

## CHOICE LITERATURE.

## MISTER HORN AND HIS FRIENDS, OR, GIVERS AND GIVING.

BY MARK GUY PEARSE.

## CHAPTER V.—HOW OLD JOWL GOT A DINNER.

Yet Jim Niggardly was in some matters a liberal man. He would, for instance, have earnestly coveted the honour and blessing of being an entertainer of angels, so given was he to the virtue of a free hospitality. The larger customers left his office door wiping their lips approvingly; and at his table a hearty welcome and more than enough waited for every guest. Nor did he suffer his visitors to overlook the provision made. The wine was urged with the recommendation: "I won't say it's good, but if it isn't, good can't be got for money;" and the prices of luxuries were carefully whispered by him as "between ourselves."

Some said Mister Horn was too strict, some called him pig-headed, and that he believed no one was right but himself. At any rate it was true that, somehow or other, he wouldn't see much virtue in this, nor suffer it to be urged in James Niggardly's defence.

"Hospitality is he—good-hearted?" Mister Horn would say, waxing hot and indignant. "That's just what I can't stand about him. If James Niggardly ground himself down to a flint-stone, if he grudged every penny that he spends, I could understand the man. If he were a scraping, hoarding, miser, lean and shrivelled, whose hooked fingers would like to clutch and save the air that other folks breathe, and the sunlight they see by, I could make him out then. The worst of all is, that he can be good-hearted to himself or to anybody else, except to the loving Father who gave him all that he has got. He can be hospitable to most, but he will keep the door shut against the would-be Guest who has stood and knocked, in vain entreating, 'Open unto Me!'" As he went on, the tone grew more tender until the voice trembled with emotion.

"Yes, Jim Niggardly can be generous to anybody except to the blessed Lord, who was rich and for our sakes became poor. To think that he should grudge anything to Him! Again Mister Horn spoke angrily. "The man doesn't care for any expense but what goes to God's work. His house, his back, his belly must have themselves waited on and paid for; but God's work must stand out in the cold waiting, hat in hand, for the scraps that are left. He will spend his money upon his horse and his dog without grudging; but he can't give away a twentieth part of what they cost him without grumbling and growling about it for a whole week. The man must give a dinner to his friends sometimes, or he must be off for a month at the seaside, and he pays the bills as if it were no very great trouble. But ask him for five shillings for old Jowl! Try and get a guinea out of him for the Sunday school! Remind him that a shilling is all he gives for class ticket! Why, you'll have a list of dreadful things that would make you fancy the man hadn't a ha'penny to bless himself with. No, I would rather see Jim Niggardly a miser out and out—to himself and to everybody else—than see him as he is, a miser to nobody but to the blessed Lord who gave him the very breath that's in his nostrils. No, don't talk to me about his hospitality."

And it must be confessed that most people readily obliged Mister Horn in this request.

With these notions so strongly held, it was not much wonder that Mister Horn did not care to avail himself of Jim's pressing invitation. Often repeated, and very heartily made, they were somewhat bluntly declined.

On one occasion, however, Mister Horn accepted an invitation with a readiness and freedom that were surprising.

He had dropped into the office on business, and as he was leaving Jim pressed him to remain. "You never come to take dinner with us; you know there is always a knife and fork and the best I can afford—nobody living is more welcome than you are."

It was evident that Mister Horn had just got something "in his mind." Turning suddenly round in the doorway, and coming back again he struck his stick sharply on the office door.

"Thank ye, Jim, thank ye," said he, as the little gray eyes twinkled merrily. "You're very kind. It's just the very thing I'm wanting, is a good dinner. I'll take it with me, thank you."

Jim knew there was something else coming, and he looked inquiringly.

"I'll take it with me, Jim," continued Mr. Horn, as he began figuring upon a piece of paper, and then went on interrupting himself as he added his figures: "Ninepence and sixpence—you're very kind, Jim—and eightpence—very kind—and ninepence more—very kind—and fourpence"—he paused as he drew a line at the bottom of the paper. "There, Jim, I'm not much of a ready reckoner, but that's about it, as you do things handsome—three shillings—ah, but I'd forgotten the cigars—say two, that's sixpence more—say three shillings and sixpence. Thank ye; I'll take it with me, as I'm rather in a hurry."

James Niggardly began to suspect what was coming, but only looked what he thought.

Mister Horn laughed with a childlike and honest merriment, and then renewed his appeal.

"I'm just going to see poor old Jowl; he's as poor as a church mouse, and I should very much like to take him a dinner; so if you'll give it to me I'll be off, Jim; and the sentence ended in a laugh like that with which it began.

"Three and sixpence!" said Jim; "really, Mister Horn, you're always begging—I'm only a poor man—give, give, give—it's nothing but give;" and he spoke like one who is bitterly wronged.

"Oh, I'm very sorry, very sorry, I'm sure," and Mister Horn spoke with an air of apology. "You ask me to take dinner; I accept your offer and want to take it, and now you draw back like this. Why, Jim, I certainly thought you meant it."

James Niggardly felt that Mister Horn had him, and that

it was useless to wriggle. As if it had been his very life blood, he counted three shillings and sixpence into Mister Horn's hand.

"Thank ye, Jim, thank ye," Mister Horn chuckled; "I've enjoyed the dinner very much. It's such a comfort to an old man like me to dine without indigestion, and all that." His voice returned to its more serious tone as he moved toward the door. "Good-day, Jim, there's not many things that are better worth the money than old Jowl's blessing—good-day, thank ye."

"Well," Mister Horn muttered to himself as he went up the road, "I'm glad that I've got poor old Jowl his dinner; but I can't understand it. Jim would rather have had me, or anybody else who doesn't need a dinner, to dine with him all the week round than have spent three shillings and sixpence in this way. He'd give you five shillings in meat and drink sooner than give old Jowl one in hard cash. If Jim could only get hold of a prince now, he'd ruin himself to get him luxuries—that he would. Poor Jim! God help thee, or some day thou wilt hear it spoken. I was alungered, and ye gave no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and ye took Me not in; naked, and ye clothed Me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited Me not. Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me. God help thee, Jim—I'll not give thee up yet, for I think there is somewhat to hope for."

"Really," grumbled James Niggardly, Esq., as he passed into his comfortable dining-room, "this incessant giving is unbearable; people beg without any conscience." And he was obliged to console himself with a glass of his golden sherry.

## CHAPTER VI.—MORE TO BE DESIRED THAN GOLD.

The deceitfulness of riches is a form of speech often heard. Yet, frequently as it is used, few act as though they realized its truth. It is very possible that even we do not apprehend fully its import.

Money is very useful, indeed, almost essential, to doing good. And then poverty is really uncomfortable, and it is so unimportant, so powerless for any beneficence. It is generally ignorant, too, and often drunken and dishonest. Why, look at all our town missions and home missions, our Bible women and tract distributors—they are all for the conversion of the poor, and force us to think of that Scripture, "The poor have the Gospel preached unto them," as if it meant that nobody else needed it. Look, too, at our common phrases that unconsciously betray the deepest and most general convictions. The man who is getting rich is *doing well*, as if all morality lay in money-making. He who loses money is *doing badly*, and the world reckons it the very worst badness of which men can be guilty.

The religious phrases in use baptize the same notions with a Christian name: "Providence smiles upon him"—they are always golden smiles—the man's getting rich. But of him who loses money—the Church shrugs its shoulders and shakes its head, and says, half-pityingly and half-upbraidingly, "He has gone out of his providential way." We test Providence by gold, and measure the Divine favour by the amount of the income. When, my reader, shall we learn the lesson of that Life of Jesus? The Son of the Highest was called the son of a carpenter. He in whom the Father was well pleased was faint with very hunger. The Well-beloved had not where to lay his head!

She is a lying jade, this deceitful riches. For years she had whispered to James Niggardly. "You see," she whispered smoothly, "when you have got so much more, how useful you could be, how very useful! Of course at present you can't do much; but then you will be able to give without stint, and in so many ways to do good." The fair enchantress conjured up a picture in which James Niggardly saw himself amid his abundance blessed and beloved of all the villagers, busied only with schemes of usefulness, and spending his untroubled leisure in doing good. He saw half the devils of Tattingham cast out by his gold—potent gold, yellow, flashing gold, the true magician, the mighty exorcist, whose fetters should bind the prince of darkness, and whose influence should bring the "golden age;" what could not its wizardry accomplish?

The wonder is that James Niggardly did not see the lie, ay, and feel it, too! The balance at the banker's increased each year, each year trades grew and the returns swelled to higher figures, yet he was not a little the happier, he could not give a penny more and grudge as much as ever the little he did give. Happier? not he; he was harder to please, he grumbled more constantly, he swaggered a great deal more, his indigestion became more troublesome, while now and then there was an ominous twitching in the great toe—and this was all that riches did for him. The deceitful thing!

And she was as cruel as she was false. James Niggardly was within easy reach of the truest, purest happiness that ever soul delighted in. If, as he sat in the easy chair, looking out from the dining-room into the pleasant garden, he could have changed places with Mister Horn for an hour, he would have known what true happiness is.

The road from Stukeville to the village passed up the hill, between tall hedges, and here and there between old twisted oaks and stately elms. All was beautiful with the leafiness of June; the air was sweet with honeysuckle and wild rose, and the white flowers of the elder; hazel-branches covered the hedge-top and from beneath them rose the leafy fern, the plume of the budding foxglove, and all the luxurious tangle of deep grass and trailing leaves, starred by the white or pink or yellow of clustering wild flowers. The hum of insects and the twittering of hedge-birds filled the lazy noon-tide, while now and then a flood of melody was poured from the soaring lark. On one side of the road leaped and sang the ceaseless little stream that, bubbling up to light in a delicious spring, round which the mosses hung, formed a tiny crystal pool where the birds stopped to drink, and then went laughing all along its way to the river in the valley below, as if its one good deed sent it rejoicing to the end of its course.

Slowly nature stole Mister Horn's thoughts. He stayed to scent the sweetness, admiring the beauty lavished around

him, until he caught the spirit of gratitude that inspired all things, and he lifted up his heart to bless the good Father: "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works; the earth is full of Thy riches!" he muttered. "Full of Thy riches; yes, God doesn't keep His riches to Himself. The earth is full of them. Every little nook is crowded, even this common hedge-row and dusty highway. God's riches that He gives are more than all our riches can buy."

Slowly reaching the hill-top, the landscape opened more fully before him. The intense blue sky, the fields and woodland dappled with light and shade chasing each other in leisurely sport, while far away the great banks of clouds—God's snowy mountains—rose before him. "Full of Thy riches," he cried as he paused, "and all these riches mine!"

A princess welcomed to her adopted home with jubilant music and costliest splendour, with censers breathing delicate perfumes and the rapturous greetings of a mighty host, would have been of all things most unlike the plain, quaint, busy Mister Horn. And yet it was with such a joy, so full and deep, that he lived each day; and with such a delight in all about him. Nature teemed with ministering spirits that seemed sent forth to minister to him. And well might it be so. Did he not walk in the smile of God—the smile that makes life's lowliest by-path a triumphant way? And did not leafy arches span it as he passed along, and flowers breathe delicious fragrance? God's own sun illuminated his steps, and the ever sweet and gentle music of the birds attended him. "Full of His riches, full," he cried, "there is no room for anything more." Ah, James Niggardly, how much wouldst thou have paid down in hard cash to have had for one hour this contentment, this gratitude, this delight?

Near to the hill-top was one of the many clusters of cottages that made up the scattered village of Tattingham. For the most part they stood in groups of three or four, facing the highway, with their gardens flourishing around them. But, passing these Mister Horn crossed over a stile; and then a few steps along the little path between the green wheat brought him to a dilapidated hovel. It looked as if, ashamed of being seen on the highway, it had slunk back thus far out of sight, and had all but thrown itself down in the effort. The disordered thatch, the uneven walls, the one window with its patched and ragged panes; the strip that had been a garden now a mound of ashes and a wilderness of weeds—it was only by the grossest flattery that these could be known as "Old Jowl's Cottage."

It was not a knock that announced Mister Horn's arrival so much as a rattle, as if the loosely hanging door resented the tap and shook itself crustily. A feeble voice answered, "Come in." Putting his finger through the round hole and lifting the clumsy latch, Mister Horn stooped under the doorway and passed within.

Fortunately the door was left open, for the air was needed, and the sunlight that slanted across the dusty room was the only pleasant thing in it. The place was just as comfortable as the outside promised—perhaps a trifle dingier. The old man himself was undoubtedly as poor as the proverbial "church mouse" to which Mister Horn had likened him. Yet, somehow, the first look made one take a fancy to "Old Jowl." There was a fresh colour upon his wrinkled cheeks, and a smile that lit up the blue eyes and curled about the corners of the mouth; and when he spoke there was such a cheery contentment in his tone that one could not help liking him. The sunshine reached just far enough to fall on the old, large-type Bible that rested upon his knees, and from its open page the light was reflected upon his face. One felt as if the reflected light were always there, and that the freshness, the smile, and the contented tone grew somehow out of the light from that open page.

"Old Jowl," as everybody called him, had been for years unable to work. Crippled with rheumatism, and gradually growing feebler, he could only crawl from his bed to the fireplace and back again. His wife had died some years before, and since then he had lived alone. The neighbours looked after him, and with the help of some friends and the parish allowance, he had, he said, "enough to praise God for."

"Well, old friend, how is it to-day?" asked Mister Horn, gently shaking the old man's hand.

"Ah, Mast' Horn, I'm glad to see yeow, bless yir. I knew 'twas yeow when yeow came to the door, and the sound o' yeow did me good like. I'm right glad, I am, right glad;" and the old man looked it, too.

Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart; and Mister Horn might have been the messenger sent with it. As the light-bearer and the joy-bringer many a one had blessed him. His happy manner, his homely ways, his pleasant gossip about all that could interest, his simplicity and quaintness, did the people more good, they said, "nor the doctor hisself," which is not altogether incredible, seeing that most of them were doctored "by the parish." The Sun of Righteousness carries the healing in His wings. There is nothing that heals in the gloom of righteousness—nothing that heals in the chill, unless religion that goes through its duty cold and unrejoicing, like a November day.

"They don't do much good," Mister Horn often said, "who have stayed in the thunder till it has turned their milk of human kindness sour."

It is a way of doing good much overlooked by many learned doctors and great professors that the Bible recommends: "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine."

Bitters are useful sometimes, and blisters are needed now and then; but as a general sort of a family medicine that it's best to keep about one, there's nothing like a merry heart," was one of Mister Horn's favourite receipts, and many grateful testimonials would have testified to its efficacy. Jim Niggardly, with a purse of golden guineas, couldn't have made Old Jowl's face brighter into such a happiness as did the merry heart that rang in every word Mister Horn spoke.

"I've been thinking as I came up the hill what a happy o'd fellow you ought to be, friend," continued Mister Horn.

"Me, Mast' Horn, so I am, bless yir," and old Jowl looked happier than ever.

"Well, I said to myself, 'If anybody has got a father so rich and so kind as the Father, he might set up for a