

cheerfully. "I could have counted the folk that went by on the pavement this afternoon."

"Yes, that is true; but business is not good, John—not good at all! In fact, it is causing me the very keenest anxiety. After all claims are met, the margin of gain is very small. Indeed, I am afraid to tell my dear wife how small it is."

He ran his fingers up and down the columns of the ledger; but John Glide, from whom he had no secrets, hardly required to follow him—he knew to the fraction of a farthing what were the profits of the house.

"Perhaps we buy in too dear a market, sir," he said modestly. "Everything everywhere has advanced in price except with us. I've pointed out before that we could hardly go on profitably selling at the old prices when the cost of purchase for us has gone up more than ten per cent."

"You may be quite right, John; but, as I have pointed out to you before, Rodneys have never kept but one quality of goods—the best. Then, as to price, how could I raise it on my old customers? They would not like it, John—in fact, I believe they would go elsewhere for a cheaper, even if adulterated, article."

Glide was silent for a moment, for this sort of argument, with which he was perfectly familiar, was difficult to refute. He had far too much affection and respect for his master to thrust his own opinions on him, but during the last year or two he had endured many moments of anxiety and dismay in contemplation of the future. He could not deny that, regarded from the keen modern standpoint, Rodneys' business methods were hopeless, and that, sooner or later, they would have to be abandoned or the business would abandon them.

Cyrus Rodney, though a sound Liberal and Nonconformist, was conservative in every relation of his life, extending his conservatism down to the very smallest