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THE TARNOWSKA TRIAL.

Believing that the scene I have witnessed today will be of interest to those who read the *Record* and deeply conscious of the impression that it has made upon my own mind, I venture to send an account of the Venetian court proceedings against the Countess Tarnowska, that woman of a beauty and of a fascination so terrible that there is no fashionable circle in all eastern Europe where she is unknown. The Countess Tarnowska has been in prison for two years and more under the suspicion of having caused her lover to be murdered. With her in the sad prison of the Giudecca have been the three others whom she is believed to have bent to her evil will—first of all Nicholas Naumoff, the Russian, who is twenty-one years old; secondly M. Prilukoff, the lawyer, and last of all Liza Perrier, who is French and of an exceeding delicacy of form—and yet, it is said, with a heart so firm that never for a moment has her tranquillity deserted her. These three were brought from the prison in a special gondola and before the gaze of hundreds of Russians, Germans, and Poles who have assembled in Venice to gaze upon the face of the woman who is still lovely and perhaps even more lovely than ever for the paleness of the prison. These people did not shout like the Venetian people, who continually cried 'Death, death.' They simply gazed and spoke to each other in low tone, perhaps of those other times when the Countess Tarnowska enchanted them all. The gondolas of these onlookers blocked the canal until the sorrowful party of the accused had entered the court surrounded with the carabinieri.

The countess is not of Russian descent, but Irish. She is the daughter of Colonel O'Rourke, whose family has lived in Russia for a hundred years and become Russian in everything except the ancient family name. When she was thirteen years old and already of famous beauty she ran away with the Count Tarnowska, a great aristocrat of Russia, and for four years they lived together until the great trouble came. Then the scandalous began to whisper, and it happened that one day the countess openly embraced a man who was her lover, and her husband saw her do his thing and so followed the man out of the room and killed him on the spot. Then he divorced his wife and because of the provocation was left unpunished by law.

The man Prilukoff was the lawyer of the countess in the divorce case, and as did all other men who saw her he fell in love with her and gave his soul to her, although he had a wife. When the countess left Russia and went to Venice, Prilukoff went with her, but first he stole all the money of his customers that was in his hands. Perhaps she got weary of Prilukoff, who was only a lawyer and ill-favoured, for after a time she went back to Russia, and then she threw the net of her beauty over Naumoff, who also became her slave. But he had no money, and so she made her last conquest of the Count Paul Kamarowski, who was a great Russian noble like her husband, and so presently all these people are in Venice, where also Prilukoff, the lawyer, had been waiting ever since the countess left him. The Count Kamarowski presented the countess everywhere as his betrothed and Prilukoff and Naumoff watched at a distance, tied as it were to one another by their passion for one woman. The Count Kamarowski, too, was so much *épris* that he insured his life for £20,000 and signed a paper that all this money should be for the woman he loved, and when he signed that paper it was at the same time his death warrant.

Now we find Nicholas Naumoff, who has come all the way from Russia that he may see the countess smile, visiting the count at his residence, and the count received him in his dressing-gown. No one knows what happened. That is for the judge to discover. But it is said that Naumoff at once shot the count in the stomach and then shot him yet five times, and when the servants came the count was as though dead and his head was resting in the arms of Naumoff. Every one said that the count had sought self-murder and that Naumoff had found him and would aid him to his room.

But the count was not yet dead, unluckily for Naumoff, and he said that Naumoff had shot him. So Naumoff was arrested and he said at once that this was true, for they had talked and quarrelled. Then the count said that there was no quarrel, and so the carabinieri asked many questions and at last

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they learned of the countess and her life in the past and her bewitchment of Naumoff. And they learned also that Naumoff was constantly with the lawyer Prilukoff, who also was a lover of the countess, and so at last they arrested all three. Also they arrested the maid, although no one knows what she has done. Perhaps it was better for her to be in prison with her mistress, whose hand she kisses all day long in the court.

Who shall say what will be proved? It may be that Prilukoff believed that the countess would marry him if the count were dead and if she had his money, and so he persuaded Naumoff to do the crime. It may be that Naumoff also believed that he could have a rich wife by killing the count. Perhaps the countess told them both that she would marry them if the count were dead, and it may be that the countess intended to snap the fingers and to go away alone with the money seeking for other rich men. All these things are to prove, and so Venice is full of aristocrats who knew the countess formerly and perhaps were enamoured of her, wishing now to know what her last fate will be. But never was there such a scene in Venice with the gondolas of great foreigners thronging the canal and the crowded courtroom watching the accused in the iron cage where such as they are customarily placed for trial. They sit in a row, the four accused ones, but they are separated by carabinieri so that they shall not speak to each other, all but the little French maid, who is allowed to sit next to her mistress and she gazes constantly with devotion into her face and tries to kiss her hand, which the countess is unwilling to permit. During the morning and while the charge is being read Naumoff faints and remains for many minutes without knowledge. The countess looks steadily upon the ground and does not raise her eyes when she is asked if her knowledge of the Italian tongue is sufficient for her own protection. She murmurs yes and the proceedings go on. Only the lawyer Prilukoff is calm, perhaps with the tranquillity of innocence, perhaps because he knows that nothing can be proved against him, and that in Italy it is not a crime to love a beautiful woman. Every one looks at the countess, the aristocrats from Russia and from Poland, and it is easy to believe that there are many among them whose wings were burned in the old days, and perhaps some of them also are wondering if they, too, would not have gone down into the pit of murder to win the favour of the enchantress.

A. G.

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NEWS OF THE WORLD.

LORD ROSEBERY'S LETTER.

As reported in our last issue, Lord Rosebery has sent a letter to the *Times* pointing out the supreme gravity of the constitutional issue and appealing to all parties to drop other questions and concentrate upon this as the main issue at the approaching General Election. Lord Rosebery's letter is as follows:—
 "The statement of the Prime Minister last night makes it plain that within a very short time the country will be called upon to decide at a General Election the greatest issue of our time—that is, whether the Constitution shall be wrenched out of all shape and proportion to give almost absolute power to a Single Chamber and its casual majority. Such an issue should be the sole one; there is no room for another. If it be complicated with others we shall not obtain what we require, the clear and solemn pronouncement of the nation on this fateful question. In the United States it would be called a Constitutional Amendment, which could only be carried by the most elaborate means under the most vigilant and careful precautions. Here, unhappily, it is otherwise. It will be decided at a General Election, in which it will be mixed up with a score of other questions, and a mixed and dubious verdict will be given by an electorate imperfectly instructed and with a distracted attention. When I say 'imperfectly instructed' I take as an example those who believe that it is the House of Lords itself that pronounces the judicial decisions given by a few Judges in its name, such as those on the Churches of Scotland and on trade union levies. But the great controversy which will run athwart that of the Single Chamber is that between Free Trade and Tariff Reform.

"Here, surely, is an opportunity for patriotism as distinguished from party. The Unionist leaders have the opportunity of vindicating their claim to be considered as the Constitutional party. They, at any rate in that capacity, must surely desire a straight fight on the sole issue of a Single Chamber as opposed to two. On that depends much more than the temporary success of any party; the confidence of other countries, that of our own Dominions—nay, that of our own people. How can we hope with a Single Chamber to obtain more reliance than Greece or Costa Rica; how shall we deserve it? Tariffs are no doubt very important. But how can they vie in importance with this question? If the nation pronounces with a definite, unflinching opinion on this, we know where we are. We shall know whether the nation decides to maintain or to abdicate its position. But unless the issue is put alone, as it would be in a Referendum, the nation will remain in its present uncertainty, so fatal to trade, enterprise, and employment.

"Will the Unionist leaders, then, not drop for the coming election the Tariff issue and concentrate on the Constitution? They could do so either by dropping the question altogether or agreeing to refer it to a Royal Commission. If victorious at the polls they could at once set about a real reform of the Second Chamber, and when that mandate was exhausted appeal to the country on their Tariff policy with the certainty of having placed the Constitution on a sure basis for the future. It will be a sacrifice, but all lovers of their country will thank them for

(Continued over the page.)