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Grace Livingston Hill Lutz

An Appreciation of the Creator of "Marcia Schuyler"

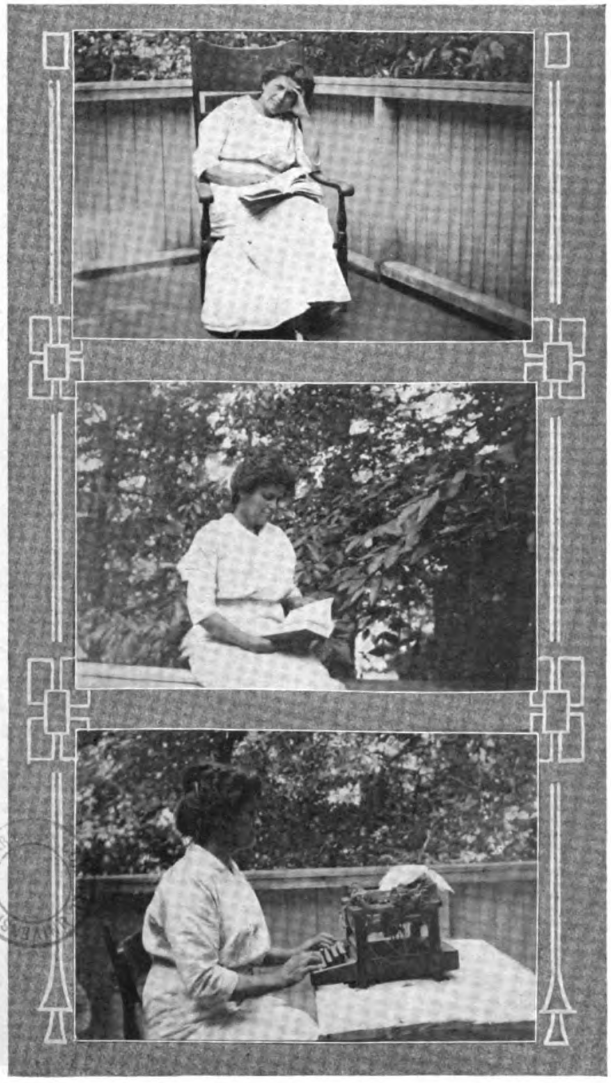
By Hilda von Markhen

WHEN you lay down one of Mrs. Lutz's stories, *Miranda* or *Marcia*, with a smile at its quaint humor and sweet, old-fashioned flavor, how do you picture the author at work on her book? Do you put her in the calm of a sunshiny, book-lined study, done in rosewood, tapestry and comfortable cats? Attractive and correct a setting as that may be, you will have to erase it from your mind's eye at once, with the exception of the sunshine and a few of the books. Put in its place as your ideal of her workshop an ample, business-like desk at the sunshiny side of the living-room. Before her her typewriter and a few necessary reference books; behind her a glass door which leads to a tiny unroofed upper porch set in the midst of trees, where one meets birds, squirrels, and even the stars, on terms of intimacy. So she sits for you in the picture.

But the picture is but a picture and the unruffled calm is still too peaceful for reality. Too often there is no calm at all. The reference books are sometimes hopelessly mingled with school books and half-finished "themes;" and the typewriter is obscured beneath a layer of towels on which the latest photographic efforts have been drying over-night. From the sad and patient excavation which takes place every morning it may be gathered that those are not the results of Mrs. Lutz's own activities.

They are her "children's" things. I quote the word children advisedly, for although she has two well-beloved daughters of her own, she has many other sons and daughters whom she delights to call her own. With them all she works and plays, and from them she claims to have learned some of the most precious truths life has taught her.

Many an anxious night she has spent worrying about her "boys," but those who love and strive must always suffer, she will tell you. And if you mention wobbly, creaking chairs, the result of a "rough-house," she laughs and tells you that is what her friends call her "mission" furniture. She is proud that she has learned their language of the college and the school—their "kidding" and their slang. One night one of the boys brought down a friend and the crowd indulged in an intricate form of "kidding." Mrs. Lutz saw the point at once and the boys noticed it with glee. "Oh, we've almost got Mrs. Lutz brought up," explained one boy to the surprised stranger. She has humbly tried to learn the boys' code—their wise silence, their indifference to public opinion when they think they are right, their just democracy and their white perfection of loyalty.



Mrs. Lutz at her Swarthmore Home

"Mother's" desk ought to be sacred, but she would much rather have her children succeed in their work than that she herself should attain to the Halls of Fame. As long as I have known her (which is more years than I should like to tell) she has been the victim of this fault of forgetting entirely her own rights and finding her greatest pleasure in making others happy. Perhaps the secret of this may be traced to early training, and, in fact, to a certain piece of cheese.

Her mother, who had not been well, was staying at a sanatorium for a few weeks with her little daughter. A friend took the little girl, who was only five, to visit a cheese factory. She was overjoyed at the gift of a large piece of cheese. According to standing orders she waited until she reached her mother before she took a single bite. But alas and alack! she learned that her abstinence had been in vain—she might not eat the cheese at all! Loud and long she

wailed, until the head of the institution heard her and tapped on the door to know what was the matter. This awesome lady stilled the sobs and quieted the little girl with promises of a "splendid plan." Then she rang for knife and plate, and little "Gracie" cut her cheese into forty pieces, for the forty sick ladies who were patients in the house. To mere grown-up minds the plan was splendidly logical, but to a mind still young and fresh it seemed an unforgettable lesson, that selfishness and wailing brought only a fortieth of a piece of cheese, and all one's enemies got the rest. Since then I have seen her give up the thirty-nine pieces of time, of pleasure, ungrudingly. and did one but ask it, as cheerfully hand over the fortieth part.

And yet, withal, her work is not neglected, as these facts would seem to say. Certainly, it would be if her workshop and working hours were actually limited by four walls and the going down of the sun.

Since Mrs. Lutz was a little girl she says she has loved to "make up stories." Her mother always told her a story at night when she was very little, and as she grew older, she acquired the habit of thinking one out each night before going to sleep. Sometimes the same story will hold her attention over and over for weeks, even months. Thus she becomes so well acquainted with the people who visit her in this way that their every word and action is immutably, unquestionably their own. Her characters never have to be drawn consciously by her as an author. Not until creator and creation have reached this point of intimacy are the stories brought to actual daylight.

The work then done by the typewriter is merely a careful translation into words of a long-perfected thought. This part of her work goes quickly and easily for the most part, though of course there are the inevitable bumps and ruts in a much-traveled road. Once in a while there are hours and even days when the course will not run smoothly, and often a page will be rewritten eight or ten times in the hope of straightening out its difficulty. This is attended with many discouragements and heaviness of heart. But there is about both her life and writing a certain buoyant spirit which forces her up and out —a spirit that trusts that whatever befalls the whole will end in love and wisdom. It is this spirit which has upheld her through severe trials and has given her a message with which to justify the simple tale-weaving which she loves.

This is Mrs. Lutz at her work, from the lips and through the eyes of a friend who has stood near at least in spirit throughout the years. But you do not know her until you see her playing, too.

She will try to tell you she is getting old now and hasn't time to play, but you know better when you see her laugh. The boys and girls will tell you she is a "pretty good old scout," and it is hoped that this does not need to be translated into "a splendid comrade." And good times! Just to see a troop of them starting off for a winter walk! The wind whistled, the snow crackled, the thermometer said zero, the neighbors said: "What utter foolishness!" They walked six miles that day, built a fire and ate a lunch of toasted sandwiches, then walked back home another way. It was even rumored among intimate friends that Mrs. Lutz practised football signals with the boys and girls on a country road to warm up a bit—and she made good, too.

Her avocations are not all so unique as that. She loves tennis, and you may find her out on the court behind the house playing for a few minutes "between times." Sometimes there are all-day tramps through the surrounding country-side on a rare holiday. But to give her the most pure and undiluted pleasure, put her in a canoe to glide swiftly along the sun-flecked shadows of the little creek, or to rock softly under the fragrant piney darkness of its upper stretches. There she finds a mysterious peace from the little worries of a daily world, a power of overcoming, and an inspiration for the nature touches in which she loves to set her stories.

Throughout Mrs. Lutz's life the influences which surrounded her have been such as should bring forth a good writer. Her father was a Presbyterian minister, Charles Montgomery Livingston, of the well-known and aristocratic house of Livingston. Her mother was Marcia Macdonald, a descendant of the ancient Macdonald clan, as well as other noted Scotch and English families. Mrs. Lutz's father was a frequent contributor to religious papers, and her mother's name is well known as a writer of beautiful romances, writing also in collaboration with her sister, Mrs. Alden, better known as "Pansy."

These two sisters, Mrs. Livingston and Mrs. Alden, were inseparable, and, as a consequence, the two families spent much of their time together. The little Grace Livingston thus grew up in an atmosphere of books and the making of books. She learned to spell on her aunt's typewriter, one of the first all-capital Remingtons. She regarded the writing of stories rather as a necessary diversion from the real business of life which at that time was play. At the age of ten she produced a story of her own which was published as a surprise to her. "The Esselstynes; or, Marguerite and Alphonse," is an extravagant tale of the adoption of two forlorn and penniless orphans by a rich lady, who at once provided them with all this world's goods. Of course, it is a childish effort and crude, but it furnished a delightful opportunity to exercise her imagination.

Her education was supplemented by reading and by discussion in the home and by travel. She was greatly influenced by her aunt, whom she idolized. Her father was deeply interested in politics and studied carefully the questions of moment in all current events. His eyes were not able to bear more strain than that of the study necessary to his work. So he called upon his daughter to read the newspapers to him in the evenings. Some never-to-be-forgotten discussions ensued from these readings, and Mrs. Lutz treasures in her memory many a wise thought or prophecy from her father's lips of these later times since fulfilled.

When she was about twenty the family spent several winters in Florida, and several times during those winters she went with her aunt to assist on the program at some of the Florida Chautauquas. Here in the primitive surroundings of a new Chautauqua she came into pleasant intimacy with many of the great men and women, great minds of the day, who were "talent" on the program, many of whom became life-long friends. Of these were numbered Dr. Russell H. Conwell, Dr. David James Burrell, J. Dewitt Miller, Dr. John W. Hamilton and many others. For many years the family summered at the "real Chautauqua" in New York State, and here again were like opportunities of meeting great minds and hearing great thoughts. Bishop John H. Vincent, the founder of Chautauqua, she counts as one of her most revered and honored friends, and here through the years she has met such interesting people as Henry Drummond, Joseph Cook, Dr. Fairbairn, of England; Edward Howard Griggs and many other leaders of thought.

Chautauqua has been designated by Henry James as the "middle-class heaven." It was then less middle-class—and perhaps less heaven, if one may reckon that state of bliss by the degree of physical comfort. One slept upon "relief maps," as the artist Frank Beard used to say. One ate awful things upon picnic tables with tin forks and shared spoons. But opposite you across the picnic table Dr. Frederick Starr laughed with you at the simple fare and talked about neolithic man in a way that would have meant Utopia achieved to the "Brook Farmers."

Stimulus to mind, imagination, best living and thinking, of course it was. But in this case it furnished the particular stimulus which started "Grace Livingston" upon her career.

Mrs. Lutz and Her Daughters

One year it was being discussed in the family council whether or not the usual Chautauqua pilgrimage from Florida had best be made, and the tide was turning against it. Now the whole heart of a certain young girl was bound up in Chautauqua, and she asked her father if they would go if she could earn enough money to pay her way. He laughingly consented. She set to work and wrote a simple allegory of birds and trees and running brooks, who succeeded in making for themselves a Chautauqua. "A Chautauqua Idyl" was accepted, Edward Everett Hale wrote a preface, the book was published and the money earned. But still greater guerdon was hers. Her beloved Bishop Vincent arose before the thousands assembled on "Old First Night" in Chautauqua and announced the publication of the story. Moreover, he praised "The Chautauqua Idyl" and told the name of the author.

Shortly after this other stories were published, and then books. In December, 1892, she was married to Rev. Thomas G. F. Hill, a brilliant young Presbyterian minister. The varied duties of a minister's wife, together with a naturally sympathetic temperament, gave her an intimate knowledge of human nature, both high and low, such a school as few have the privilege of attending. Her religious work began when, as a minister's daughter, she had her Sunday School class, and continued throughout the seven years of Mr. Hill's life, and after his death became, next to her writing and the training of her two daughters, the dominant interest of her life.

In October, 1904, she was married to Mr. F. J. Lutz, and since that time has lived in Swarthmore, Pa.

It were not fair to leave these few chords of a life before you unless I play you last those which have been to her the dominant and tonic chords of all. It was always her delight to do Christian work. From the time she was sixteen she has scarcely ever been without a Sunday School class, and has been connected with the great Christian Endeavor movement almost since its inception, having part in the program of more than one great international convention and having written Chris-

tian Endeavor stories for their national organ, "The Christian Endeavor World," for many years.

She has been particularly a friend to those in need, whether the need be money, a helping hand or a word of comfort; or, the hardest to fill of all those needs, some one to confess to and advise with. Liberal-minded and broad she stands upon the topics of the day—but many would call her "old-fashioned" in her religion. She has not found it necessary to leave the "straight and narrow" faith of a Bible and a Christ, and so she will tell you with a light of gladness in her eye that this is the secret of the power of her spirit, of her pure, true life, of the "joy of living" in her writings.

An Impression of Mrs. Lutz

By Norma Bright Carson

IF YOU have ever been in Swarthmore, that quiet, quaint Pennsylvania college town, you will know how soothing is its peaceful atmosphere to the ragged nerves of the town-dweller, and how inspiring is its subtle air of aristocratic learning to the tired traveller in the beaten ways of the average life of the city.

It was in the summer-time and warm when I drove up to the hospitable door of Mrs. Lutz's home in Swarthmore. In the drawing-room, however, where I sat to await her coming, it was cool and refreshingly pleasant. Subdued in tone, but with an indefinable air of cheerfulness, one sensed it as the room of an artist as well as a home-lover. If one remarked its musical atmosphere, it was to wonder if the creator of Miranda was herself the musician.

Into the room came Mrs. Lutz, welcoming hand extended, a pleasant smile upon her face and a kind word upon her lips. No one would mistake the author of *Phoebe Deane* and *Marcia Schuyler* for other than what she is. There is not a particle of pretense in her attitude, nor the least tendency to pose—she is simply quiet and friendly, and charming in the way a mother-soul is always charming. She is not professional in manner, and shows a modesty entirely unassumed with regard to her work. After all, it has come about very naturally. For her family was a family of writers; her aunt was the dear "Pansy" herself, and if the little girl who adored Miss Alden took up her pen as the proper thing for her to do, why, who should have cause for surprise?

Mrs. Lutz has lived in a religious atmosphere all her life as well as a literary one. Naturally, she turns to things that are spiritual. But spiritual they must be in a practical and wholesome way. As a girl she became interested in Christian Endeavor work. She wrote Christian Endeavor stories first and most of all. She taught Sunday School and learned to love boys and girls. For years she has done Christian Endeavor topics for the papers.

But as success has crowned her work she has turned to different types of stories—tales of America a generation or two ago. In her family were those who were filled with reminiscences of that earlier period, and from the stories that she heard from the lips of her elders, Mrs. Lutz started to write the books that include *Marcia Schuyler*, *Phoebe Deane* and *Miranda*. Her imagination seized upon the most salient characteristics of these proud ancestors, and created tales at once delightfully charming and not a little humorous in the way of heart humor.

Mrs. Lutz was asked how she ever came to write such stories as *The Best Man* and *The Mystery of Mary*, and she laughingly replied, that they were her "other mood" stories. For it seems she has off moments, when she likes to cut loose from the routine life and frolic a bit mentally as physically. These lighter, more frivolous tales, with their touches of mystery, reveal this play side. They are clever and entertaining and one enjoys them well.

Mrs. Lutz has two daughters, and one of these is the musician of the family. Her daughters and she are great friends—side by side they appear as companions and chums. That they are proud of their talented little mother is very evident, just as it is obvious indeed that their mother is immensely proud of them.

I left Mrs. Lutz with the impression of having met a woman at once spiritually fine and mentally capable. She is a wholesome woman, in all the best senses of the word; she is an unspoiled successful woman; she has the virtue of not taking herself too seriously and yet one finds in her a poise that shows that how clearly she probably recognizes both her powers and her limitations. Certainly she represents the best type of normal literary woman, who is not letting her supposedly "artistic temperament" interfere with the pleasant business of a normal, happy, healthy life.