. Her maid, similarly attired, was with her.

The President then discovered a number of other ladies who are members of the Venetian aristocracy similarly dressed in servants' clothes, patiently enduring the discomfort of standing for hours in order to hear the evidence.

The President smiled grimly, but did not order their withdrawal.

The attempt has been made by the prosecution to show that the Countess had employed the tactics of playing off one lover against another in former episodes in her life and that when she wished a lover removed she excited the jealousy of the others against him. She denied that Borzevsky, whom her first husband had killed, had been dealt with in this manner, and that she had brought about the duel which resulted in the death of another lover, Tolstoy. She denied that her brother-in-law, Peter Tarnovsky, had killed himself for her sake. Then the President asked:

"Stahl, for instance, did he not commit suicide on your account?"

"It is not true."

President: "But at Stahl's grave did you not tell Naumoff that he had killed himself for love of you?"

"I never said that Stahl had committed suicide because I had refused him my love. I said that this was merely the subject of gossip."

At this point it was decided to read Stahl's letter dated Dec. 10, 1904:

"On my word of honor, and by everything that remains stainless in me, I, Vladimir Stahl, have promised Maria Nikolovlevna Tarnovsky to do everything that she ordains during my stay in Kieff. I further declare that this does not constitute any sacrifice on my part, and that I do not ask for any reward. I shall act always in the name of that pure love which has now absorbed the whole of my life. (Signed) Vladimir Stahl. P. S.—In fulfillment of this promise, I, Vladimir Stahl, declare under oath that, except for the loss of my word of honor, Bedroff shall be inviolable for me."

The following letter bears the date of Jan. 19, 1905:

"Dear Maria Nikolovlevna: I arrived at the operating theatre at 9 instead of at 6 o'clock. I shall live another forty minutes. I live with one single hope—that you will pass in your carriage. I kiss you and die. (Signed) Vladimir Stahl."

This letter was written by Stahl a few minutes before he died by his own hand.

President: "From this letter it might be deduced that Stahl had killed himself for you?"

"No, I do not believe he killed himself for my sake."

"How do you explain the first letter?"

"By this he swore that he would not fight a duel, and that he would do nothing to Bedroff, who was the lover of his wife. And the words, 'In the name of that pure love,' prove that he was not my lover."

Public Prosecutor: "What power had you to extort such an oath?"

"Stahl was in love with me."

The last message sent by Stahl to his wife was also read. It contained only one word, which cannot be reproduced.

At another time Count Kamarovsky's will is read to the court. He begins by solemnly declaring that he leaves the whole of his fortune, including the \$100,000 for which his life had been insured in Vienna a few weeks before his murder and his great estates, as the absolute property of the Countess Tarnovsky. He urges his son to respect the Countess and to tend the tomb of his mother, the Count's first wife. The following letter of Kamarovsky to the Countess is read:

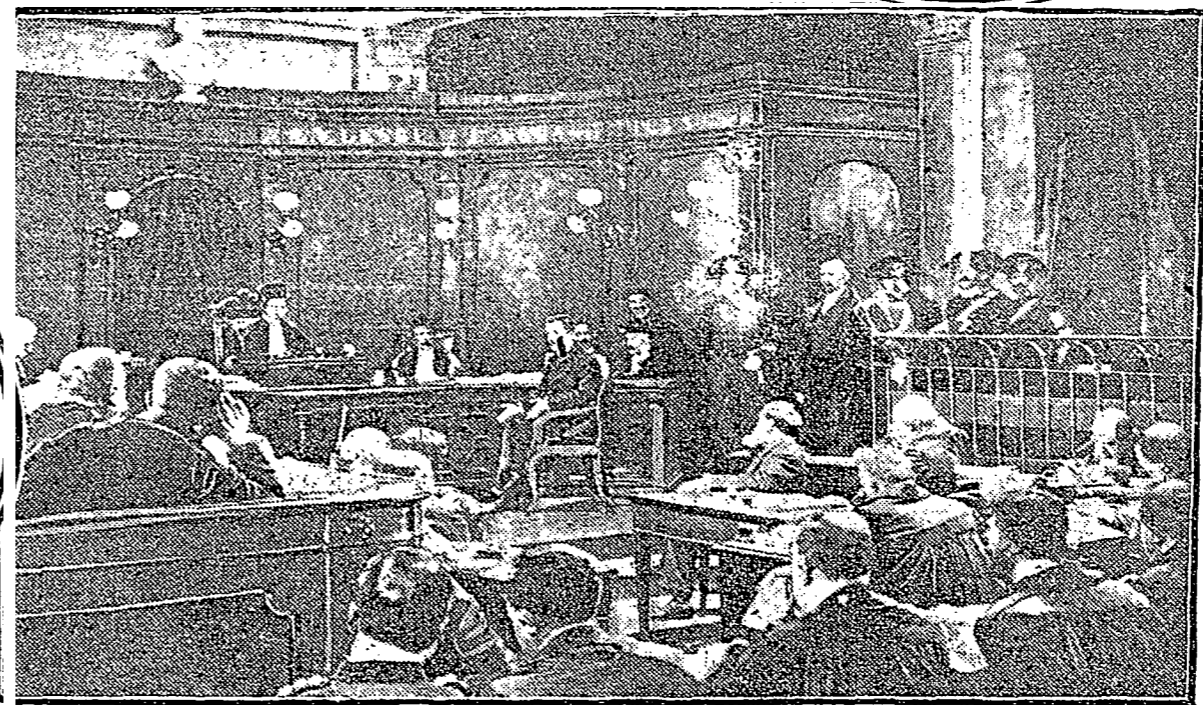
"Remember, you have given your-



"The Enchantress," Countess Marie Tarnovsky, on Her Way to Court.



The Judge, Angelo Fusinato.



Scene at the Trial. Naumoff Making His Confession Involving the Countess, Who Is Seated Behind the Railing at the Right of the Picture.

self to me, and from that moment you became my wife. Your past does not belong to me, but the future is ours. We have both suffered, but now we have a right to rest together."

President: "Is it true that Prilukoff was under the influence of your fascination?"

"One day he wrote me a letter which was absolutely insulting and ferocious. That did not seem to suggest that he was very 'fascinated.'"

Later in the same session the President asked: "Did he love you?"

"Yes, very dearly. And I loved him. But we led a sad life of wandering, and he ended by wearying me of our relations to each other."

Public Prosecutor: "If you loved Prilukoff, how do you explain the fact that at the same time you sent affec-

tionate telegrams to others, for example, to Naumoff?"

"I loved Prilukoff very much, but as so often happens when two persons are too much together we got tired of each other. Meanwhile I saw Naumoff, and he pleased me. I was in search of an ideal, and I turned to him. Then came Kamarovsky. I thought I would have a quiet life, and I wanted him to marry me. When Prilukoff was away I wanted to marry Kamarovsky; when he was near I did not know what to do with the Count."

A juror rises suddenly with the unexpected question:

"Why did the Countess not warn her

flancé, Kamarovsky, of the peril he was in from Naumoff?"

This is a vital point in the Countess's responsibility for the crime. But she is this time quite unmoved and answers: "I did not know that Kamarovsky was in danger until the last moment. I believed that he would not be killed, and that Prilukoff would send an order that he should be spared."

"To whom? To you or to Naumoff?"

"To one or other of us."

President: "Did not Naumoff send you a letter containing proposals of suicide?"

The Countess remained silent, so the

President ordered the following letter to be read:

"I am leaving to-day. I am not going to Volochiska, as was arranged, but to another place much further away. Forgive me. To-day my hand is trembling. I am drunk; not with wine, but with grief. I have given you everything; all that was in me. My dark, unhappy life was all in your hands. I attached myself to you as a shipwrecked man attaches himself to

quiltize him and inspire him with hope of your love?"

"I do not know when this letter was written, but I remember going to see him a few times."

The President ordered the reading of the written interrogatory, in which the Countess said that she had gone to comfort Naumoff, so as to get him into a calm state, and had made him hand over his revolver, afterward telling him to go away.

The Countess: "Yes, I took away his revolver."

President: "Naumoff says that you spoke badly of Kamarovsky on that occasion, and that you told him (Naumoff) that Kamarovsky spoke badly of him?"

"On the contrary, I kept the arrival of Naumoff in Vienna secret for fear of a conflict."

The Countess tells of the tortures which Naumoff underwent at her hands. He suggested, she says, that she should burn him with cigarette ends and stab him with hatpins, and he found his delight in suffering. They used to stab each other with the pins and bathe the wounds with eau de Cologne.

At the preliminary hearing the Countess was allowed to smoke. One day Naumoff was speaking, freely denouncing the Countess with great vehemence. Suddenly he stopped, his eyes riveted on the floor, and without another word he sat down and covered his face with his hands, sobbing out: "I say no more. I love her! I love her!"

After his withdrawal they looked on the floor to see what had moved him and found a cigarette and that had been dropped by the Countess.

But it was not on lovers alone that the Countess exercised her fatal charm. Her maid and confidante, Elise Perrier, is a witness to that. Whenever the Countess is testifying Naumoff watches her with a passionate eagerness; Prilukoff listens intently, but will not look at her. Elise Perrier regards her with a dog-like affection and tenderness.

The career of Napoleon, this strange criminal drama has all Europe for its stage. Elise Perrier, speaking in a curious fluent Italian, but with a slight foreign accent, related her travels with the Countess from city to city. Tears rolled down her cheeks as she recalled the Countess's kindness to her. Once her mistress had nursed her through a severe illness, sitting up with her night after night.

An attempt was made by the public prosecutor to have the maid admit that she had previous knowledge of the crime, so that by further questions he might find out who had planned the murder. The maid stoutly maintains her ignorance. Then said the President:

"When you were arrested in Vienna you confirmed everything; indeed, you denounced the whole of the criminal plan of your mistress, who wanted to have Kamarovsky killed, Naumoff arrested, and then to make Prilukoff commit suicide. The Magistrate at Vienna asked you if you had not thought of your responsibility, and you replied, 'No, I only think of my responsibility now; at first I thought of the happiness of my mistress.' And you said that you were profoundly sorry for having contributed to the killing of a fellow-being and to sending another to prison. Repentance follows a sin, does it not?"

"Yes, I was sorry because I had not sufficiently reflected upon what I was unwittingly doing."

Public Prosecutor: "You have told us of your mistress's conduct with Kamarovsky, Prilukoff, and Naumoff; have you never thought what an ignominious thing it was to remain in the service of such a mistress? How is it that you, who belong to an austere sect, rigorous in morality, and who have exemplary parents, never thought of the immorality of your position?"

"I loved my mistress, and never thought that she could do wrong."

A curious incident occurred at one session. The lawyers in court threatened to go on strike because they were sharply rebuked by the President for constantly interrupting the examination. They rose in a body and were about to leave the court when the President advised them to keep their tempers and assist him to render justice in this momentous case. Thereupon the lawyers sulkily resumed their seats.

The Countess was apparently amused at this interlude. When the examination concluded for the day she walked briskly out of court between two carabinieri and entered the prison, gondola.

Countess Tarnovsky.

