

AN ELEGY IN A COUNTRY STORE.

SIT down a minit, Mister, an' write a line or two,

An' let me tell my story—you'll say it's sad though true;

But some things hez their bright sides as well as darkest shades,

An' clouds are never brighter than when the sunlight fades.

There's trouble, disappointment an' trials all through life,

An' tho' yer peaceful-minded yer bound ter hev some strife;

But settle at four cross-roads an' keep a country store,

An' ye'll find yer troubles greater than e'er they were before.

But, 'scuse me, I'm a wanderin' a little off my text,

An' if ye'll tell yer paper when yer a writin' next,

How old Hank Smith of Johnsville was hooked an' done up brown,

Ye'll do a wondrous kindness to every country town.

I've kep' a store in Johnsville nigh onto twenty year,

An' every man an' woman to my old heart is dear,

I've paid what's due of taxes an' helped ter make the town,

An' many a totterin' farmer I've kep from breakin' down.

My bizness was progressin', an' though my wants were few,

I couldn't lay a surplus by, as some I know well do—

Like old Ben Jones, the Deacon, down on the township line,

Who owns three hundred acres, the finest of the fine.

One day a deputation of farmers came to town,

An' called on me to offer their trade an' spot cash down;

They'd writin's, papers, letters, rules, by-laws an' the like,

Just like the honest workmen, preparin' for a strike.

An' Deacon Jones was leader an' read the rules to me,

An' Rodd of Township Logan, he of Concession Three,

Got up and painted to me the glories of the deal,

An' like a fool I signed it—they stamped it with a seal.

I was to get the business of a hundred farmers sure,

On only ONE condition—'twas simple an' secure—

That I should sell them freely, for cash, you understand,

Their goods, an' only charge them—a twelve per cent demand.

They said they'd buy all goods from me and pay me down the cash,

An' that the other merchants here would all go plunk to smash,

That I would do a roarin' trade an' make my money fast,

An' all my neighbors would get left for robbin' in the past.

I signed the paper as I said—they stamped an' sealed it too—

An' smilin' left my little store—that day I'll always rue.

At first they swarmed into the place an' ordered goodly lots,

Looked at my bills, put down the cash, an' grinned like idiots.

But Roberts 'cross the road from me, who'd kicked the whole gang out,

Cut sugar down below my cost, which raised a deuced shout,

An' Brown, up near the market, sent out a card to say,

That "Patrons or no Patrons," who had the cash to pay,

Could get what goods they wanted at less 'an Patron price—

He put his prices lower than for living would suffice.

An' every store around me, both in our town an' out,

Was cuttin' things below me, of that there was no doubt.

I kinder felt uneasy to see such tricks be made,

An' knew that I was losin' each blessed day more trade,

The Patrons seemed to vanish and leave no trail behind—

My neighbors was a smilin'—Tney didn't seem to mind.

An' then my trade in town got mad an' passed my store each day,

An' bought their goods from "Hustler" Brown or Roberts cross the way.

They wouldn't deal, they told me so, with any man who sold

To greedy men of wealth like Jones, for twelve per cent. of gold.

The Patrons didn't seem to come like once they used to do,

An' I began to see that things was gettin' mighty blue,

My business got into a mess, my bills could not be paid,

The wholesale house got dunnin' me—said "payments must be made."

I wondered what the matter was, an' couldn't make it out,

Until one night I met old Jones ('twas him without a doubt),

Aloadin' up his democrat in front of Brown's old stand.

I tumbled to the racket then—I saw the rascal's hand.

That night when I got home again I read the writin's through

To see just what the bargain was, an' what we had to do.

'Twas clear as daylight now to me—I'D ROUND MYSELF TO SELL,

While they had not agreed to BUY, except it suited well.

An' when my prices seemed too high, though I was sellin' straight

They either went to other towns or came at night quite late,

An' bought what goods they wanted from Roberts or from Brown,

Who worked together, strange to say, to beat my prices down.

I knew then just how things would go. I knew it, though too late,

That I was bound to clean bust up as sure as fate is fate.

I couldn't buck agin Old Brown, an' Roberts too was rich.

While they were making money, I was nearly in the ditch.

Next mornin' I hung out a card, with letters large an' red,

An' told the public—as I thought the Patrons was all dead,

An' that, though I was near the same, I'd drop the whole gang hot

An' sell my goods like honest men—I'd do it or be shot.

An' Mister, say, when you reach town, jest tell yer printer-man

To write an' show the merchants how they work their little plan.

An' if you'll only tell 'em straight, I'm sure you'll have success

An' many a trustin' brother will pause, an' think an' bless—

HEC. SECOND.

THE DRUMMER.

First in the crowded car is he to offer—

This traveling man, unhonored and unsung

The seat he paid for, to some woman young Or old and wrinkled. He is first to proffer

Something, a trifle from his 'samples,' maybe, To please the fancy of the baby.

He lifts the window and drops the curtain For unaccustomed hands. He lends his case

To make a bolster for a child, not certain But its mamma will frown him in the face,

So anxiously some women seek for danger In every courteous act of every stranger.

Well versed is he in all the ways conducive To comfort where least comfort can be found.

His little deeds of thoughtfulness abound, He turns the seat unasked, yet unobtrusive;

Is glad to please you, or have you please him— Yet takes it very calmly if you freeze him.

He smoothes the Jove-like frown of the official By paying the fare of one who cannot pay;

True modesty he knows from artificial; Will flit, of course, if you're inclined that way,

And if you are, be sure that he detects you, And if you're not, be sure that he respects you.

The sorrows of the moving world distress him; He never fails to lend what aid he can.

A thousand hearts have cause to bless him, This much abused, misused commercial man.

I do not strive to cast a halo round him, But I speak of him precisely as I've found him.

—Ella Wheeler.

THE GOOD IT DID HIM.

He exercised with clubs and weights.

Although it was no play;

He walked and rowed and puffed and blowed, And never missed a day.

And after six long months, what was

The outcome of it all?

He found, alas! to his despair,

His dress suit was too small.

—The Clothier and Furnisher.