

Astonishing Career of the Countess Sarolta Vay of Austria.

The Countess Sarolta Vay, who for the last six years has played a man's part in man's attire before the sporting world of the Austrian Empire, is lying ill and penniless at the house of a friend in Pesth. Excessive dissipation has shattered her health and her fortune. Her crazy career is at an end. Hereafter the gay subjects of Emperor Franz-Joseph must find some other strong-minded young woman to shock them with her mad pranks.

A record of the Countess Sarolta Vay's young life reads like the first acts of a melodrama, according to the *New York Sun*. General Count Ladislas Vay von Vaya married her mother thirty-six years ago. He was the sole possessor of the vast and unencumbered estates of his family, ranked high in the army and was a chamberlain of the Emperor. The first five years of his married life passed and his wife had borne him no heir. He was in despair, for in case he had no child his property would go to the crown at his death. The sixth, seventh and eighth year went by, and he was still childless. His anxiety and disappointment had already begun to warp his mind and embitter his disposition. In the ninth year, however, the Countess bore him a little girl. He had waited so long and so anxiously for the birth of an heir that when the baby came no one dared to tell him it was not the male heir he had been looking for so eagerly.

Day after day was added to the baby's age, and still no one told him the truth. Then the countess decided that, for her husband's sake, she would pretend that her child was a boy; would rear it and dress it as a boy, and would let her husband die in the happy confidence that his name and estates would be properly handed down to his posterity. So the priest was induced to baptize the baby publicly as Sandor (a boy's name), although on the church register he called the child Sarolta or Charlotte. The little girl grew as little boys grow, in trousers and jackets, with plenty of light fishing, hunting and other similar sports. When she became 14 years old her father decided to send her away to a military school. Just then, however, an incident occurred which upset all previous calculations of the Vay household. The countess gave birth to a real boy.

Here was a pretty pickle. The real heir kicking about unhonored and unrecognized in the cradle, and the bogus heir strutting into general notice under the false cover of trousers and roundabouts. The countess cut the knot by confessing the whole deception to her husband, who accepted the situation philosophically, and set about getting his eldest child out of Sandor's trousers into Sarolta's skirts.

Sarolta, however, was incorrigible. She persisted in playing the part which her mother had assigned to her. She continued to hunt, fish, ride like mad, fence and knock about as a boy among boys. As she matured she took to drinking, gambling and smoking just as she would have been expected to do if she had really been the male heir of all the Vays.

When she reached her majority she made a formal declaration of independence from all parental authority. She went the rounds of the big cities in a high hat, cutaway coat and tight trousers, plunged headlong into almost every dissipation which they afforded, fought three duels with men who reproached her with her sex, and eventually brought up in Pesth head over heels in debt. In her straits she decided that her only hope of better times lay in an advantageous marriage.

She found a beautiful young girl named Marie Engelhardt, the daughter of a rich army contractor in Laybach, introduced herself as Count Sandor Vay, and under the pretense of being a man got Herr Engelhardt to accept her as a son-in-law. The marriage ceremony between Fraulein Marie and the countess was performed, the nuptials were celebrated, and the quasi-husband pocketed the big dowry of the quasi-wife. The whole swindle was discovered shortly. Fraulein Marie was taken home by her father and the countess was imprisoned in Klagenfurt, although not before she had squandered Fraulein Marie's money.

About four weeks ago she was released from prison and went to the house of Fraulein Czeky, her friend, in Pesth. She took to her bed immediately, suffering from nervous prostration. Within a few days, however, she picked up so amazingly that she was able to talk with the reporters who crowded to her bedside for interviews. She was glad to see them all, she said, and would tell them all she knew on one condition, which was that they should treat her exactly as they would treat a man. "Call me 'count,'" she requested, "for I feel the deepest aversion toward everything which reminds me that I am a woman. I would formally insult a stranger who called me 'countess.' An acquaintance would get no answer at all."

"I am perfectly sound mentally," the

countess said at the conclusion of the last interview with her, "in fact, have never been better. I have sown my wild oats, and have suffered for it. All I wish now is a quiet life with my dear wife."

Curiously enough Fraulein Marie is full of admiration for the countess, speaks of her as the grandest of women, and is anxious to be her companion through life.

The countess is of middle height, with a good chest, heavy shoulders, and well developed arms and legs. She has short, curly dark hair, hazel eyes, a saucy nose, and a Cupid's bow mouth. Although the lines of her face have been somewhat deepened and hardened by her fast life, she still looks like a handsome, dashing young fellow of 20 years.
