



# Grace Livingston Hill Combo 1: Aunt Crete's Emancipation, The City of Fire, Cloudy Jewel (Masterpiece Collection)

*Grace Livingston Hill*

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“WHO’S at the front door?” asked Luella’s mother, coming in from the kitchen with a dish-towel in her hand. “I thought I heard the door-bell.” “Luella’s gone to the door,” said her sister from her vantage-point at the crack of the sitting-room door. “It looks to me like a telegraph boy.” “It couldn’t be, Crete,” said Luella’s mother impatiently, coming to see for herself. “Who would telegraph now that Hannah’s dead?” Lucretia was short and dumpy, with the comfortable, patient look of the maiden aunt that knows she is indispensable because she will meekly take all the burdens that no one else wants to bear. Her sister could easily look over her head into the hall, and her gaze was penetrative and alert. “I’m sure I don’t know, Carrie,” said Lucretia apprehensively; “but I’m all of a tremble. Telegrams are dreadful things.” “Nonsense, Crete, you always act like such a baby. Hurry up, Luella. Don’t stop to read it. Your aunt Crete will have a fit. Wasn’t there anything to pay? Who is it for?” Luella, a rather stout young woman in stylish attire, with her mother’s keen features unsoftened by sentiment, advanced, irreverently tearing open her mother’s telegram and reading it as she came. It was one of the family grievances that Luella was stout like her aunt instead of tall and slender like her mother. The aunt always felt secretly that they somehow blamed her for being of that type. “It makes one so hard to fit,” Luella’s mother remarked frequently, and adding with a disparaging glance at her sister’s dumpy form, “So impossible!” At such times the aunt always wrinkled up her pleasant little forehead into a V upside down, and trotted off to her kitchen, or her buttonholes, or whatever was the present task, sighing helplessly. She tried to be the best that she could always; but one couldn’t help one’s figure, especially when one was partly dependent on one’s family for support, and dressmakers and tailors took so much money. It was bad enough to have one stout figure to fit in the family without two; and the aunt always felt called upon to have as little dressmaking done as possible, in order that Luella’s figure might be improved from the slender treasury. “Clothes do make a big difference,” she reflected. And sometimes when she was all alone in the twilight, and there was really nothing that her alert conscience could possibly put her hand to doing for the moment, she amused herself by thinking what kind of dress she would buy, and who should make it, if she should suddenly attain a fortune. But this was a harmless amusement, inasmuch as she never let it make her discontented with her lot, or ruffle her placid brow for an instant. But just now she was “all of a tremble,” and the V in her forehead was rapidly becoming a double V. She watched Luella’s dismayed face with growing alarm.



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