

DE RAYLAN'S DIARY.

Mystery of Russian Man-Woman Finally Solved.

FOOLED M. POBEDONOSTZEFF

Remarkable Story Revealed in Memoirs of Ex-Secretary to Czar's Consul in Chicago, Whose Sex Was Not Discovered Until Her Death.

The life secret of Nicolai de Raylan, for years secretary to the Russian consul at Chicago, who, after masquerading as a man for eighteen years, was found after her death in Arizona in December, 1906, to have been a woman, has been revealed. The story, never before published, containing her reason for starting out on a career of deception that proved her one of the most accomplished actresses in the world and disclosing a Russian scandal that has been hidden for years, is contained in her diary and private correspondence recently discovered by Michael Feinberg, a clerk in the law office of Gardner, Stern & Anderson of



CONVINCED THE PROCURATOR SHE WAS TELLING THE TRUTH.

Chicago, attorneys for James Reddick, public administrator. Most of the documents and all of the diary are in the Russian language.

The diary and a letter from her mother received through a go-between more than a year ago show De Raylan's real family name to have been Taletsky. Her given name is not shown by any of the documents. The diary covers a period between the years 1888 and 1892, the year of her arrival as a refugee in Chicago.

The first phase of her life traced in her journal, many pages of which indicate that she was a drunkard, a gambler and a profane rone, depicts her as a schoolgirl. Her mother had placed her in a government school for girls in

Kiev, Russia, where the Taletsky family home was situated, and between the ages of fifteen and sixteen years she was to graduate. Somewhere around this period her mother, who had been well to do before, suddenly acquired 250,000 rubles (about \$125,000).

Nicolai discovered the existence of this sum and became suspicious concerning it. In some way she found that it had been settled on her mother as trustee by some member of the nobility, to be conserved in the interest of Nicolai. This discovery made the young girl curious as to the reasons for the settlement and caused her to wish for her father, to find from him what mystery surrounded her origin. Nicolai writes of various interviews with her mother, in which the latter refused to give information.

As the time of the graduation from the girls' school drew near the girl conceived a Napoleonic scheme to force her mother to pay her a considerable sum of money or at least to divulge the information she sought so eagerly, or both. She had her inspiration in two statutes of Russia, one making it a crime, punishable by imprisonment, to gain entrance by any means for a boy into a girls' school. The other was the law regulating compulsory military service, which made it a serious crime to hide the sex of a male child.

The completeness of detail with which the sixteen-year-old girl set about to prove herself a boy shows her to have possessed originality and imagination to the point of genius. No detail was left uncompleted. Before she made known to any one her purpose she made final and convincing arrangements to provide for evidence in case her sex was questioned.

She had been watched over from early childhood by a French governess, Louise Ratone, about nine years her senior. Affecting to take her governess into her confidence, she said, according to the diary:

"Louise, you've seen me in the house here posing as a girl, when in fact all the time I have been a boy. The purpose of my mother in disguising me in this way was to procure this money that has come to her."

She convinced Louise of the truth of her statement, and they entered into a compact, according to the diary, to leave Kiev together and enter on a campaign the purpose of which should be to force the mother to give up the information and the money. Nicolai told the governess she long had been secretly in love with her and would marry her as soon as the money was obtained.

The preparation for the assuming of male disguise consumed about two years, and the actual occurrences began to take place in 1892. It was apparently in 1891 that Louise Ratone, after the two girls had been at St. Petersburg a short time, wrote a letter to the late M. Pobedonostzeff telling him the chief facts of Nicolai's alleged case and asking for an interview.

The statesman and churchman, confidential adviser of the czar and who was sometimes called the dictator of Russia, took an interest in the case at once and summoned Nicolai to his palace. Nicolai went there alone and at the end of a private interview succeeded in convincing the procurator that she was telling the truth.

At the instance of the procurator she swore out a complaint against her

mother in the courts of Odessa. These charges are now on record in Odessa, according to the diary. The procurator went to that city himself and advised the officials. Mrs. Taletsky was arrested, preparations were made for her trial, and she sought the advice of one Plavakoy, an attorney of Kiev.

At this juncture Nicolai saw that discretion was the better part of valor and that she would probably be landed in prison herself if she submitted to the medical examination necessary to a formal hearing of the case, even though she had fooled the procurator. She had met in St. Petersburg a young woman named Muey Rosdorhney, with whom she affected to fall in love, as she did with convincing cleverness nearly every woman she met, and whom she courted when Louise Ratone was not around. Both Nicolai and Louise saw that the "jig was up," and they abandoned their plans.

Zaney, the St. Petersburg sweetheart, raised money enough to start Nicolai on her travels, and the latter fled to Finland, informing Zaney and leaving a letter for the procurator, telling him that her filial devotion pre-



SHE GOT VERY FRIENDLY WITH THE STEWARDRESS.

vented her at the first moment from appearing against her mother; that she would flee to save the latter's name and honor.

The case against the mother proceeded to trial, and the procurator was chief witness for the government. Louise Ratone also appeared. The mother's attorney produced the doctor who had assisted at the birth of Nicolai and the Greek Catholic priest who had christened her. They both testified that they positively knew that Nicolai was a girl. The procurator flew into a rage. He said he had ocular evidence. The case was dismissed.

M. Pobedonostzeff now found himself in an embarrassing and delicate position. He had stood sponsor for Nicolai, personally supervised the proceedings and swore that she was a boy. He was in the humiliating circumstances of having to confess he had

been fooled. The story was hushed up quickly, but the secret police of Russia were placed on the trail of the fleeing girl, and they tried for years to track her. In her diary she intimated her conviction that it would have gone hard with her if they had caught her and taken her back to Russia, and all through the remarkable document there is an undercurrent of fear of arrest.

She lived a short time in Finland, and then, with the remainder of Zaney's money, she fled to Antwerp after changing her name to Nicolai Konstantinevitch.

At Antwerp, Nicolai met a banker named Gittens, who gave her money and a letter of introduction to a banker named Wilson in Worcester, Mass.

She became extremely friendly with the stewardess of the liner on which she came to New York. The captain of the ship grew interested in his strange passenger and became suspicious of Nicolai's sex. He had many a quarrel with the stewardess for maintaining Nicolai was a man. Finally he made a bet of 60 francs with the stewardess, the test to be made by the captain. He interviewed Nicolai privately and then sought out at once the stewardess and paid the wager, admitting he had lost.

Arrived in Worcester, Nicolai talked things over with Wilson, the banker, and decided she had best go to Chicago. Mr. Wilson gave her a letter of introduction to a French grocer whose name is blurred in the diary.

Here the strange diary ends. Nicolai eventually became secretary to the Russian consul general in Chicago, holding the position for thirteen years, until, overcome by tuberculosis, she went to Arizona. There upon her death the undertaker discovered her true sex.

BABY SAILS IN SKY.

Carried Out Over Ocean by Bunch of Toy Balloons.

With a huge stack of toy balloons tied to her waist, Minna Moody, two years old, daughter of J. H. Moody of Waco, Tex., was carried out over the sea from the veranda of a hotel at Rockport and only rescued by George Munafee of Denver exploding enough of the balloons with bullets to permit an easy descent. The tot came down St. Joseph's island, half a mile away.

The Moodys went to Rockport recently on a vacation. Mrs. Moody was with her daughter on the veranda when a peddler came up with the balloons. Minna clasped her hands in delight, and when she was seated in her mother's lap the man tied the bundle around her waist. "Oh, what fun, Minna!" said Mrs. Moody, putting the child on the floor. Minna tried to take a step forward, but almost instantly she was caught off her feet by the straining of the balloons, which, driven by a fresh breeze, headed straight for the sea. Mrs. Moody and the ped-

