

GIANT COVETOUSNESS.



THE MISER.

[The following article and its illustration are reprinted from a very interesting volume entitled, 'Giants, and How to Fight them,' by Dr. Newton, just published by the Wesleyan Conference Office.]

GIANT COVETOUSNESS is very large in size, and very strong in limb; but he has the tiniest little bit of a heart you ever saw. It is not bigger than a bantam chicken's heart. You might put it in a nutshell. The only wonder is, how so huge a frame can be supported by so small a heart. But this is not all, for small as his heart is, it is as hard as stone. We sometimes hear of people dying with what is called the ossification of the heart. Ossification means, turning to bone. When a man's heart gets hard, or turns to bone, he dies. According to this rule the giant Covetousness ought to have been dead long ago. It's a perfect wonder how he manages to live, with his heart all turned to stone. But he does live; yes, and not only lives, but is hearty and strong. He is very active. His castle is of great size, and he always has it crowded with prisoners. Those whom he once fairly gets into his chains, find it very hard to break loose. Yet this is very strange, for he is a most disagreeable creature. He drives the poor away from his door. If a shivering beggar comes by, he buttons up his pocket, lest by any means a penny should happen to get out. He can hear about poor widows and orphans starving with hunger, and perishing with cold, but never sheds a tear, or heaves a sigh, or gives the least trifle for their relief. When he knows of worthy people being in need, he "shutteth up his compassion from" them. His heart is hard as a rock, and cold as an iceberg. He loves money better than anything else in the world. He gets all he can, and keeps all he gets. He is ashamed of his name, and won't answer to it. He pretends that his right name is—FRUGALITY. But this is a great story. Frugality is a very different person. He is a good, true, honest fellow. I know he is a sort of SECOND COUSIN of the giant's, and some people think he looks very much like him; but I don't think he does at all. At any rate this is NOT the giant's name. His own, real, proper name is COVETOUSNESS; and his puny, little, stony heart PROVES IT.

Well, his prisoners all become wonderfully like him. Their hearts shrivel up till they are almost as small and as hard as his. But how may we know when he is trying to make people his prisoners? Very easily. When you see people learning to love their money more than they used to do; when they always tie their purse-strings very tight, and are

very slow to untie them; when you hear them, all the time, grumbling about there being so many collections, and so many calls for money; when you find them unwilling to give, and when you see them wince and wriggle under parting with a little, as though you were drawing one of their eye-teeth out of their heads, then you may know that the giant Covetousness has got a hold upon these people.

My dear children, I want you all to fight bravely against this giant. If you ask, How are you to fight him? I answer, BY LEARNING TO GIVE. He has giving above all things. It hurts his feelings dreadfully. Once get into the habit of giving, and he never can fasten his chains upon you.

"Mother," asked a little boy who was trying to make a good beginning of the new year, "how much of my spending-money do you think I ought to give to God?"

"I don't know," said his mother. "How much have you?" He opened his purse, and out dropped, on the table, a half-sovereign his grandmother had given him for a Christmas present, a sixpenny-piece and a fourpenny-piece.

"There's my half-sovereign, I'll halve that," said he; "sixpence and fourpence are twopence, and half of that is five. But, no. I'll GIVE THE LARGEST HALF TO GOD. I'll give him half the gold and the sixpence."

I don't believe the giant Covetousness will ever get a single link of his chain fastened on the limbs of that noble-hearted boy.

But I want to tell you about a great battle once fought between this giant and a deacon, in a church in New England. We may call the deacon's name Holdfast. The story is a true one, though this was not the man's real name. Before Deacon Holdfast became a Christian, he had been a prisoner of the giant's for years. The chains of the giant had been so riveted upon his limbs, that he found it very hard to get rid of them. Many a sharp conflict they had together. Sometimes the deacon would get the victory, but more frequently the giant. Still the deacon wouldn't give up. He was determined not to wear the giant's chain. And after the fight that I'm going to tell you about, he got such an advantage over the giant that he never troubled him much again. It happened in this way.

In the same church to which the deacon belonged there was a worthy, honest, good man, who was very poor. This poor man had the misfortune to lose his cow. She died. The poor man was in great distress. The cow was his chief dependence for the support of his family. He went and told the deacon about his trouble. In order to aid him in getting another cow, the good deacon drew up a subscription-paper, and put his own name down, at the head of it, for five pounds, which he paid over. This made the giant Covetousness very angry. He took on dreadfully. He began to rave and storm, and tried to frighten the deacon.

"What's the use of all this waste?" he cried. "Charity begins at home. The more you give, the more you may give. Why can't you let people take care of themselves? What right have you to take the bread out of the mouths of your own children, and give it to strangers? Go on at this rate, and the poorhouse, wretchedness, poverty, and rage, are what you will come to."

This made the deacon angry. His spirit was roused. He went to the poor man to whom he had given the subscription, and told him he must give him back the five pounds. The poor fellow's heart sunk within him. He thought he should never get his cow again. But he handed over the money. The deacon stood a moment as if hesitating what to do. At last he said to the poor man: "My brother, some people are very much troubled with their old women, but I am troubled most with my old MAN. He has been scolding me dreadfully for giving you so much money; but now I mean to fix him." And then, turning round, as if addressing the giant, he said: "Old fellow, I want you to understand that I mean to give away just as much money as I think right." And then, opening his purse, and taking out a ten-pound note, he added: "I shall now give this good brother ten pounds instead of five, and if you say another word I'll give him TWENTY, instead of ten!"

This was a dreadful blow to the giant. It laid him sprawling on the ground. It took him, as the Bible says, "under the fifth rib." It knocked the breath clean out of him. He hadn't a word to say.

LEARNING TO GIVE is the way in which to fight the Giant Covetousness.