

The Girl in the Sealskin Coat

By Jessie Adelaide Middleton

Canon Sutton, vicar of Bridekirk, near Cockenmouth, in a lecture to the church people of Dearham, in Cumberland, related a ghost story in his own experience.

The orphan daughter of a brother clergyman was left in straitened circumstances, and Canon Sutton befriended her and obtained for her a situation as governess. Soon after she became engaged to an officer, and Canon Sutton gave her a sealskin coat as a present, but the wedding never took place, because the soldier lover, like his prototype in "The Banks of Allan Water," proved false and jilted the poor girl, who was heartbroken.

One evening Canon Sutton, who had been dining at Davenby Hall, was riding home to Bridekirk on a clear moonlight night, when, on approaching Davenby school, he saw the girl in the sealskin coat he had given her. It was a clear moonlight night, about 12.15 a.m. The horse, which saw her too, stopped suddenly.

On arriving home he told his wife, who laughed at him, saying he must have been dreaming. Later on, however, he learned that the girl had died at the moment he had seen her, and that at the time of her death she was wearing the sealskin Coat. Her last words were a message to him of forgiveness for introducing her to her faithless lover.

Canon Sutton also alluded to a similar experience he had had in his life, while travelling in the Sudan. Several newspapers reported the story of the girl in the sealskin coat at the time he related it in public, and it is certainly a typical case of haunting at the moment of death.