

"Never mind, Lucy, I know it is selfish of me, when you don't care to go. I will go alone. It is not far and I shall get along very nicely." Mrs. Daniel rose from her knees with a great assumption of cheerfulness.

"O Cora dear! I was only teasing you. Of course I'll go with you, there—I really believe you were about to cry. I'm a wretch. Aren't you well, Cora? Your hands are so hot. When do you want to go?"

"I don't know—I must find out about the trains first. Ask Jennie to send William up-stairs, please, dear; we'll not start till after luncheon."

"She is very much excited over something," thought Lucy, as she left the room: "It will be strange if I don't find out all about it before we go down there."

In ten minutes the footman returned from the Brunswick with a schedule of the Long Island Railway. Cora ran her eye down the column.

"Twelve-thirty, one-thirty, two-thirty. We will have luncheon early and make that one-thirty train. Now, William, call a messenger-boy and send this telegram down to Mr. Daniel's office."

At luncheon the lady had a message from her husband:

"Called out of town on business—don't wait dinner for me.  
"J. D."

In the middle of the afternoon two young women alighted at the Cedarhurst railway station. One was fair, with bronze-colored hair; the other was shorter and dark: both were pretty and handsomely dressed.

"Have you any idea where she lives, Cora?" asked the younger of the two.

"No, let us go to the hotel and get a carriage; I suppose they will know there."

A man driving a somewhat rickety-looking conveyance coming along at this moment, was hailed by the ladies, and replied to Mrs. Daniel's enquiry about the Wheatleigh cottage, that he knew it very well.

"Not more than a mile from here, ma'am."

Cora was silent during the ride through the village and over the country road. The beauties of Nature which she had so longed for, according to her talk with Lucy, interested her now not at all, for she hardly looked to left or right.

"What am I going to do after I see Nettie?" she was asking herself: "shall I question her?—oh no!"

"I almost wish I had not brought Lucy—I wish I had not come myself!" Her sister-in-law looked at her from the corner of her eye now and then, but asked no more questions.

"Here you are, ladies," called the driver, as he drew up before a little white house.

"Is this Nettie's cottage?" said Lucy. "Well, I don't think it is anything so remarkable. They are at home, Cora. I see somebody at the window."

Mrs. Daniel paid and dismissed the man. Five minutes later, the two ladies hurried back to the gate and gazed anxiously down the road after the departing carriage. The house belonged to a Mr. Wheeler, and he knew nothing of their friends.

"Oh, what shall we do?" cried Mrs. Daniel in dismay.

"We can only walk back to the hotel," replied Lucy, "perhaps we will meet another carriage. But my! isn't it hot? and so close."

They had walked perhaps ten minutes along the lonely highway when Mrs. Daniel said, "Lucy, it is going to rain—see that bank of clouds—and, oh, look at these trees down the road, how they are bending!"

"What shall we do?—we must run for that big house across the fields."

"We can never make it, Lucy!"

"Run, run!" replied her sister.

"Five minutes more and the storm was upon them. Mrs. Daniel had brought a light silk umbrella, but the wind struck them with such force that it was wrecked immediately. Lucy espied a little wooden shed a few rods away.

"We must go in there, Cora," she panted, "or we'll be drowned."

They rushed into the little ram-shackle structure just as the storm burst in its fury. Lucy's hat was hanging by the strings from her neck and her hair was blown in every direction. Both ladies had received enough of a wetting to cause them to feel very dispirited and unhappy.

"Oh, Cora, isn't it awful? but I'm thankful——"

"Keep movin', ladies!" called a queer, cracked voice.

"Mercy, Lucy—look there!" cried Mrs. Daniel.

An old horse with marvellously attenuated frame was bearing down upon them; his glassy, unseeing eyes were but a few feet away. The two women sped along in front of the animal, and looking about them found they were in a little round hut, open on all sides; indeed, it was nothing but a roof supported by upright poles. A grizzled old man was driving the horse around a circular track. The animal, hitched to a horizontal pole, connecting with a mill in the centre of the ring, was, in his slow march, grinding out some bark which the old man, from time to time put in the hopper. In order for the ladies to remain under shelter from the rain, now pouring in torrents, and out of the horse's way, it was necessary for them to keep in constant motion.

"It's a bad sort o' day leddies," said the old man; and without waiting for an answer he began crooning a song in his thin, quavering voice.

"We have lost our way and were caught in the storm," said Cora, as the young women followed behind him. "May we stay here until it is over?"

The veteran continued his song, paying not the slightest attention to the question.

"May we rest here?" repeated Mrs. Daniel.

"This is a tan-mill, leddies," replied their host, cocking one eye at them over his shoulder.

"Lucy, I believe he is deaf."

"Heavens, Cora! Will we have to keep on following this old horse all the time we are here? Why, it may rain all day! How long before you stop?" she called.

"When you and I were young, Maggie!"—a tremendous crash of thunder drowned the next line of the song.

"Oh, Cora, this is simply horrible! Why did you bring me down here? I am ready to drop with fatigue, and here we are caught in a—a—treadmill." Lucy began laughing an hysterical laugh which might end in tears.

Mrs. Daniel stepped forward until she was immediately behind the old fellow.

"My sister and I are very tired," she shouted; "won't you please stop your horse awhile?"

"Can't do it, leddies—must make hay while the sun shines." Then with a twinkle under his shaggy eyebrows he added, "'Tain't shinin' much, though, just now."

"What an old wretch!" said Lucy as she caught up with her sister. "Cora, I mean to walk just as slow as I can: I suppose, though, he'd go right over us. Just listen to that song! Do you believe he ever could have been young, or had a Maggie?"

For ten minutes or more the ladies trudged wearily around the ring. Their skirts were wet and heavy. Lucy had just avowed her intention of sitting on the shaft which turned the mill and riding around with it, if she must keep in motion, when they heard a sound of running feet, and a young man plunged into the hut.

"Halloa, Uncle Amos," he cried, "you're not washed away,