

# TRUE STORIES OF THE NEWS.

## JUST WHY NELLIE RAN AWAY.

The Girls in the Western Union Operating Room Gossiped About It Yesterday, and They Were All Wrong.

Nellie Duke Was of Age—That Is All—She Was Tired of Her Home and an Adopted Mother, Who, She Says, Never Kissed Her in Her Life and Saw Only Her Faults—So She Goes Her Own Independent Way.

The operating-room of the Western Union Telegraph Company's main office in Broadway was all agog yesterday. There are 350 girls there and nearly 350 men and boys, and an alleged scandal had risen upon them. Not a big, unpleasant scandal such as

very ordinary affair—just the running away from home of a girl. For the newspapers had published it and everybody knew that Nellie Duke had left the home of her adopted mother, Mrs. Georgiana Duke, No. 220 East Eighteenth street, on Saturday-morning last, and had not since revisited it, and that on Saturday night, at

10 o'clock, she sent the following message from the office of the Postal Telegraph Company in Jersey City: "Mrs. G. Duke, 220 East Eighteenth street, New York: Don't expect me to-night. Won't be home. Left for good. Think it for the best." "There's a man in it," the chattering gossips ventured. So Mrs. Duke's boarders shook their heads and Mrs. Duke felt pained and the servant gasped, and as to the five or six hundred girls, boys and men in and about the main operating-room of the Western Union, they for the most part giggled and whispered. BUT NELLIE LOOKS THE WORLD IN THE FACE. For Nellie, you know, is not one of those light, girlish girls that every daw can peck at every time he wants to test the sharpness of his bill, but a girl of dignity and character, tall almost as a man, erect, calm and grave, looking the world straight in the face with clear, brave, dark-blue eyes. And so the little world in the Western Union operating-room laughed and joked. That another girl should run away from home would be no surprise, but Nellie! Oh, these quiet people! These quiet people! There's always the worst when you find them out!

There's a man in it! they whispered slyly. "What girl ever ran away from home unless for the sake of a man?" And yet what was Nellie doing at work yesterday after running away from home in that fashion on Saturday? Her hours in the operating-room of the Western Union are from 9 o'clock till 3, 3:30 and yesterday at 3.30 A. M. precisely. No! He walked in, laid her wraps in the closet and calmly began work. Her work is what is called a "split trick"—fifteen minutes at this instrument and half an hour at that. That makes her pass and repass among her 600 fellow employees, and the most thoughtless of them soon gave her to understand that she had become a local celebrity. They showed her a newspaper containing an account of her visit to the telegraph office in Jersey City and—then they watched her face. Nellie's lips are full and rich, but firm; her eyes are mild and kindly, but strong; her face is beautiful, but grave. The pleasant dignity of her countenance abated not a jot. She read calmly and gravely and her interest in the story of her escapade was only manifested by a slight, momentary elevation of the brows. Could she have the paper a moment; just a moment? Much obliged. NELLIE GOES DIRECT TO HEADQUARTERS. And well-poised, low-voiced, clear-eyed and smiling Nellie moved on. The group about her parted and the tall, erect, handsome figure in the brown dress went straight to the office of Mr. W. J. Dealy, manager of the operating department. Strange! The gossips couldn't understand it at all. But Mr. Dealy soon understood it, for Mr. Dealy is a quiet man and a kindly. He has seen a power of girls and watched them with good-will in his heart, and he understood

Miss Duke exactly. So did Mr. T. Brennan, Mr. Dealy's assistant. Not that Miss Duke had pleaded with them. She had told a very simple tale with a perfectly self-possessed countenance, and had rested her case on that plain tale, willfully discarding all woman's usual weapons—the tears, the storm of words, the piteous appeal. Then she returned to the operating-room, giving back the newspaper, and returned to her work without one word of explanation—nay, with the self-same smile on her lips that had been there before they showed her the disagreeable theory one impertinent newspaper had formulated concerning her running away. The color in her cheeks was higher than usual, but her eyes were still clear and calm, and still she held up her head and looked all who addressed her in the face. And there was no man in it at all! Not at all! Year ago when Nellie was a young, ignorant little thing, reading novels of the Charlotte Bronte, Laura Jean Libbey type, with their quaking gurgle of gelatinous gas and yearns and quivers in palpitant shivering, there might have been seen a man in it. But now— For Nellie is eighteen years of age, you know, and old! So old! So far beyond nonsense like love, you know, for she reads histories and travels. She has read all about American history, the old colonies and the Revolution and all that kind of thing. She is reading a book of travels now. They are regular travels, bound in calf and illustrated

and bearing the name of a reputable publisher. So, of course, she has not discovered, nor does it matter, where the traveling took place or who did it. And she reads Dickens now, and Shakespeare is dodging her round the sacred brow of Parnassus, for she will wrestle with him presently. Old! Oh, goodness! She can look back into what seems infinity and see her little, serious self from the time when she toddled about and was called "the baby" by Mrs. Duke and Mr. Duke and all the boarders, and she can note every step of her growth. So there's no man in it at all, and she didn't run away to meet a lover, and Cora Hicks is as innocent as herself, and they are both living together on Jersey City Heights with Cora's aunt, grandmother and grandfather. Cora Hicks is the girl who went with Miss Duke into the Jersey City telegraph office on Saturday night to send the message to Mrs. Duke. NELLIE IS OF AGE, THAT IS ALL. Why, there isn't any mystery at all about Miss Duke's movements. She became of age a week ago. She had inquired how old a girl must be before the law allowed her to administer her person and affairs. Learning that that estate was reached at the age of eighteen, and having arrived at that age, she prepared to leave her adopted mother's house. Her movements were deliberate. She took away her treasures little by little. She feared that there would be trouble and a scene if she went to Mrs. Duke or to Mrs. Duke's mother, Mrs. Jennie Rodman, and told of her intention. Not that Mrs.

Rodman is unkind, for she is very kind, but then she would tell Mrs. Duke and Mrs. Duke would make a scene. Her Manners have not that repose That marks the east of Verde Verde. She would weep and claim to be the most extravagantly affectionate mother in the city, and appeal to everybody to behold an ungrateful and hard-hearted daughter—all of which was unnecessary. And there's no doubt but Nellie was ungrateful. She had been a great trouble to bring up. It was so hard to make her sit in a particular chair in a particular way, and do things just like old folks and slowwork—and she was the only young thing in the house. And when you're a boarding-house mistress, and the sky is always dark and the tradesmen always trying to cheat, and the boarders and servants and everything else are all wrong at all times, a child is very exasperating. Nellie was sent to school and afterwards to the Cooper Union. She was treated like a lady and allowed a room to herself. OF COURSE SHE WAS TOLD OF HER FAULTS. And if she had faults it wasn't for want of being told of them. No mother in New York, it appears from Nellie's story, ever watched and exposed her daughter's faults to that degree as Mrs. Duke did. Strange as it may seem, Nellie shrank from this well-meant supervision and her life swung in one weary monotonous round. Nine hours in the Western Union operating room, three hours for meals and going to and from business, four hours sitting and

reading all alone in a chair in her little hall bedroom, and eight hours in her bed. Round and round the weeks swung round in and year out and the monotony only varied for those few occasions when Nellie and Mrs. Duke went to a theatre. But even then how could the play be enjoyed, for Mrs. Duke conscientiously lectured Nellie all the time and still complained of the universal wickedness of men, women and circumstances. NOT ONE KISS IN ALL THE YEARS. And in all the years since baby Nellie had died about the floor not one kiss from the adopted mother—not one kiss, she says. And so it was to find if the books were true and if there really were brighter skies than she knew and if there were such things as sympathy and liberty and laughter and larger bounds and wider lands than the four walls of a hall room could compass. And vainly and deliberately Nellie turns away with dry eyes from the woman she has called "mamma" for so many years, but who, as she avers, had never kissed her. As to Cora Hicks she has known Nellie ever since they both were pupils in Cooper Union, whence Nellie was graduated graduate, special mention. And Cora knew Nellie's life and pitied her. And Nellie had no friend but Cora. What more natural than that they should go to live together in Cora's grandmother's house in Jersey City, where Cora and her aunt and her grandmother and grandfather all live together, and each seems to do as if or she likes and nobody could or tries.