

# Mystery No Longer Shrouds Famous Centerville Ghost

### Wandering in the gloaming and the dawning in her search for the devil Miss MacLane appeared as an apparition to the people of the suburb.

### "The Story of Mary Mac Lane," the book that rivals Ella Wheeler Wilcox's famed productions establishes identity of the spectre.

### Extracts from the latest literary sensation disclose the writer's supernatural appearance in her wanderings and her vigils on the lonely wind-swept mountain sides.

**M**YSTERY no longer enshrouds the identity of the ghost that has haunted Centerville and the adjacent mountains. This ghost was only an unhappy girl searching for the devil and was: **MARY MACLANE.**

In her hopeless, maddening search for a reincarnated devil, Miss MacLane has wandered through Centerville. She has wandered out upon the bleak mountain side; she has overlooked the roofs of Butte; she has trudged, gesticulating, through the streets and the open country in the dawning and in the twilight, in the glare of noonday and in the dark of early night.

During these peregrinations the people have seen her. Unused to such sights they have ascribed it to the supernatural. Now they know that it was the natural.

It is in her book, "The Story of Mary MacLane," that the Butte girl has tacitly acknowledged that she was the ghost. She has told of her wanderings in search of the devil.

**Her Confessions.**

There are some rather startling admissions in her book. She does not know if they are true. One only has her written confessions and her own oft-repeated assertions that every word in the book is true; that it is a truthful portrayal of her own life.

Must not one believe Mary MacLane? After a sort of resume of her character, her life and her surroundings, Miss MacLane says:

I care neither for right nor for wrong—my conscience is nil.

My brain is a conglomeration of aggressive versatility.

I have reached a truly wonderful state of insensate morbid unhappiness.

I know myself, oh, very well.

I have attained an egotism that is rare indeed.

I have gone into the deep shadows.

All this constitutes oddity. I find, therefore, that I am quite, quite odd.

I have hunted for even the suggestion of a parallel among the several hundred persons that I call acquaintances. But in vain. There are people of varying depths and intricacies of character, but there is none to compare with me.

Further on in her remarkable book she makes this admission:

So then, yes, I find myself at this stage of womanhood and 19 years, a genius, a thief, a liar—a general moral vagabond, a fool more or less, and a philosopher of the peripatetic school. Also I find that even this combination can not make one happy. It serves, however, to occupy my versatile mind, to keep me wondering what it is a kind devil has in store for me.

**Pith of Mystery.**

However, this has to do with the solution of the Centerville ghost mystery, and Miss MacLane's connection with it, in her rambles. Here is the pith of the mystery: as mystery, as disclosed in her book:

Some time in the midst of the brightness of an October I have walked for miles in the still high air under the blue of the sky. The brightness of the day and the blue of the sky and the incomparable high air have entered into my veins and flowed with my red blood. They have penetrated into every remote nerve-center and into the marrow of my bones.

At such a time this young body glows with life.

My red blood flows swiftly and joyously—in the midst of the brightness of October.

My sound, sensitive liver rests gently with its thin yellow bile in sweet content.

My calm, beautiful stomach silently sings, as I walk, a song of peace, the while it hugs within itself the chyme that was my lunch.

My lungs, saturated with mountain ozone and the perfume of the pines, expand in continuous ecstasy.

My heart beats like the music of Schumann, in easy, graceful rhythm with an undertone of power.

My very intestine even basks contentedly in its place like a snake in the hot dust, vibrating with conscious life.

**Has Sensitive Nerves.**

My strong and sensitive nerves are reeking and swimming in sensuality like drunken little Bacchantes, gay and garlanded in mad reveling.

The entire wonderful, graceful mechanism of my woman's body has fallen at the time—like the wonderful, graceful mechanism of my woman's mind—under the enchanting spell of a day in October.

"It is good," I think to myself, "oh, it is good to be alive! It is wondrously good to be a woman young in the fullness of nineteen springs. It is unutterably lovely to be a healthy young animal living on this charmed earth."

After I have walked for several hours I reach a region where the sulphur smoke has not penetrated, and I sit on the ground with drawn-up knees and rest as the shadows lengthen. The shadows lengthen early in October.

Presently I lie flat on my back and stretch my lithe slimmness to its utmost like a mountain lioness taking her comfort. I am intensely thankful to the devil for my two good legs and the full use of them under a short skirt, when, as now, they carry me out beyond the pale of civilization away from these dull people. There is nothing in the world that can become so maddeningly wearisome as people, people, people!

**Thanks the Devil.**

And so, devil, accept, for my two good legs, my sincerest gratitude. I lie on the ground for some minutes and meditate idly. There is a world of easy, indolent beautiful sensuality in the figure of a young woman lying on the ground under a warm setting sun. A man may lie on the ground—but that is as far as it goes. A man would go to sleep, probably, like a dog or a pig. He

would even snore, perhaps—under the setting sun. But then, a man has not a good young feminine body to feel with, to receive into itself the spirit of a warm sun at its setting, on a day in October—and so let us forgive him for sleeping, and for snoring.

When I again rise to a sitting posture all the brightness has focused itself to the west. It casts a yellow glamor over the earth, a glamor not of joy, nor of pleasure, nor of happiness—but of peace.

The young poplar trees smile gently in the deathly still air. The sage brush and the tall grass take on a radiant quietness. The high hills of Montana, near and distant, appear tender and benign. All is peace—peace. I think of that beautiful old song:

"Sweet vale of Avoca! how calm could I rest in thy bosom of shade—"

But I am too young yet to think of peace. It is not peace that I want. Peace is for 40 and 50. I am waiting for my Experience.

I am awaiting the coming of the devil. I am weary—wearily, and, oh, I want memory, his fragrance would stay with me always—always. Bring me, devil, my red sky! Short is it might be, its my red line of sky for one hour and take all, all—everything I possess. Let me keep my happiness for one short hour, and take away all from me forever. I will be satisfied when night has come and everything is gone.

**Shows Impatience.**

Oh, I wait you, devil, in a wild frenzy of impatience!

And as I hurry back through the cool

darkness of October, I feel this frenzy in every fiber of my fervid woman's body.

That the girl longs for her Satanic friend is disclosed in this message:

And there is that kind of happiness which is of the red sunset sky. There is something terrible in the thought of this indescribable mad happiness. What a thing it is for a human being to be happy—with the red, red happiness of the sunset sky!

It's like a terrific storm in summer with rain and wind, beating quiet water into wild waves, bending great trees to the ground—convulsing the green earth with delicious pain.

It's like something of Schubert's played on the violin that stirs you within to exquisite torture.

It's like the human voice divine singing a Scotch ballad in a manner to drag your soul from your body.

But there are no words to tell it. It is something infinitely above and beyond words. It is the kind of happiness the devil will bring to me when he comes—to me, to me! Oh, why does he not come now when I am in the midst of my youth? Why is he so long in coming?

**Startling Admissions.**

Somewhat startling are her admissions, all of which she declares are true of her, as, for instance, this:

There are persons who say to me that I ought not to think of the devil, that I ought not to think of happiness—happiness for me would be sure to mean something wicked (as if happiness could ever be wicked!); that I ought to think of being good. I ought to think of God. There are persons who help to fill the world with fools. At any rate their words are unable to affect me. I can not distinguish between right and wrong in this scheme of things. It is one of the lines of reasoning in which I have gotten to the edge, the end. I have gotten to the point to which all logic finally leads. I can only say, What is wrong? What is right? What is good? What is evil? The words are merely words, with word-meanings.

Reading on, one finds she lifts the curtain on the Centerville ghost mystery a bit higher and one reads:

me happiness. The devil has done me some great favors—he has made me without a conscience, and without virtue.

For which I thank thee, devil.

At least I shall be able to take by happiness when it comes—even though the piles of nice distinctions between it and me be mountains high.

**Early Ghost Stunt.**

Apparently Miss MacLane was wont to do a ghost stunt when she was much younger, for, speaking of her childhood, she says:

When I was a child I lived in Canada and in Minnesota. I was a little wild savage. In Minnesota there were swamps where I used to wet my feet in the spring, and there were fields of tall grass where I would lie flat on my stomach in company with lizards and little garter snakes. And there were poplar trees that turned their pale green backs upward on a hot afternoon, and soon there would be terrific thunder and lightning and rain. And there were robins that sang at dawn. These things stay with me always.

Spasmodically Miss MacLane breaks out in her cries to the devil. One of these picturesque spasms follows:

Periodically I fall completely, madly in love with the devil. He is so fascinating, so strong—so strong, exactly the sort of man whom my wooden heart awaits. I would like to throw myself at his head. I would make him a dear little wife. He would love me—he would love me. I would be in raptures. And I would love him, oh, madly, madly!

"What would you have me do, little MacLane?" the devil would say.

"I would have you conquer me, crush me, know me," I would answer.

"What shall I say to you?" the devil would ask.

"Say to me, 'I love you, I love you, I love you,' in your strong, steel fascinating voice. Say it to me often, always—a million times."

"What would you have me do, little MacLane?" he would say again.

**Idea of Happiness.**

I would answer: "Hurt me, burn me, consume me with hot love, shake me

## "No Rest for the Weary."

### How Mary MacLane Studied Human Nature.

On the Centerville hill overlooking Butte a ghostly form was seen by wayfarers after nightfall a year ago. The supposed apparition was seen several times during the months of March and April. The excitement created by the ghostly visitor has had but one parallel in Butte's recent history—the advent of Mary MacLane into the public gaze.

Excellent authority from a source close to the confidences of the author of "The Story of Mary MacLane" is responsible for the statement that the ghostly form seen flitting across the bleak hill north of Butte 18 months ago was no other than the weird girl whose love for things eerie led her to venture out in the character of a phantom wanderer of the night.

Stories are told of the wild vagaries of the young writer. It is related that she clings to the belief that inspiration can be gained by midnight rambles on the hills near Butte and that she frequently is miles away from home before sunrise to catch the first glimpse of the dawn as it flashes across the eastern peaks.

While Butte is agog with the fascinating theme of this young woman's unique personality the story that seems to be most generally credited by her intimate friends is the one that tells of her first successful effort to amaze the people of Butte by playing ghost.

The second venture in stimulating the public mind to dizziness seems to be the result of her success in proving that the mysterious, the unexpected and the unreal are the elements which go to make up a real sensation.

Today I walked far away over the sand in the teeth of a bitter wind. The wind was determined that I should turn and come back, and equally I was determined I would go on. I went on.

All these wanderings, as has been explained, were in search of happiness and a self-communion with the devil, and in this connection the girl says:

I can think of no so-called vile deed that I would scruple about if I could be happy. Everything is justified if it gives

violently, embrace me hard, hard in your strong steel arms, kiss me with wonderful burning kisses—press your lips to mine with passion, and your soul and mine would meet them in an anguish of joy for me!"

"How shall I treat you, little MacLane?"

"Treat me cruelly, brutally."

"How long shall I stay with you?"

"Through the life everlasting—it will be as one day; or for one day—it will be as the life everlasting."

"And what kind of children will you bear me, little MacLane?" he would say.

"I will bear wonderful, beautiful children—with great pain."

"But you hate pain," the devil will say, "and when you are in your pain you will hate me."

"But no," I will answer, "pain that comes of you whom I love will be ineffable exaltation."

"And how will you treat me, little MacLane?"

"I will cast myself at your feet; or I will minister to you with divine tenderness; or I will charm you with fantastic delirium; when you weep, I will melt into tears; when you rejoice, I will go wild with delight; when you go blind I will put out my eyes; when you go lame I will cut off my legs. Oh, I will be divinely dear, unutterably sweet!"

"Indeed you are rarely sweet," the devil will say. And I will be in transports.

Oh, devil, devil, devil!

Oh, misery, misery of nothingness!

The days are long—long and very weary as I wait the devil's coming.

One cannot wonder that "little MacLane" wandered in Centerville and vicinity while in prosaic and unimaginative people of Butte believe the devil is in that vicinity.

**Loves Man Devil.**

Here is where she sheds more light on the famous ghost mystery:

Today I walked over the hill where the sun vanishes down in the afternoon.

I followed the sun so far as I could, but two even very good legs can do no more than carry one into the midst of the sunshine—and then one may stand and take leave, lovingly of it.

I stood in the valley below the hill and looked away at the gold-yellow mountains that rise into the cloudy blue, and at the long gray stretches of rolling sand. It all reminded me of the devil and the happiness he will bring me.

Some day the devil will come to me and say: "Come with me."

And I will answer: "Yes."

And he will take me away with him to a place where it is wet and green—where the yellow, yellow sunshine falls on heaven-kissing hills, and misty, cloudy masses float over the valleys.

And for days I shall be happy—happy—happy!

For days! The devil and I will love

each other intensely, perfectly—for days! He will be incarnate, but he will not be a man. He will be the man-devil, and his soul will take mine to itself and they will be one—for days.

Imagine me raised, out of my misery and obscurity, dullness and nothingness, into the full, brilliant life of the devil—for days!

When I think of all this and write it there is in me a feeling that is more than pain.

Perhaps the very sweetest, the tenderest, the most pitiful and benign human voice in the world could sting these things and this feeling set to their own wondrous music—and it would echo far—far—and you would understand.

Here is where she shows her presence in what Mr. Jags calls "the cold gloom of the early morning":

Often in the early morning I leave my bed and get me dressed and go out into the gray dawn. There is something about the gray dawn that makes me wish the world would stop, that the sun would never more come up over the edge, that my life would go on and on and rest in the gray dawn.

In the gray dawn every hard thing is hidden by a gray mantle of charity, and only the light, vague, caressing fancies are left.

Now that the Centerville ghost mystery has been effectually dispated, it will no doubt be interesting to learn of Miss MacLane's impressions of the city that is proud and made famous to call her a resident. In part, this is what she says:

The town of Butte presents a wonderful field to a student of humanity and human nature. There are not a great many people—70,000 perhaps—but those 70,000 are in their way unparalleled. For mixture, for miscellany—variegated, Bohemianism—where is Butte's rival?

The population is not only of all nationalities and still on, but the nationalities and stations mix and mingle promiscuously with each other, and are partly revealed in the mazes of a veneer that belongs neither to nation nor to station, but to Butte.

**Shot at Butte.**

The nationalities are many, it is true, but Irish and Cornish predominate. My acquaintance extends widely among the inhabitants of Butte. Sometimes when I feel in the mood for it I spend an afternoon in visiting among divers curious people.

At some Fourth of July demonstration, or on a Miners' union day, the heterogeneous herd turns out—and I turn out, with the herd and of it, and meditate and look on. There are Irishmen—Kelleys, Caseys, Callahans, staggering under the weight of much whisky, shouting out their green-isle maxims; there is the festive Cornishman, ogling and leering, greeting his fellow-countrymen with alcoholic heartiness and gazing after every feminine creature with lustful eyes; there are Irish women swearing genially at each other in shrill pleasantry and five or six loudly-vociferous children for each; there are round-faced Cornish women likewise, each with her train of children; there are suave, sleek sporting men just out of the bath tub; insignificant lawyers, dentists, messenger boys; "plungers" without number; greasy Italians from Meaderville; greasier French people from the Boulevard addition; ancient miners—each of whom was the first to stake a claim in Butte; starved-looking Chinamen here and there, a contingent of Finns and Swedes and Germans; musty, stuffy old Jew pawnbrokers who have crawled out of their holes for a brief recreation; dirt-encrusted Indians and squaws, in dirty, gay blankets, from their flea-haunted camp below the town; "box-rastlers"—who are as common in Butte as barmaids in Ireland; swell, flashy-looking Africans; respectable women with white aprons tied around their waists and sailor hats on their heads, who have stepped out to see what was going on; innumerable stray youngsters from the dark haunts of Dublin Gulch; heavy restaurant-keepers with toothpicks in their mouths; a vast army of dry-goods clerks—the "paper-collared" gentry; miners of every description; representatives from Dog Town, Chicken Flats, Busterville, Butchertown, and Seldom Seen—suburbs of Butte; pale, thin individuals who sing and dance in beer halls; smart society people in high traps and tall-hos; impossible women—so-called (though in Butte no one is more possible), in vast hats and extremely plaid stockings; persons who take things seriously and play the races for a living; "beer-jerkers"; "bisquit-shooters"; soft-voiced Mexicans and Arabians—the dregs, the elite, the humbly respectable, the offscouring—all thrown together, and shaken up, and mixed well.

**Caustic Remarks.**

There is much more about Butte. There are some caustic remarks about the "mysterious widow with one child," who moves into a house and creates comment in the neighborhood and who "silently and stealthily disappears," and of a "house whose occupants seem to be five men and one woman" who turn night into day.

It is in her meditations that she asserts that she always sits "with my feet on the bureau—always on the bureau"—and rather quaint is her description when she takes the reader into her bedroom and shows him just how she has thought out her thoughts and just how she has written these thoughts.

Speaking of her flirting with death by an unused well, she says:

Death is fascinating—almost like the devil. Death makes use of all his arts and wiles, powerful and alluring, and fights with deadly temptation for me. And I make use of my arts and wiles—and tempt him.

Death would like dearly to have me. And I would like dearly to have him. It is a flirtation that has its source in mutual desire. We do not love each other, death and I—we are not friends. But we desire each other sensually, lustfully.

Sometime I suppose I shall yield to the desire. I merely play at it now—but in an unmistakable manner. Death knows it is only a question of time.

But first the devil must come. First the devil, then death; a deep, dark, soothing grave—and the early evening, "and a little folding of the hands to sleep."

Again—

But the Centerville ghost mystery is solved!



MISS MARY MAC LANE. Posed Specially for The Inter Mountain.



Home of Mary Mac Lane, No. 419 North Excelsior Avenue, Butte.