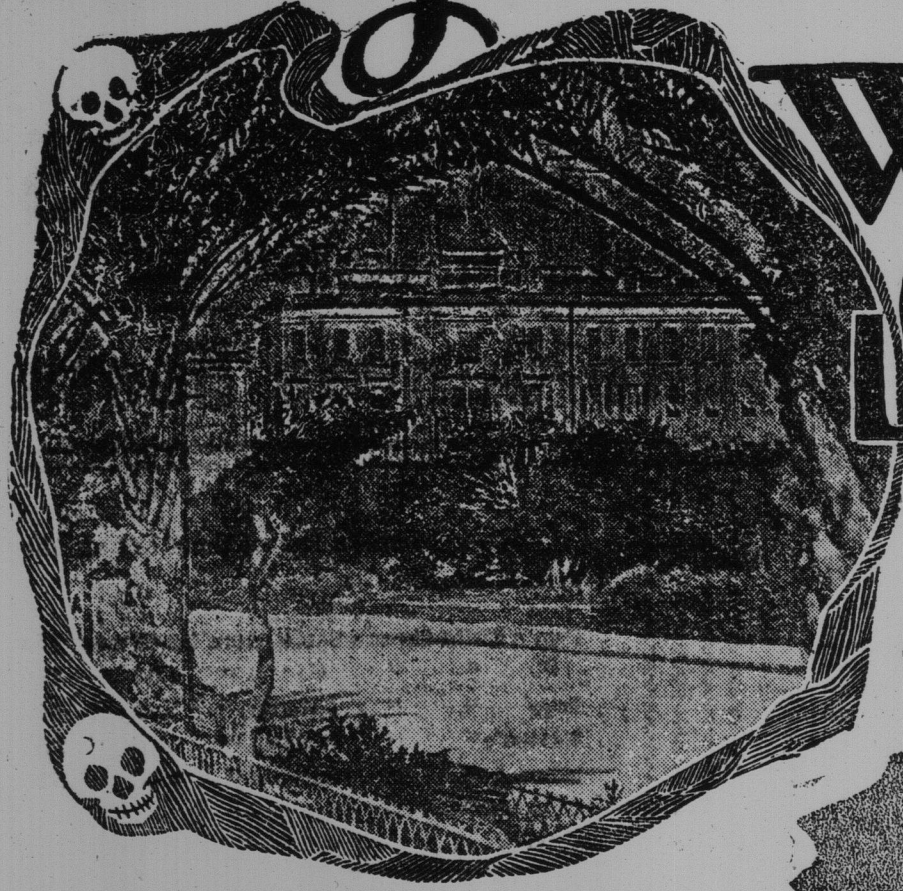


Tragic End of THE Czar's Best Woman



The Countess's Villa in San Remo, Where She Was Murdered.

After an Amazing Career of Brilliant Conquests the Fascinating Countess Della Torre Is Found in Her Villa With Her Skull Beaten In.

ST. PETERSBURG, July 6.—The great White Czar's best friend has just been murdered. Her extraordinary death is the last chapter in the annals of a most extraordinary woman. Her aim in life was to live in almost as barbaric splendor as the Czar himself. She was killed by her lover, whom she had fooled for twenty years, whom she made a tool of when she was a girl, and who, finally getting suspicious after twenty years of waiting, came back and killed her. Battista Pisani, an inhabitant of the neighboring village of Apricale, near San Remo, where "roy first made love, left his home to seek fortune in America. He returned unexpectedly and found proof that his wife had proved unfaithful to him—and faithful to the Czar. Blinded with rage and shame, he seized a hammer and, having battered in the wretched woman's skull in her palatial villa on the Mediterranean, escaped unrecognized. The masters of international craft could ill afford to discard an instrument of such admirable temper as Countess della Torre, who had every fascination that has ever been known. Little by little she became a party to great secrets of state, and, if report speaks true, did not hesitate to make use of or disclose them. Recent events have proven her to have been a Russian political spy, and the papers found at her death give positive proof of the almost fabulous sums that she had received from high military officers at St. Petersburg. Among others was the will of an ex-governor of that city, who is now in America, constituting her his universal legatee on condition that she should have him buried under the green of Apricale. Her relations with the Emperor's staff were close. She had been in the Far East, some time in correspondence with that fortress. But she is dead now, murdered by the man she loved when she was a little Italian, her rise from a barefooted child who used to carve money for the tourists to scripping into the secrets of the world for the largesse of the Czar, follow.



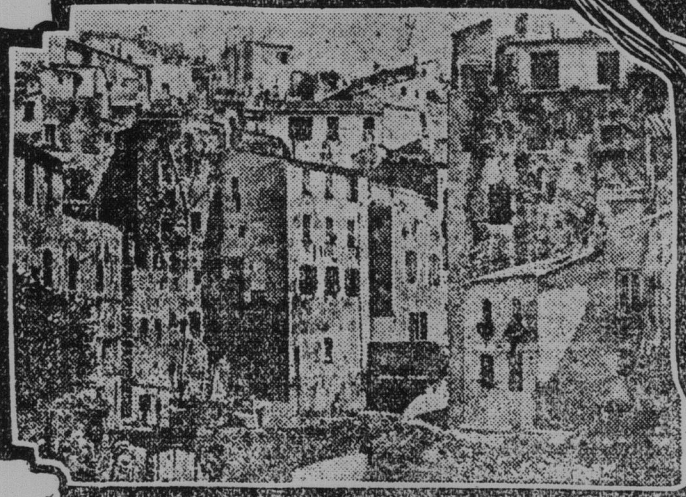
In Early Life.

THE unfortunate woman will be andy missed from the Russian Secret Service. No one will ever know the hazardous undertakings which the Countess carried through with consummate skill for the Czar. Her career of seduction was wide and she was equally adroit in penetrating diplomatic secrets of the foreign legations or in managing to find out the most carefully guarded plans of the Nihilists. Speaking with wonderful fluency seven different languages, the Countess was able, at times, to ingratiate herself into the confidence of important personages in nearly every one of the great capitals of Europe. Skilled in the art of cajolery, unscrupulous even to the point of murder, the Countess managed by flattery and more than once by the little vial of poison which she carried in her glove, to gain possession of secret documents which were of the greatest importance to her Russian master. It was early in her career that she won the personal confidence and gratitude of the Czar by a brilliant coup. The Russian Secret Police had received conflicting information from their agents in Rome and in Paris as to a Nihilist plot. In the dead of night the Countess, who had constant access to the Czar himself, was the leader of an intrigue which threatened the life of the leading members of the royal family. Finally, the St. Petersburg Chief of the Secret Service detailed the Countess della Torre on the case and she began work in Rome. With the aid of the local Russian spies Madame was soon in the confidence of the called hand of Nihilists and was admitted to their nightly councils in one of the Roman catcombs. Suddenly following a desperate illness, the Countess took her departure to London for the purpose, she avowed, of consulting the best English surgeon and preparing for an operation in a sanatorium there. From London the Countess slipped across to St. Petersburg and made known her discoveries to the Chief of the Secret Service. When she revealed the name of the palace official who was the real leader of the Nihilist plot, the incredulous Secret Service Chief declared her as a blundering fool and declined to have any further dealings with her. Charged, angry, and her pride deeply wounded, Madame the Countess, hastened back to Rome and renewed her relations with the Nihilists, and finally secured a mission from the leader in Italy to bring a package of secret reports to the Nihilist chief in the royal household. Armed with these documents, the Countess again went to St. Petersburg, but this time she demanded and secured an audience with the Czar himself. When the Countess unfolded the facts in her possession the Czar, too, was amazed and refused to believe the accusations against one of the most trusted members of his personal staff. "Then I shall prove to Your Majesty what I say," cried the Countess. "In half an hour I must beg to see you again." Hastening to the unsuspecting Nihilist, the Countess made known her mission from the Italian leader, and delivered into his hands the package of secret documents. "Keep them with you," she whispered in his ear. "On your noble person they are safe, but in any hiding place they may be found." Returning to the apartments of the Countess, the Countess demanded that the young officer be instantly summoned into the imperial presence. "I beg Your Majesty," she implored, "to observe the Count's features closely when he beholds me at your side." A few moments later the young staff officer entered, saluted the Czar, and as his eye fell upon the Countess he staggered back, raised his hand to his brow and a look of amazement and horror overspread his features. "As I told Your Majesty," cried the Countess, "Search him and you will find the proof!" They were married in the Spring, and he carried his treasure off to Apricale, and set down to ply his trade. In their early married days he was no doubt able to give his bride such educational advantages as were his, and, still passionately in love, was ready to satisfy her slightest caprice. Her ambitions were many and, for the most part, far beyond his means, for stone carving, like the other artistic crafts, affords but a precarious livelihood. What Battista earned kept body and soul together, but in no way sufficed for the needs of his luxury-loving and ideally beautiful Emma, so one fine day he turned his talents to account, and became—for her sake—a colonel in a country town, however.

the subtlest, cleverest spy in the employ of the Russian Bureau. It was as the Countess della Torre that she was known, and that name will awaken memories among European diplomatists, and in the brilliant if somewhat elastic circle of what is called cosmopolitan society—even, perhaps, in far away Port Arthur—this true story of this remarkably brilliant adventuress, spy—and from the intimacy of European archives that are leaking out slowly, slowly—many times poisoner, who would murder without hesitancy of scruple. When Emma Bellomo was fourteen she was of an extraordinary and ripe beauty beyond her years, and was employed as nothing more than a household drudge by a bourgeois family of Nice. Even at that age she had dreams and aspirations, and realized that nature had endowed her with something as valuable as talent and rare than riches—a face that would be her fortune if only she carried it to the proper market. So Cinderella went about her work, waiting for the fairy godmother to appear. She had the sense, however, to realize that the Prince would not come at once. And so, having one day met Battista Pisani, she realized that a life of domestic slavery, and set her young cap at him. Pisani was by trade a "pratichien," a stone carver, and socially, as well as intellectually, her superior, but, blinded by love and beauty, he fell a willing victim. HOW HER INSATIABLE AMBITION BEGAN LEADING HER UP TO HER TRAGIC END.

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The Quarter of the Poor Near San Remo, Where She Was Born



The Countess Della Torre.

the maid-of-all-work-like another Emma in English history—became the "grande dame" and happily made up for the shortcomings of her early education. Tensious of purpose, she worked hard at every subject that might increase her arsenal of seductions and obliterate all trace of her origin. When the Count died he left her his immense fortune, and she promptly assumed the title of Countess della Torre. Society opened its doors still wider to her. In Paris, Rome, St. Petersburg, at Longchamps or on the Promenade des Anglais, she held her court. She was even then a miracle of loveliness, exquisitely dressed, and always afterwards able to be witty in French, English, German or Italian with equal facility. Up to this point she was a social success, but her ambitious went further still. She wanted to be a Minister of Finance and Minister of State, of diplomats and millionaires, and she was in reality the Countess della Torre, her stony were crowded, if not with the original, at all events with their portraits—row after row of framed phoos, grins bearing affectionate dedication and able to enter society wearing a coronet. The Cinderella dream was realized, and signatures of men whose signatures are set to the deeds of nations. And now, right here, comes the terrible interruption of a terribly intense purpose. Throughout her career she had maintained a friendly correspondence with Battista Pisani, her husband. She kept him well supplied with funds, and had even supplied him with the money to return—as she thought, in order to relinquish his marital rights—as things turned out, to put an end to her life. The generally accepted theory is that husband and wife disagreed as to the sum that was to buy her freedom, and that the former, in an access of fury, murdered her—with, as it were, the predestinated instrument—his stone-carver's hammer. With that strange homing instinct of criminals, Emma had always had an affection for her country. She had built herself a villa at Apricale, and when about to set out on her last voyage to Port Arthur she made a will leaving all her fortune to the hospitals at Vouthilliers. Such, then, is the strange history of the Countess della Torre, whose career resembles in many ways that of Emma Hart, Nelson's beloved lady Hamilton. And now, after her life's final fever and many wanderings, the Czar's subject, wickedest and best woman spy—she may hope remember—sleeps in her beautiful home, bought with the proceeds of her ingenuity, in her sunny Apricale.