

## **Glamis Castle**

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# Glamis Castle

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"THE CASTLE OF GLAMIS, a venerable and majestic pile of buildings," says an old Scots Gazetteer, "is situate about one mile north from the village, on the flat grounds at the confluence of the Glamis Burn and the Dean. There is a print of it given by Slezer in Charles II.'s reign by which it appears to have been anciently much more extensive, being a large quadrangular mass of buildings, having two courts in front, with a tower in each, and gateway through below them; and on the northern side was the principal tower, which now constitutes the central portion of the present castle upwards of 100 feet in height. The building received the addition of a tower, in one of its angles, for a spiral staircase from bottom to top, with conical roofs. The wings were added, at the same time, by Patrick Earl of Strathmore, who repaired and modernised the structure, under the directions of Inigo Jones. One of the wings has been renovated within the last forty years, and other additions made, but not in harmony with Earl Patrick's repairs.

"There is also a secret room in it, only known to two or at most three individuals, at the same time, who are bound not to reveal it, unless to their successors in the secret. It has been frequently the object of search with the inquisitive, but the search has been in vain. There are no records of the castle prior to the tenth century, when it is first noticed in connection with the death of Malcolm II. in 1034. Tradition says that he was murdered in this castle, and in a room which is still pointed out, in the centre of the principal tower; and that the murderers lost their way in the darkness of the night, and by the breaking of the ice, were drowned in the loch of Forfar. Fordun's account is, however, somewhat different and more probable. He states that the King was mortally wounded in a skirmish, in the neighbourhood, by some of the adherents of Kenneth V."

Let us turn now to the ghosts of Glamis Castle.

A lady, well known in London society, an artistic and social celebrity, wealthy beyond all doubts of the future, a cultivated, clear-headed, and indeed slightly matter-of-fact woman, went to stay at Glamis Castle for the first time. She was allotted very handsome apartments, just on the point of junction between the new buildings perhaps a hundred or two hundred years old and the very ancient part of the castle. The rooms were handsomely furnished; no gaunt carvings grinned from the walls; no grim tapestry swung to and fro, making strange figures look still stranger by the flickering fire-light; all was smooth, cosy, and modern, and the guest retired to bed without a thought of the mysteries of Glamis.

In the morning she appeared at the breakfast table quite cheerful and self-possessed. To the inquiry how she had slept, she replied: "Well, thanks, very well, up to four o'clock in the morning. But your Scottish carpenters seem to come to work very early. I suppose they put up their scaffolding quickly, though, for they are quiet now." This speech produced a dead silence, and the speaker saw with astonishment that the faces of members of the family were very pale.

She was asked, as she valued the friendship of all there, never to speak to them on that subject again; there had been no carpenters at Glamis Castle for months past. This fact, whatever it may be worth, is absolutely established, so far as the testimony of a single witness can establish anything. The lady was awakened by a loud knocking and hammering, as if somebody were putting up a scaffold, and the noise did not alarm her in the least. On the contrary, she took it for an accident, due to the presumed matutinal habits of the people. She knew, of course, that there were stories about Glamis, but had not the remotest idea that the hammering she had heard was

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connected with any story. She had regarded it simply as an annoyance, and was glad to get to sleep after an unrestful time; but had no notion of the noise being supernatural until informed of it at the breakfast-table.

With what particular event in the stormy annals of the Lyon family the hammering is connected is quite unknown, except to members of the family, but there is no lack of legends, possible and impossible, to account for any sights or sounds in the magnificent old feudal edifice.

It is said that once a visitor stayed at Glamis Castle for a few days, and, sitting up late one moonlight night, saw a face appear at the window opposite to him. The owner of the face it was very pale, with great sorrowful eyes appeared to wish to attract attention; but vanished suddenly from the window, as if plucked suddenly away by superior strength. For a long while the horror-stricken guest gazed at the window, in the hope that the pale face and great sad eyes would appear again. Nothing was seen at the window, but presently horrible shrieks penetrated even the thick walls of the castle, and rent the night air. An hour later, a dark huddled figure, like that of an old decrepit woman, carrying something in a bundle, came into the waning moonlight, and presently vanished.

There is a modern story of a stonemason, who was engaged at Glamis Castle last century, and who, having discovered more than he should have done, was supplied with a handsome competency, upon the conditions that he emigrated and kept inviolable the secret he had learned.

The employment of a stonemason is explained by the conditions under which the mystery is revealed to successive heirs and factors. The abode of the dread secret is in a part of the castle, also haunted by the apparition of a bearded man, who flits about at night, but without committing any other objectionable action. What connection, if any, the bearded spectre may have with the mystery is not even guessed. He hovers at night over the couches of children for an instant, and then vanishes. The secret itself abides in a room a secret chamber the very situation of which, beyond a general idea that it is in the most ancient part of the castle, is unknown. Where walls are fifteen feet thick, it is not impossible to have a chamber so concealed, that none but the initiated can guess its position. It was once attempted by a madcap party of guests to discover the locality of the secret chamber, by hanging their towels out of the window, and thus deciding in favour of any window from which no spotless banner waved; but this escapade, which is said to have been ill-received by the owners, ended in nothing but a vague conclusion that the old square tower must be the spot sought.