

Mrs. Ray's Story.

From the Chicago Tribune.

"What became of my little Miss L. Why, my dear, do you remember her? Yes, I know you did meet her, but only once—that was the day you spent with me when you were going east, through Dakota.

"Well, I need not wonder that you do remember her. 'Twas a face to make an impression on me, I am sure. A dear, sweet, tender face, indeed. Of course, my dear, I am only too pleased to tell you about her.

"Let me see! We were in that cozy flat on the north side, then, and it was altogether the most desirable place I have lived in since we came to Chicago six years ago. I was sorry, indeed, to make a change.

"Oh, my dear, many things happened there which would interest you to hear, I am sure. We took lodgers you know. Not; not to make money, but help about rent, and I like to have people about me. You see, Mr. Ray and I are growing old. Yes, old it will be soon if we are inclined to cling to middle-aged life, and the right title. And not a dear child of our own have we ever had. So we have our own hearts for all who come under our roof, and sooner or later all my lodgers have come to seem like our own family.

"Why, there were those three boys who had the north room for two years. Not a lady, and away from their homes and their mothers, in a great city. 'My boys' I always called them, and think of them as 'my boys' to this day. These are their photographs on the mantel, my dear, and one of them was quite an artist. I will show you some bits of his work by and by.

"But about little Miss L. I always called her that, and I came to love her dearly. I did, indeed, all my lodgers.

"She was in my house almost a year, you see, and she crept into my heart, and I had no reason to regret it. I liked her very first time I saw her, and the little parlor and bed-room pleased her so much that she engaged them at once, and brought her few belongings in the very next day. I was pleased to see her as she went about putting her knick-knacks here and there in a quiet way of her own.

"Quiet contentment there seemed to be in her face, and yet I saw a shadow of something, I could not tell what in her eyes, which I came to long to drive away. I wanted to see her merry. She was not old enough to be so quiet, and nothing she did or said afterwards herself seemed to explain it to me. But I don't think she seemed unhappy. How well I remember her saying after only two or three days: 'Dear Mrs. Ray, I haven't been in so homelike a place for years. You have no idea how contented I am.' That pleased me, don't you see? That was what I wanted to see, my dear, homelike. Well, the light house-keeping helped me to get acquainted quickly. Yes, my dear, she had her little stove and cooked for herself, and I cooked her up my own when she liked to. Indeed, she would do so pleased to have her do so. Then I began to think that she did not eat enough hearty food, and I set to preparing to eat more meat. Now, you need not laugh, my dear. My hobby? Well, better meat than medicine, anyway. I shall always say, 'I want her to grow bright and merry, don't you see?'

"But no, in spite of fresh air and hearty food there was the same quiet, and I must know it wasn't her natural manner. To be sure, there were reasons for her to be sad sometimes. She was all alone. She said she would never see her dear mother, and how tenderly she said it.

"Her mother's picture was in a little frame on a bracket, and there was a tiny bunch of pressed violets pinned against it. 'Mamma died when I was 12,' she said one day, 'and after a while papa married again.' Then she waited for a moment and then said with a firm look coming around her mouth, 'And I feel happier to take care of myself.'

"And she earned enough money, my dear, to do it. There was the piano puppets—almost every day she was away down here on the south side giving lessons. Then, between times, she painted the prettiest little things, and they sold, too, though hardly for what they were worth, I am sure. Yes, she was always busy. Plenty to do and strength to do it, I said to her once. 'Surely, little Miss L., that ought to make you happy.'

"No, my dear, and she wasn't; yet she was not what I felt sure she might be, and had been, and that was bright and merry. Why, she never sang! And she had a voice, for she had told me of singing here and there in years gone. Now, I know where there is a real and happy heart—a song coming bubbling up from it now you know, my dear, at least. But I never heard it for seven or eight months. Then a Sunday morning I remember it was, and I posted her, for it surprised and delighted me.

"Why, William, said I (that's Mr. Ray, you know, my dear), 'little Miss L. is singing.'

"And we both listened, and then she sang the words right out, and what do you think they were? No, not a bit of a hymn tune, but this:

"For I will marry my own love, My own love, my own love, My own love, but after a little she sang again:

"For true of heart am I! 'Well, my dear, to say I was astonished isn't saying much. 'But I kept still, you may be sure, and when I went in after a while with Ellen, my funny little Swedish maid, to tidy up things a bit, there was 'good morning' to little Miss L., there was a new look on her face. Not that the shadow I told you about was all gone, either. Well, of course it puzzled me, and the next day I watched her, and she seemed different in some way.

"Then Wednesday, my dear, I said something. You see, 'twas this way. I went in with a plate of cakes for her and said: 'These doughnuts are not as good as usual, I'm afraid,' and she said: 'Do not think I shall lay that up against you, Mrs. Ray,' and laughed such a merry little laugh, my dear, that I just stopped and looked at her in blank amazement.

"The light heartedness that showed itself in that foolish little pun and in the laugh!

"I set down my plate and took hold of her with both hands. 'Little Miss L., said I, 'how do you feel now?'

"'Why, am I?' she asked, and a pretty pink color came into her cheeks; then she grew a little bit grave and hesitated, and then—

"'Well, I'll tell you, dear Mrs. Ray,' she said, 'though I'm afraid you will think me very, very foolish. It is a little dream I had last Saturday night. But first I must tell you that once—once there was some one I loved—oh! very, very dearly, Mrs. Ray, and he loved me too; but there was a little—what shall I say? It was just a little foolish quarrel, any way, and he went away angry, and—and—' her voice began to tremble. Then she said,

with a little impatient cough that was almost a sob: 'It was two years ago, and I have never seen him since! But I know,' and she looked right at me, and spoke quite earnestly, 'I feel so sure some way that he is coming back to me soon. And now I'll tell you the dream.'

"Then she came and sat down right by my dear, and I took one of her hands in mine.

"I dreamed, she said, 'that the dear boy I loved was sitting in the same room, which seemed to be my home, and it was Sunday. It is a very hazy and indefinite, and I had not spoken to him, but I went to his side and handed him a paper, or an envelope, or something like that, and he did not look up, but put out his hand and took mine and drew me nearer to him. I stood there just an instant and some one said to him: 'Ralph, are you going to church this evening?' and without replying he looked up into my eyes and asked: 'Are you?' I shook my head, and he answered the question quietly: 'No, I think not,' and he held my hand more closely. And some way I know that we were at sea, and a great happiness came into my heart, and right then I awoke and found the tears running down my cheeks, and I turned my face against the pillow and prayed a little prayer, and asked God to let the dream come true and send him back to me, that we might help each other to be better and happier all the rest of our lives, and ever since that I've had a new little hope. And that is all. It is very, very foolish.

"She looked at me so wistfully. 'Why, my dear,' said I then, 'Why my dear, I said right over again, and then I just rose right up and went away, for my throat was getting all choked, and I knew I was going to act like a silly old woman and cry.'

"It was the simple, tender way in which she told it, don't you see? And she child-like faith! It was so long since I had seen that kind of faith. You know, my dear, I've been about a good deal, and have seen something of this hard world, and there isn't much of that kind of faith to be found in grown-up people. You find it in little ones who kneel and say the 'Our Father,' to be sure, but I had almost forgotten all about it.

"Well, the days passed by, and the hopefulness still shone out of her eyes, and sometimes I heard her singing.

"One day about the 4th of February, I think, when I went in for a little chat, she was waiting valentines. Such pretty and original little things! I must tell you about them.

"Several weeks before little Miss L. had asked me for all the wishbones of the chickens we ate, and as we invariably have chicken soup at our Sunday dinner I had taken her quite a number of them. Well, my dear, she was using them in this way: On a heavy, square white card she put one of the wishbones which she had gilded, and it, you know, with very narrow bright ribbon, and in the lower left-hand corner of the card were some flowers painted—forget-me-nots, on one, I remember. Then in the right-hand upper corner were some appropriate little rhyme in gilt letters.

"The gilding touches were just being put to the fifth one as I went into the room, and I told Miss L. held it up for me to see. 'It is the prettiest one I have ever made,' she said. 'That valentine is passing coming out of the gilded corner is a tender thought.'

"The rhyme on this was: 'If your wish prove the same as mine I'll be your faithful valentine.'

"And down by the many were her initials, 'D. E. L.' She had her mother's good old-fashioned name. Dorothy, and now, my dear, comes the strangest part of the story, but of course you know it is all true. The next morning after little Miss L. had gone to her pupils, I went down on the south side, for I had the rent to pay and some shopping to do, and as I passed Bascom's window, among other pretty things, I saw little Miss L.'s valentines.

"A brown-haired gentleman stood looking at them quite intently, and as I hurried along he went into the store. Well, my shopping took up more time than I had anticipated, and I went into Thompson's for lunch and took a seat at an empty table. Soon after a gentleman seated himself at a table opposite me. I fancied I had seen him somewhere, and thought that he glanced rather sharply in my direction. He did this several times, and I decided that he must be looking at some one behind me.

"He was one of the particular kind, my dear, and was some time in selecting some thing for his lunch, but finally a tempting repast was placed before him. Just then a lady passed by me, going out, and I recognized her as Miss L. I could not resist the temptation to look at her, and I saw that the brown Russian circular on her brown velvet hat with the long, floating feather, although I did not see her face.

"But think how astonished I was to see the young gentleman opposite start to his feet, hurry into his overcoat, snatch his hat, hastily hand the waiter some money, and leaving his lunch untaken, rush out, apparently in hot pursuit of little Miss L.

"Well, I finished my shopping, and on my way to the street car stopped for a minute at Bascom's window myself and I posted her, for it surprised and delighted me.

"Then I went home, and as I entered the hall noticed that little Miss L.'s door stood ajar and some one was with her. Now I don't think I am an eavesdropper, my dear, and I give you my word I did not intend to listen while I took off my cloak and bonnet, but I heard a manly voice say: 'What kind of a feather is that on your hat, Dot?'

"'A bird of Paradise,' she answered; 'but why, Ralph?'

"'That is what I thought,' said he, 'and I followed it to its home.' Just then one of my parcels—dropped and the noise brought little Miss L. to her door, but seeing me she insisted on my coming in. She had a white card in her hand, and 'What do you think, dear Mrs. Ray?' she said, 'one of my valentines has come back to me.'

"Then she introduced Mr. Ralph Ainsworth, and his face was as bright as a sunbeam.

"Well, of course, my dear, he proved to be the same brown-haired gentleman I had seen twice before the same day, and I could not refrain from asking him how he enjoyed his lunch.

"Then there was an explanation and a hearty laugh, and they told me how the old valentines first caught his eye, and the initials D. E. L. took him into the store to learn the name and address of the artist, on whom he determined to call as soon after lunch as propriety would admit, my dear.

"And, of course you guess all the rest, my dear. 'She isn't little Miss L. any longer, and when they found Mr. Ray and I were coming over here on the south side they rented that same cozy little flat, and there they are to this day, as happy as happy can be.'

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A despatch says: "The president has done his summer suit." Probably a typographical error. No doubt "re-designed" was meant.

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Table with columns: Direction (GOING EAST, GOING WEST), Stop (Don Bridge, Leavelle, Woodbine, Ben Lamin, Beach, York Park), Time (Leave, Arrive).

**TORONTO RAILWAY TIME TABLE.** Grand Trunk Railway. Trains Leave Toronto as Under:

Table with columns: Train Name (EASTERN STANDARD TIME, MAIN LINE EAST, MAIN LINE WEST), Destination (Montreal, Quebec, Port Huron, etc.), Time (Leave, Arrive).

**Grand Western Division, LEAVE TORONTO.** 7:15 a.m.—Mixed—Blackwater and intermediate stations.

**ARRIVE TORONTO.** 8:40 a.m.—Express from Chicago, Detroit, Hamilton, etc. 10:15 a.m.—Express from London, St. Catharines, Hamilton, etc.

**Canadian Pacific Railway, (Ontario division), CREDIT VALLEY SECTION.** Trains Leave Toronto, Ontario, as follows:

7:10 a.m.—St. Louis Express for all stations on main line and branches, and for Detroit, Toledo, St. Louis and Kansas City. 1:55 p.m.—Express for Galt, Woodstock, Ingersoll, St. Thomas, Detroit, Chicago, and all points west and northwest.

**TORONTO, GREY & BRUCE SECTION.** Trains Leave Toronto, Ontario, as follows: 7:30 A. M. MAIL—4:00 P. M. EXPRESS.

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