# The MYSTERY of MARY

## By Grace Livingston Hill Lutz

AUTHOR of "MARCIA SCHUYLER," "PHOEBE DEANE" "DAWN OF THE MORNING" ETC.

ILLUSTRATIONS By RAY WALTERS

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CHAPTER I.

He paused on the platform and glanced at his watch. The train on which he had just arrived was late. It hurried away from the station, and was swallowed up in the blackness of the tunnel, as if it knew its own shortcomings and wished to make up for them.

It was five minutes of six, and as the young man looked back at the long flight of steps that led to the bridge across the tracks, a delicate penciling of electric light flashed into outline against the city's deepening dusk, emphasizing the lateness of the hour. He had a dinner engagement at seven, and it was yet some distance to his home, where a rapid toilet must be made if he were to arrive on time.

The stairway was long, and there were many people thronging it. A shorter cut led down along the tracks under the bridge, and up the grassy embankment.

Under the center of the bridge a slight noise behind him, as of soft, hurrying footsteps, caught his attention, and a woman's voice broke upon his startled senses.

"Please don't stop, nor look around," it said, and the owner caught up with him now in the shadow. "But will you kindly let me walk beside you for a moment, till you can show me how to get out of this dreadful place? I am very much frightened, and I'm afraid I shall be followed. Will you tell me where I can go to hide?"

After an instant's astonished pause, he obeyed her and kept on, making room for her to walk beside him, while he took the place next to the tracks. He was aware, too, of the low rumble of a train, coming from the mouth of the tunnel.

His companion had gasped for breath, but began again in a tone of apology:

"I saw you were a gentleman, and I didn't know what to do. I thought you would help me to get somewhere quickly."

Just then the fiery eye of the oncoming train burst from the tunnel ahead. Instinctively, the young man caught his companion's arm and drew her forward to the embankment beyond the bridge, holding her, startled and trembling, as the screaming train tore past them.

The man's first thought was to get out of the cut before another train should come. He grasped his companion's arm and started up the steep embankment, realizing as he did so that the wrist he held was slender, and that the sleeve which covered it was of the finest cloth.

As they emerged from the dark, the man saw that his companion was a young and beautiful woman, and that she wore a light cloth gown with neither hat nor gloves.

At the top of the embankment they paused, and the girl, with her hand at her throat, looked backward with a shudder. She seemed like a young bird that could scarcely tell which way to fly.

Without an instant's hesitation, the young man raised his hand and hailed a four-wheeler across the street.

"Come this way, quick!" he urged, helping her in. He gave the driver his home address and stepped in after her. Then, turning, he faced his companion, and was suddenly keenly aware of the strange situation in which he had placed himself.

"Can you tell me what is the matter," he asked, "and where you would like to go?"

The girl had scarcely recovered breath from the long climb and the fright, and she answered him in broken phrases.

"No, I cannot tell you what is the matter"—she paused and looked at him, with a sudden comprehension of what he might be thinking about her—"but—there is nothing—that is—I have done nothing wrong—" She paused again and looked up with eyes whose clear depths, he felt, could hide no guile.

"Of course," he murmured with decision, and then wondered why he felt so sure about it.

"Thank you," she said. Then, with frightened perplexity: "I don't know where to go. I never was in this city before. If you will kindly tell me how to get somewhere—I suppose to a railroad station—and yet—no, I have no money—and"—then with a sudden little movement of dismay—"and I have no hat! Oh!"

The young man felt a strong desire to shield this girl so unexpectedly thrown on his mercy. Yet vague fears hovered about the margin of his judgment. Perhaps she was a thief or an adventuress.

The girl was speaking again: "But I must not trouble you any more. You have been very kind to get me out of that dreadful place. If you will just stop the carriage and let me out, I am sure I can take care of myself."

"I could not think of letting you get out here alone. If you are in danger, I will help you." The warmth of his own words startled him. He knew he ought to be more cautious with a stranger, but impetuously he threw caution to the winds. "If you would just tell me a little bit about it, so that I should know what I ought to do for you—"

"Oh, I must not tell you! I couldn't!" said the girl, her hand fluttering up to her heart, as if to hold its wild beating from stifling her. "I am sorry to have involved you for a moment in this. Please let me out here. I am not frightened, now that I got away from that terrible tunnel. I was afraid I might have to go in there alone, for I didn't see any way to get up the bank, and I couldn't go back."

"I am glad I happened to be there," breathed the young man fervently. "It would have been dangerous for you to enter that tunnel. It runs an entire block. You would probably have been killed."

The girl shut her eyes and pressed her fingers to them. In the light of the street lamps, he saw that she was very white, and also that there were jewels flashing from the rings on her fingers. It was apparent that she was a lady of wealth and refinement. What could have brought her to this pass?

The carriage came to a sudden stop, and, looking out, he saw they had reached his home. A new alarm seized him as the girl moved as if to get out. His dignified mother and his fastidious sister were probably not in, but if by any chance they should not have left the house, what would they think if they saw a strange, hatless young woman descend from the carriage with him? Moreover, what would the butler think?

"Excuse me," he said, "but really, there are reasons why I shouldn't like you to get out of the carriage just here. Suppose you sit still until I come out. I have a dinner engagement and must make a few changes in my dress, but it will take me only a few minutes. You are in no danger, and I will take you to some place of safety. I will try to think what to do while I am gone. On no account get out of the carriage. It would make the driver suspicious, you know. If you are really followed, he will let no one disturb you in the carriage, of course. Don't distress yourself. I'll hurry. Can you give me the address of any friend to whom I might 'phone or telegraph?"

She shook her head and there was a glitter of tears in her eyes as she replied:

"No, I know of no one in the city who could help me."

"I will help you, then," he said with sudden resolve, and in a tone that would be a comfort to any woman in distress.

As the young man let himself into his home with his latch-key, he heard the butler's well trained voice answering the telephone.

"Yes, ma'am; this is Mrs. Dunham's residence. . . . No, ma'am, she is not at home. . . . No, ma'am, Miss Dunham is out also. . . . Mr. Dunham? Just wait a moment, please. I think Mr. Dunham has just come in. Who shall I say wishes to speak to him? . . . Mrs. Parker Bowman? . . . Yes, ma'am; just wait a minute, please. I'll call Mr. Dunham."

The young man frowned. Another interruption! And Miss Bowman! It



Looked Backward With a Shudder.

was at her house that he was to dine.

He took the receiver, resolved to get out of going to the dinner if it were possible.

"Good evening, Mrs. Bowman."

"Oh, is that you, Mr. Dunham? How relieved I am! I am in a bit of difficulty about my dinner, and called up to see if your sister couldn't help out. Miss Mayo has failed me. Her sister has had an accident, and she cannot leave her. She has just 'phoned me, and I don't know what to do. Isn't Cornelia at home? Couldn't you persuade her to come and help out?"

"Well, now, that's too bad, Mrs. Bowman," began the young man, thinking he saw a way out of both their difficulties. "I'm sorry Cornelia isn't here. I'm sure she would do anything in her power to help you. But she and mother were to dine in Chestnut Hill tonight, and they must have left the house half an hour ago. I'm afraid she's out of the question. Suppose you leave me out? You won't have any trouble then except to take two plates off the table"—he laughed pleasantly—"and you would have even couples. You see," he hastened to add, as he heard Mrs. Parker Bowman's preliminary dissent—"you see, Mrs. Bowman, I'm in somewhat of a predicament myself. My train was late, and as I left the station I happened to meet a young woman—a—a friend." (He reflected rapidly on the old proverb, "A friend in need is a friend indeed." In that sense she was a friend.) "She is temporarily separated from her friends, and is a stranger in the city. In fact, I'm the only acquaintance or friend she has, and I feel rather under obligation to see her to her hotel and look up trains for her. She leaves the city tonight."

"Now, look here, Tryon Dunham, you're not going to leave me in the lurch for any young woman. I don't care how old an acquaintance she is! You simply bring her along. She'll make up my number and relieve me wonderfully. No, don't you say a word. Just tell her that she needn't stand on ceremony. Your mother and I are too old friends for that. Any friend of yours is a friend of mine, and my house is open to her. She won't mind. These girls who have traveled a great deal learn to step over the little formalities of calls and introductions. Tell her I'll call on her afterwards, if she'll only remain in town long enough, or I'll come and take dinner with her when I happen to be in her city. I suppose she's just returned from abroad—they all have—or else she's just going—and if she hasn't learned to accept things as she finds them, she probably will soon. Tell her what a plight I'm in, and that it will be a real blessing to me if she'll come. Besides—I didn't mean to tell you—I meant it for a surprise, but I may as well tell you now—Judge Blackwell is to be here, with his wife, and I especially want you to meet him. I've been trying to get you two together for a long time."

"Ah!" breathed the young man, with interest. "Judge Blackwell! I have wanted to meet him."

"Well, he has heard about you, too, and I think he wants to meet you. Did you know he was thinking of taking a partner into his office? He has always refused—but that's another story, and I haven't time to talk. You ought to be on your way here now. Tell your friend I will bless her forever for helping me out, and I won't take no for an answer. You said she'd just returned from abroad, didn't you? Of course she's musical. You must make her give us some music. She will, won't she? I was depending on Miss Mayo for that this evening."

"Well, you might be able to persuade her," murmured the distracted young man at the 'phone, as he struggled with one hand to untie his necktie and unfasten his collar, and mentally calculated how long it would take him to get into his dress suit.

"Yes, of course. You'd better not speak of it—it might make her decline. And don't let her stop to make any changes in her dress. Everybody will understand when I tell them she's just arrived—didn't you say?—from the other side, and we caught her on the wing. There's some one coming now. Do, for pity's sake, hurry, Tryon, for my cook is terribly cross when I hold up a dinner too long. Goodby. Oh, by the way, what did you say was her name?"

"Oh—ah!" He almost succeeded in releasing his collar, and was about to hang up the receiver, when this new difficulty confronted him.

"Oh, yes, of course; her name—I had almost forgotten," he went on wildly, to make time, and searched about in his mind for a name—any name—that might help him. The telephone book lay open at the R's. He pounced upon it and took the first name his eye caught.

"Yes—why—Remington, Miss Remington."

"Remington!" came in a delighted scream over the phone. "Not Carolyn Remington? That would be too good luck!"

"No," he murmured distractedly; "no, not Carolyn. Why, I—ah—I think—Mary—Mary Remington."

"Oh, I'm afraid I haven't met her, but never mind. Do hurry up, Tryon. It is five minutes of seven. Where did you say she lives?" but the receiver was hung up with a click, and the young man tore up the steps to his room three at a bound.

He was settling his coat into place when a queer little bulge attracted his attention to an inside pocket. Impatiently he pulled out a pair of long white gloves. They were his sister's, and he now remembered she had given them to him to carry the night before, on the way home from a reception, she having removed them because it was raining. He looked at them with a sudden inspiration. Of course! Why had he not thought of that? He hurried into his sister's room to make a selection of a few necessities for the emergency—only to have his assurance desert him at the very threshold. The room was immaculate, with no feminine finery lying about. Cornelia Dunham's maid was well trained. The only article that seemed out of place was a bandbox on a chair near the door. It bore the name of a fashionable milliner, and across the lid was penciled in Cornelia's large, angular hand, "To be returned to Madame Dollard's." He caught up the box and strode over to the closet. There was no time to lose, and this box doubtless contained a hat of some kind. If it was to be returned, Cornelia would think it had been called for, and no further inquiry would be made about the matter. He could call at Madame's and settle the bill without his sister's knowledge.

He poked back into the closet and discovered several wraps and evening cloaks of more or less elaborate style, but the thought came to him that perhaps one of these would be recognized as Cornelia's. He closed the door hurriedly and went down to a large closet under the stairs, from which he presently emerged with his mother's new black rain-coat. He patted his coat-pocket to be sure he had the gloves, seized his hat, and hurried back to the carriage, the hat-box in one hand and his mother's rain-coat dragging behind him. His only anxiety was to get out before the butler saw him.

CHAPTER II.

"I am afraid I have been a long time," he said apologetically, as he closed the door of the carriage, after giving Mrs. Parker Bowman's address to the driver. In the uncertain light of the distant arc-lamp, the girl looked small and appealing. He felt a strong desire to lift her burdens and carry them on his own broad shoulders.

"I've brought some things that I thought might help," he said. "Would you like to put on this coat? It may not be just what you would have selected, but it was the best I could find that would not be recognized. The air is growing chilly."

He shook out the coat and threw it around her.

"Oh, thank you," she murmured gratefully, slipping her arms into the sleeves.

"And this box has some kind of a hat, I hope," he went on. "I ought to have looked, but there really wasn't time." He unknotted the strings and produced a large picture hat with long black plumes. He was relieved to find it black. While he untied the strings, there had been a growing uneasiness lest the hat be one of those wild, queer combinations of color that Cornelia frequently purchased and called "artistic."

The girl received the hat with a grateful relief that was entirely satisfactory to the young man.

"And now," said he, as he pulled out the gloves and laid them gravely in her lap, "we're invited out to dinner."

"Invited out to dinner!" gasped the girl.

"Yes. It's rather a providential thing to have happened, I think. The telephone was ringing as I opened the door, and Mrs. Parker Bowman, to whose house I was invited, was asking for my sister to fill the place of an absent guest. My sister is away, and I tried to beg off. I told her I had accidentally met—I hope you will pardon me—I called you a friend."

"Oh!" she said. "That was kind of you."

"I said you were a stranger in town, and as I was your only acquaintance, I felt that I should show you the courtesy of taking you to a hotel, and assisting to get you off on the night train; and I asked her to excuse me, as that would give her an even number. But it seems she had invited some one especially to meet me, and was greatly distressed not to have her full quota of guests, so she sent you a most cordial invitation to come to her at once, promising to take dinner with you some time if you would help her out now. Somehow, she gathered from my talk that you were traveling, had just returned from abroad, and were temporarily separated from your friends. She is also sure that you are musical, and means to ask you to help her out in that way this evening. I told her I was not sure whether you could be



Looked at Them With Sudden Inspiration.

persuaded or not, and she mercifully refrained from asking whether you sang or played. I tell you all this so that you will be prepared for anything. Of course I didn't tell her all these things. I merely kept still when she inferred them. Your name, by the way, is Miss Remington—Mary Remington. She was greatly elated for a moment when she thought you might be Carolyn Remington—whoever she may be. I suppose she will speak of it. The name was the first one that my eye lit upon in the telephone-book. If you object to bearing it for the evening, it is easy to see how a name could be misunderstood over the 'phone. But perhaps you would better give me a few pointers, for I've never tried acting a part, and can't be sure how well I shall do it."

The girl had been silent from astonishment while the man talked.

"But I cannot possibly go there to dinner," she gasped, her hand going to her throat again, as if to pluck away the delicate lace about it and give more room for breathing. "I must get away somewhere at once. I cannot trouble you in this way. I have already imposed upon your kindness. With this hat and coat and gloves, I shall be able to manage quite well, and I thank you so much! I will return them to you as soon as possible."

The cab began to go slowly, and Tryon Dunham noticed that another carriage, just ahead of theirs, was stopping before Mrs. Bowman's house. There was no time for halting decision.

"My friend," he said earnestly, "I cannot leave you alone, and I do not see a better way than for you to go in here with me for a little while, till I am free to go with you. No one can follow you here, or suspect that you had gone out to dinner at a stranger's house. Believe me, it is the very safest thing you could do. This is the house. Will you go in with me? If not, I must tell the driver to take us somewhere else."

"But what will she think of me," she said in trepidation, "and how can I do such a thing as to steal into a woman's house to a dinner in this way! Besides, I am not dressed for a formal occasion."

The carriage stopped before the door now, and the driver was getting down from his seat.

"Indeed, she will think nothing about it," Dunham assured her, "except to be glad that she has the right number of guests. Her dinners are delightful affairs usually, and you have nothing to do but talk about impersonal matters for a little while and be entertaining. She was most insistent that you take no thought about the matter of dress. She said it would be perfectly understood that you were traveling, and that the invitation was unexpected. You can say that your trunk has not come, or has gone ahead. Will you come?"

Then the driver opened the carriage door.

In an instant the girl assumed the self-contained manner she had worn when she had first spoken to him. She stepped quietly from the carriage, and only answered in a low voice, "I suppose I'd better, if you wish it."

Dunham paused for a moment to give the driver a direction about carrying the great pasteboard box to his club. This idea had come as a sudden inspiration. He had not thought of the necessity of getting rid of that box before.

"If it becomes necessary, where shall I say you are going this evening?" he asked in a low tone, as they turned to go up the steps. She summoned a faint, flickering smile.

"When people have been traveling abroad and are stopping over in the city, they often go to Washington, do they not?" she asked half shyly.

The door swung open before they could say another word, and the young man remembered that he must introduce his new friend. As there was no further opportunity to ask her about her name, he must trust to luck.

The girl obeyed the motion of the servant and slipped up to the dressing-room as if she were a frequent guest in the house, but it was in some trepidation that Tryon Dunham removed his overcoat and arranged his necktie. He had caught a passing glimpse of the assembled company, and knew that Mr. Bowman was growing impatient for his dinner. His heart almost failed him now that the girl was out of sight. What if she should not prove to be accustomed to society, after all, and should show it? How embarrassing that would be! He had seen her only in a half-light as yet. How had he dared?

But it was too late now, for he was coming from the dressing-room, and Mrs. Bowman was approaching them with outstretched hands, and a welcome in her face.

"My dear Miss Remington, it is so good of you to help me out! I can see by the first glance that it is going to be a privilege to know you. I can't thank you enough for waiving formalities."

"It was very lovely of you to ask me," said the girl, with perfect composure, "a stranger—"

"Don't speak of it, dear. Mr. Dunham's friends are not strangers, I assure you. Tryon, didn't you tell her how long we have known each other? I shall feel quite hurt if you have never mentioned me to her. Now, come, for my cook is in the last stages of despair over the dinner. Miss Remington, how do you manage to look so fresh and lovely after a long sea voyage? You must tell me your secret."

The young man looked down at the girl and saw that her dress was in perfect taste for the occasion, and also that she was very young and beautiful. He was watching her with a kind of proprietary pride as she moved forward to be introduced to the other guests, when he saw her sweep one quick glance around the room, and for just an instant hesitate and draw back. Her face grew white; then, with a supreme effort, she controlled her feelings, and went through her part with perfect ease.

When Judge Blackwell was introduced to the girl, he looked at her with what seemed to Dunham to be more than a passing interest; but the keen eyes were almost immediately transferred to his own face, and the young man had no further time to watch his protegee, as dinner was immediately announced.

Miss Remington was seated next to Dunham at the table, with the Judge on her other side. The young man was pleased with the arrangement, and sat furtively studying the delicate tinting of her face, the dainty line of cheek and chin and ear, the sweep of her dark lashes, and the ripple of her brown hair, as he tried to converse easily with her, as an old friend might.

At length the Judge turned to the girl and said:

"Miss Remington, you remind me strongly of a young woman who was in my office this afternoon."

The delicate color flickered out of the girl's face entirely, leaving even her lips white, but she lifted her dark eyes bravely to the kindly blue ones, and with sweet dignity baffled the questioned recognition in his look.

"Yes, you are so much like her that I would think you were—her sister perhaps, if it were not for the name," Judge Blackwell went on. "She was a most interesting and beautiful young lady." The old gentleman bestowed upon the girl a look that was like a benediction. "Excuse me for speaking of it, but her dress was something soft and beautiful, like



Miss Remington Was Seated Next to Dunham.

yours, and seemed to suit her face. I was deeply interested in her, although until this afternoon she was a stranger. She came to me for a small matter of business, and after it was attended to, and before she received the papers, she disappeared! She had removed her hat and gloves, as she was obliged to wait some time for certain matters to be looked up, and these she left behind her. The hat is covered with long, handsome plumes of the color of rich cream in coffee."

(Continued.)


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