

SHE PLAYED HER PART.

Strange and Romantic Life of the Countess Sarolta Vay.

Result of a Mother's Deceit—A Beautiful Young Girl Masquerades for Many Years in Men's Clothes—Marriage Exposes the Swindle, and Lands Her in Prison.

The Countess Sarolta Vay, who for the last six years has played a man's part in a man's attire before the sporting world of the Austrian Empire, is lying ill and penniless at a house of a friend in Pesth, says a recent telegram. Excessive dissipation has shattered her health and her fortune.

A record of the Countess Sarolta Vay's young life reads like the first acts of a melodrama. Gen. Count Ladislav Vay married her mother thirty-six years ago. He was the sole possessor of the vast and unincumbered 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 bore him no heir. He was in despair, for in case he had no child his property would go to the crown at his death. In the ninth year of his marriage, 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. The Countess decided that for her husband's sake she would pretend that her child was a boy, and would rear it and dress it as a boy. The priest was induced to baptize the baby publicly as Sandor (a boy's name). When the little girl became 14 years old an incident occurred which upset all the previous calculations of the Vay household. The Countess gave birth to a real boy. The Countess then confessed the whole deception to her husband.

Sarolta, as the girl was called after this, was incorrigible, and persisted in playing the part which her mother had assigned to her. 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 light 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. She affected to become infatuated with a Bulgarian soubrette.

This sort of life increased the countess' debts so enormously that she was put to her wits' ends to keep herself out of jail. 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 Layback, 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 Klagonfurt, although not before she had squandered all the money she got from Engelhardt and was threatened with confinement in an asylum.

A few 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.

The Countess is of middle height, with a good chest and heavy shoulders. 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.