

NELLIE'S LOVER.

THE ENDING OF A TRIP TO LONG BRANCH.

No Need of the Button-Hole Machine—The New Partner—The Diamond.

"I wish I could go to the seashore," said Nellie Green, softly. She sat like a little pale shadow in the morning gloom of the Madison... which Marian had turned back and forth over the tenement window, her eyes fixed on the... between factory walls and clustering chimney pots.

"To the seashore!" said Aunt Penelope, grimly. "Marian, then, vests and pressed yet, and they're to be called for at noon, you know."

"But the seashore!" went on Nellie, as if she had not heard the grumbled old woman's words. "The green, cool waves, full of green and violet lights; the wet, crinkly sand; the sweet wind and the fringes of white foam! Oh Marian, I should be better if I could go to the sea."

"Nellie Green had been the flower of the family—the beauty, the youngest, the pet. But when Nellie fell sick and was obliged to give up school—when she continued to droop day by day, Aunt Penelope began to question the justice of Providence."

"Marian had listened wistfully to her sister's piteous words. She looked at Aunt Penelope. "Abbt Pen," said she, "there's that money I have been saving for a button-hole machine; it would just take me all to the seashore for just a week."

"And what's to become of the button-hole machine?" said Aunt Pen, working her jaws in unison with the motion of the scissors with which she was cutting several layers of white Marseilles.

"We must do without," said Marian. "No, dear, no," said Nellie, looking up with a faint smile. "I am not yet selfish enough to allow such a sacrifice as that. You have been saving up for a button-hole machine for a whole year—you could work a deal faster with it."

"Marian kissed her sister and said nothing. But next evening when she came in from delivering her latest batch of work at the vest factory, she held up three slips of paper.

"Tickets for Long Branch!" said she. "Get ready, Nell and Aunt Penelope! We are to go on Thursday for a week."

"Goodness gracious me!" ejaculated Aunt Pen. "And me without a dress and a yard of ruffling done up!"

"You can make up the dress-cap to-night," said Marian, "and as for the ruffling, we must do without it for once."

"But the button-hole machine," said Nell, drawing her sister's face down close to hers. "Oh, Marian—Marian, what have you done?"

"Dear Nell," whispered Marian, "I would make button-holes by hand all my life to see the color back in your cheeks."

"What a reward when Nellie's cheeks glowed and something of the old color came back to her eyes as the Long Branch boat steamed past the wharves and the cool salt breeze fluttered her veil and lifted the little curls of golden hair from her forehead. Marian and Aunt Pen, in her well-worn black alpaca, sat in the cabin and Miss Cynthia Culppeper, who boarded in the same house, and was a saucy old out for her two weeks' vacation, was opposite in a dress hat, imitation gold bracelets and pea green kid gloves.

"Presently a tall, handsome young man, who sat on the other side of the boat, rose and approached the party. "I beg your pardon," said he courteously to Marian, "but I see that young lady is an invalid. Would she not prefer a seat on the shady side? Mine is quite at her disposal."

"Thank you," said Marian, gratefully. "It would be pleasant."

"And then began a pleasant little traveling acquaintance, which was strengthened by the handsome stranger carrying their bags to the train for them.

"Which hotel are you for?" he asked when the train came to a stand still at the depot.

"Oh, no hotel," said the frank Nellie. "We have engaged board at private homes. A boy will meet us. We are very much obliged for your kindness."

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