

# The Cathedral Ghost at Gloucester

By Jessie Adelaide Middleton

The name of Miss Agnes Weston is known and honoured wherever the British flag waves, for her life-work among our sailors. Not only has she established Sailors' Rests at Devonport and Portsmouth, but, assisted by a brave band of helpers, she has toiled for many years—more than forty—personally among the men, speaking, organizing, lending a helping hand, making tiring efforts that have borne noble fruit. No wonder the bluejackets affectionately call her “the mother of the Navy.”

Hearing that Miss Weston had had a strange experience when playing the organ in Gloucester Cathedral, I wrote asking her if she would very kindly give me particulars.

She answered promptly and courteously, saying, “I am sending you a book which will give you an account of my experience with the Crusader. I fear that it will not be of much use, but such as it is, it is heartily at your service.”

The book was one written by herself, *My Life among the Bluejackets* (James Nisbet). It has gone into twelve editions, which is not to be wondered at, for it is one of the most fascinating books I have ever read. On page 47 is the episode of the Crusader, which, with Miss Weston's kind permission, I reproduce here.

After leaving school Miss Weston took up the organ and became a pupil of the celebrated organist and composer, Dr. S. S. Wesley, of Gloucester Cathedral. She worked hard, practising five hours a day, and during her studies the following incident happened, which made a great impression on Miss Weston and which she has rightly thought worth recording.

“Having to practise for so many hours,” she writes, “I was frequently in the Cathedral after dark, the only lights being in the organ-loft, and my own lantern by which to get out of the building. There were many ghost stories connected with the Cathedral, and one was the story of a warrior—I think a Crusader—who was buried under the organ-loft. The story was that he frequently appeared, always after dark, and walked down the nave, his mailed feet and spurs being plainly heard on the pavement, walking to the west end; he would return up one of the side aisles, and his footsteps would suddenly cease at the little chapel where his grave stood.

“I had heard all this and many other stories from my fellow-pupils, but I hope that natural pluck and, above all, trust in God, kept me calm. However, I was to be tested, as the sequel will show. One evening Dr. Wesley was giving me a lesson in the Cathedral after dark. In the feeble glimmer of the lamps in the organ-loft, the great columns of the nave looked vast, black and mysterious indeed. I was studying a difficult piece of music with him, when a messenger arrived to say that a musical friend was waiting at his house on important business.

“‘Would you allow me to go for a few minutes,’ he said, ‘while you practise that piece? I shall soon return,’ adding, as he went down the stairs, ‘I hope you will not mind my locking you in the Cathedral. We are not allowed to leave the doors unfastened!’

“Despising, as I did, all supernatural fears, I replied laughing, ‘Oh, no! I have plenty to do. Lock me in by all means,’ and I went on diligently studying the difficult music, without giving any thought to ‘spooks,’ even if they had hailed back to the Crusader. “All

at once I heard a muffled footstep, and the organ-blower came out, white and trembling; he had heard it too. We listened. The footsteps, evidently mailed and with spurs on, became more and more distant and almost died away. But presently we heard them returning, from the west end of the building. They approached nearer and nearer, until they paused in the side chapel, at the foot of the organ-loft stairs. I must say that I felt my flesh creep and that something supernatural seemed near, but I crushed down my fears and, lantern in hand, rushed down the stairs and saw—nothing.

“A few minutes later the clash of the keys in the door announced Dr. Wesley’s return. After a short time he detected something rather strange about me, and wrung from me the unwilling confession that I had not seen but had heard the ghost.

“The story lost nothing, as may be imagined, from the organ-blower, and my fellow-pupils were very much awed and determined never to practise after nightfall in the old building.”