

The Converted Ghost.

(By Lizzie Garbett, in the 'Christian Miscellany'.)

It was during the winter of 1843 that the village of Oxtou was aroused from its usual state of peaceful quietude into one of nervous excitement. It was whispered that as Tom Natriss (a steady young farmer) was returning on a certain Monday night from a neighboring village, he had seen an awful apparition; a white, ghastly figure which had suddenly appeared before him, waved its arms, groaned, and then vanished as strangely as it had appeared.

Poor Tom was considerably shaken when he reached his home, and of course the story was known from one end of the village to the other by dinner-time the next day.

The excitement increased when, on the following night, the creature was seen by two servant maids returning home after a night out, and their hysterical account of its appearance and behaviour was similar to that of Tom Natriss. But matters grew serious when Farmer Rogers saw it, and declared that the first chance he got he should put a bullet into it.

As he kept watch in the lonely lane where it had been seen, and the 'ghost' took a fancy to explore the other side of the village, the suspicions of the more enlightened minds of Oxtou were naturally confirmed that it was someone who was having in his own way 'a joke,' and not, as old Jamie Foster, the shoemaker, declared it to be, the restless spirit of a man who, some twenty years before, had been found dead under mysterious circumstances in that very lane.

Now Methodism was prospering in Oxtou during that winter, and I trust it is so yet. A revival had broken out; many were turning to the living God, and the services and meetings were marked by a spirit of great earnestness and power; perhaps none more so than the class-meetings conducted by Benjamin Wendale, and on the following Monday night, after the 'ghost' first made its appearance, the members had such a soul-stirring time that the meeting was considerably longer than the usual hour.

When at last the weekly pence were all paid, and the benediction pronounced, several of the friends volunteered to take their brightest member home. She was a tiny old lady with the sweetest face I have ever seen, who was always spoken of as 'Little Miss Jane,' and I do not think anyone in the whole village was more beloved and respected than she.

As her way home was through a lonely lane where the apparition had recently been seen, they hardly thought it was wise to let her return alone. But she assured them that she was not in the smallest degree afraid, and that the Lord would take care of her; then, with her sweet smile, she bade 'good-night' to them all and tripped away.

Now the night was very dark, the moon was hidden by masses of black clouds; but Miss Jane was not at all afraid of either the darkness or the 'ghost,' for she had a shrewd suspicion as to who was playing the prank. She walked steadily homewards, her heart full of joy and peace, feeling quite prepared for anything she might see, and was about half-way on her journey, when, without the slightest word of warning, she found the tall, dreadful thing by her side. There was a brave heart and great soul in Miss Jane's little body. So, quietly turning, she said in her most pleasant voice, and it was pleasant: 'Good evening, friend; if you are going my way, I shall be much obliged if you will allow me to walk along with you, as this lane is so dark and lonely. Will you?'

I think the 'ghost' must certainly have been startled and confused, for it silently

bowed its head with dignity and walked softly by her side.

'Thank you,' said the sweet voice again; 'that's very kind of you.' And as she spoke Miss Jane closely observed the strange white garments and face of her companion, and sent up a brief petition to her heavenly Father for help and guidance. Then she talked brightly to the figure, as if it had been an intimate friend, of the happy meeting she had just left, and of the joy of the Christian life, and her own joy and peace, and how thankful the members were to see so many seeking the Lord, until she reached her garden gate, which, by the way, the 'ghost' unlatched and held open for her.

Then she looked up at the fearful object beside her while her face beamed with tenderness and pity as she said: 'Good night, dear friend; thank you for taking care of an old woman like me. God bless you.' Then laying one hand gently upon the arm which held open the gate for her, and pointing upwards with the other, she said, 'I am going before very long to join the white-robed hosts who stand before my Saviour's throne; will you put off this false dress, and put on the true garments of righteousness and a pure life, and meet me there?'

Then a strange thing happened. The moon suddenly sent forth its bright rays between the dark clouds, and the little old lady, looking up into her strange companion's face, saw a pair of blue eyes swimming in tears and a mouth twitching in a very human manner.

Then, with a softly spoken 'good-night,' she went into her house, and the 'ghost' fled, and has never been seen again.

Miss Jane knew that her suspicions had been right when in the after-meeting on the next Sunday night in her beloved chapel, one of the wildest young men in the village walked bravely up to the penitent form, was soundly converted to God, and became one of her most devout friends.

A Sunday Bicycle Outing.

'You are old enough to decide for yourself, Harriet,' said Grandmother to a young girl one Saturday evening. 'To me the Sabbath is a day to be kept holy. I was taught to reverence it from my earliest childhood. To go off with a party for pleasure on that day would have been considered a most grave desecration in my girlhood.'

'Well, Grandmother, Alison Cornwall, is going, and she is a member of the church; if it is not wrong for her to go, it is certainly not wrong for me, for I make no professions of being religious, you know. Wallace Hunter is going, too, and he is a church member, so the girls say.'

'I would far rather you did not go my dear, but of course I can put no commands upon you.'

'A spin on the wheel is such a delightful way of getting about the country, Grandmother, and you know we shall not be here long.'

'Oh, those wheels, Harriet, what tempters they are! A young man almost ran over me last Sunday when I was crossing the road in front of the church lawn. It does seem so wicked for people to go off on their wheels to spend Sunday in riding about the country for pleasure, instead of going into the house of the Lord on his day, to honor him, as we are commanded to do.'

While this bit of conversation was going on between Harriet and her grandmother, a young girl sat on the porch of a cottage near by, turning over and over in her mind the same problem, whether it was right to take that proposed spin on her wheel the next day. She had never taken an outing for pleasure on the Lord's day. It was Alison

Cornwall, the young friend Harriet had mentioned.

'I really do not think we ought to go to-morrow, if we are away from our own church,' spoke the young man, in a bicycle dress, who was standing by her side.

'I do not think there will be anything so very wrong about it, Wallace,' the young lady answered. 'It is not likely that anyone at home will know it. Of course I would not do such a thing there, neither would you, but we are in the country now for our health and pleasure, and our stay will soon be over.'

'If you haven't any conscientious scruples, Alison, I do not know why I should, so we will consider that matter settled. I will call for you at nine o'clock.' Alison Cornwall was such a bright, pretty girl, it would be a delight to be with her all day in the pleasant outing over the well-kept country roads. If she thought there was no harm in thus spending the Lord's day, why should he?

'Go? Why, of course I shall not go,' said Mabel Strong, as the young man stopped his wheel on the way to the hotel to ask if she were to make one of the party. 'I never went on a pleasure excursion on Sunday in all my life. I always go to church unless I am ill. Why cannot this be put off until a week day? I should be very glad to make one of your party then.'

'We are all away from home, you know, we church members, and you see how it is, we shall not be here long and no one where we live will be apt to know of our trip; we certainly do not care for the people here. We could not possibly have any influence over them.'

'I am not sure about that, Mr. Hunter. At all events, I shall not go. I should feel that I was doing a great wrong to the one to whom I profess to be a loyal disciple, my Lord and Master. Is Alison going?'

'Yes. I just left her on the cottage porch. She does not think there is any harm in our going.'

The young lady looked surprised at this answer, but it explained the position which Wallace Hunter had taken to defend himself. Such a great influence is wielded by a pretty, fascinating young woman, Ah! if all such only realized their power for right or wrong.

A more beautiful Sunday morning never dawned than the one selected for the outing.

'Grandmother was very much opposed to my going,' said Harriet Goodwin, as the party wheeled up to the farm-house where she was in waiting. 'She was brought up in the old Puritan way, you know. I told her, Alison, that if you did not think it wrong to go on Sunday, I certainly need not. That settled it.'

It was a thrust that went home to Alison's soul. The question came to her again and again, as she sped along the way, 'What doest thou here, Elijah?'

'How very distract Wallace Hunter is to-day,' said one of the young men to his companion. 'He is always so jolly.'

Ah, he too, was hearing the still, small voice asking, 'What doest thou here, Elijah?' There were three of the party who had never had any religious home training regarding the Sabbath. It had been the custom of their parents to use that day as a family holiday. They spoke jestingly of those who revered the day and expressed themselves as glad that the biblical traditions were being put aside as fallacies. And, as for church members, they were no better than people out of the church.

'If I had only listened to the still, small voice, and not have dishonored my Lord in this way, how happy I should have been,' was Alison's thought, as the party wheeled back into the village again at nightfall. When she was alone in her room she realiz-