

That Mrs. Ray had not married Sandy for his beauty was certain, from the evidence of his contemporaries ; nor was it for his mental or moral attractions—because he had none ; nor was it for money, since whatever private store he might now possess he had certainly not acquired in those days ; it remained, therefore, since all reasonable causes were thus eliminated, that she had married him for love, which was the most extraordinary explanation of all.

It is my private belief that the unhappy lady, being of a nervous and submissive nature, had been positively frightened into wedding him, by which means, perhaps, more marriages are to be accounted for than is generally supposed. However, she *was* married to him, and was being only slowly relieved from that position by the disease which I have mentioned. Her husband was not specially unkind to her, but of gentleness he had not a grain in his composition, and the lack of it—though the doctors did not say so—had helped to bring her to her present pass. He had, it is probable, being proud of her in his way, at one time ; had doubtless smiled grimly when it had come to his ears that people said, “ What could she have seen in him ? ” But now he was only proud of the chair in which she sat. It had cost him, being a patent article, a considerable figure ; and when folks said (for there are folks who will say anything) that his wife’s affliction must be a great trial to him, he would reply, “ not only a trial, but let me tell you, a matter of very considerable expense.” Then he would point out the advantages of the chair, with her in it ; indeed she was made to put it through its paces as it were, moving it hither and thither with a touch of her thin hand ; and if a compliment was not paid him—though he professed to despise compliments—upon the consideration for the comfort that had caused him to invest in so expensive an article, he was more bearish than usual for the rest of the day.

What thoughts passed through poor Mrs. Ray’s mind as she sat, dying so slowly in that delicate and costly piece of furniture, are too sad for me to imagine. She was not what is called “ a great thinker,” so let us hope things were better with her than they would have been with some who are ; but sometimes in that worn and weary face could be read terrible things ; across those still tender eyes flitted, I fear, the ghosts of youth and health, the piteous remembrance of long vanished joys. She had no very earnest religious feelings, and therefore without that hope which sustains so many unfortunates in this inexplicable world ; of life, the poor soul had had enough ; the best that she looked forward to was eternal rest. Yet no word of complaint escaped her. How strange it is that the fate of martyrs, who do not happen to be saints, should attract so little pity !

Gracie, indeed, was sorry for her mother ; but with that exception,