

The Unique Career of Countess Sarolta Vay of Austria.

Lying ill in the house of a friend in Pesth is the Countess Sarolta Vay.

Thirty-six years ago Gen. Count Ladislas Vay von Vaya took to himself a wife. He was rich and powerful. When year after year went by and his good wife failed to show her appreciation of the kindness he had done her in marrying her by furnishing him with an heir, the count was naturally annoyed. The thought that his vast estates were likely to pass from the family to the crown finally affected his mind.

Just at this juncture a child was born. But, alas! the child was a girl. The countess was in despair. Finally she decided to rear and dress the infant as a boy and let the count (who was feeble and apparently traveling the downward slope of life) live and die happy in the delusion that the name and estates would be perpetuated by a son. The bogus boy was ostensibly christened Sandor, but her real name was registered as Sarolta.

For fourteen years the girl was carefully trained to be boyish. She was dressed in trousers; she was taught to enjoy those sports in which only men take part—hunting, fishing and the like. In short, she occupied in every way the position of a young Austrian noble, and moreover, no one suspected less than she that she was not what she seemed.

When she had passed her fourteenth birthday an event occurred which upset all the calculations of her mother. This event was no more nor less than the arrival of a real boy baby. The good old countess was nonplused. Finally she took the only course open to her and confessed to the count the deception which had been practiced on him. For the first time Sarolta learned that her proper sphere was in the

drawing room and not in the saddle. The count took the news philosophically, but Sarolta was furious. She did not weep—she swore. For had she not been brought up as a young man? She



COUNTESS SAROLTA VAY.

was absolutely incorrigible. She would not put on skirts and become docile and ladylike; but fished more, hunted more, rode harder, gambled more recklessly, and, as she matured, took to drinking and smoking as readily as possible. When she became of age she formally renounced parental authority. Seeking the great cities of Europe she went about in high hat, tight trousers and cutaway coat, and plunged madly into dissipation of all sorts. She fought three duels with men who reproached her with her sex and contracted enormous debts.

In Pesth, in order to keep up the farce, she affected to have become infatuated with an actress and gave her magnificent presents. This sort of life increased her liabilities so enormously that she had difficulty in keeping out of prison.

She finally decided that her only escape lay in an advantageous marriage. She found a beautiful young girl named Marie Engelhardt, the daughter of a rich army contractor named Laybach. Sarolta presented herself as Count Sandor Vay, and pretended to be a man so skillfully as to win the love of Marie and the consent of her father. They were married and Sarolta pocketed the dowry of her quasi wife. Her sex was discovered and a great scandal was the result. In the meantime Marie's fortune was squandered. Sarolta was imprisoned and Marie was taken back to her father's home.

Something more than a month ago Sarolta was released from prison.

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