

Pearlin Jean

CHARLES KIRKPATRICK SHARPE

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"In my youth," he says, "Pearlin Jean was the most remarkable ghost in Scotland, and my terror when a child. Our old nurse, Jenny Blackadder, had been a servant at Allanbank, and often heard her rustling in silks up and down stairs, and along the passages. She never saw her; but her husband did.

"She was a French woman, whom the first baronet of Allanbank, then Mr Stuart, met with at Paris, during his tour to finish his education as a gentleman. Some people said she was a nun; in which case she must have been a Sister of Charity, as she appears not to have been confined to a cloister. After some time, young Stuart either became faithless to the lady or was suddenly recalled to Scotland by his parents, and had got into his carriage at the door of the hotel, when his Dido unexpectedly made her appearance, and stepping on the forewheel of the coach to address her lover, he ordered the postilion to drive on; the consequence of which was that the lady fell, and one of the wheels going over her forehead, killed her.

"In a dusky autumnal evening, when Mr Stuart drove under the arched gateway of Allanbank, he perceived Pearlin Jean sitting on the top, her head and shoulders covered with blood.

"After this, for many years, the house was haunted; doors shut and opened with great noise at midnight; the rustling of silks and pattering of high-heeled shoes were heard in bedrooms and passages. Nurse Jenny said there were seven ministers called in together at one time to lay the spirit; 'but they did no mickle good, my dear.'

"The picture of the ghost was hung between those of her lover and his lady, and kept her comparatively quiet; but when taken away, she became worse-natured than ever. This portrait was in the present Sir J. G.'s possession. I am unwilling to record its fate.

"The ghost was designated Pearlin, from always wearing a great quantity of that sort of lace.

"Nurse Jenny told me that when Thomas Blackadder was her lover (I remember Thomas very well), they made an assignation to meet one moonlight night in the orchard at Allanbank. True Thomas, of course, was the first comer; and seeing a female figure in a light-coloured dress, at some distance, he ran forward with open arms to embrace his Jenny; when lo and behold! as he neared the spot where the figure stood, it vanished; and presently he saw it again at the very end of the orchard, a considerable way off. Thomas went home in a fright; but Jenny, who came last, and saw nothing, forgave him, and they were married.

"Many years after this, about the year 1790, two ladies paid a visit at Allanbank—I think the house was then let—and passed the night there. They had never heard a word about the ghost; but they were disturbed the whole night with something walking backwards and forwards in their bed-chamber. This I had from the best authority."

To this account may be added that a housekeeper, called Betty Norrie, who, in more recent times, lived many years at Allanbank, positively averred that she, and many other persons, had frequently seen Pearlin Jean; and, moreover, stated that they were so used to her as to be no longer alarmed at the noises she made.