

adulteration, of course; we give no credit, and consequently have no bad debts. And in our tract we appeal to almost the lowest of all human motives: the desire for gain. It is a system which only has to be stated and understood in order to be adopted at once. Not only will our customers see that they get their tea and other things cheaper, but better, and in the long run that they share in the advantages of honest trade. Good tea," here he clasped the canister to his heart, "good sugar, good rice, good cheese, good flannel—everything good. Why, the village-shop will regenerate the village. And, Miranda, the first step is taken when I have made them discontented with their present condition."

Alan laid in for himself as much tea and groceries as would suffice for ten cottages. Then, in his ardour, he ordered his house-keeper at the Court to use the village-shop; persuaded Miranda to drive into the village and order quantities of things, which she did not want, all of which were paid for on the spot, and got the Vicarage people to patronise it, so that the shop began with a fair stroke of business. One thing only went to mar the general cheerfulness; none of the villagers went into the shop at all, unless when Alan invited them, and, after explaining at length the principles of co-operation, bought articles of domestic consumption for them, and paid for them on the spot. Then they went away, bearing their pounds of tea, and came no more. The reason was, not only the habit of going day after day in the same way, in the fetters of use and wont, but also a more important reason, that they all had "ticks" at the old village-shop which they could not pay off. Alan's only plan would have been to have shut up the ancient establishment, pay all the debts of the village, and start fair. Even then, there would be some of the more dashing spirits who would spend their wages at the Lion, and ask for credit on the very next Saturday.

There was a third hindrance to the success of the shop: one which was as yet unsuspected by its promoters. It was, that the manager, the sandy-haired young man of the name of Hutchings, was contracting the habit of sitting secretly and by night over the ledgers, not with the lawful desire of estimating profit and loss, but with the reprehensible design of cooking the accounts.

As nobody interfered with him, and he gave no receipts, this was not difficult; and as immunity encourages the sinner, he soon prepared two ledgers, in one of which he entered faithfully before the eyes of the purchaser any item, and in the other he divided the purchases by half, and even left them out altogether; and he put the money into his pocket, and went off to the city of Athelston every Saturday evening.

"I hope, George," said his uncle, meeting him, "I do hope that you have had a warning, and are now going straight."

"Ah! yah! there you go," replied his nephew, "always throwing a thing into a poor fellow's face. Why don't you go off and tell the Connection? Why don't you take and write to Squire Dunlop? Ah! why don't you?"

"If you'd been my son," said the man of virtue, "I'd have behaved to you as a parent should—cut your liver out first, and turned you out of the house next."

Which shows what a useful thing is a testimonial, and how, like charity, it may be made to cover a multitude of sins.

Exhilarated by the dream of his shop, Alan prepared the way, by another tract, for his next great move; this was nothing less than a direct blow at the Licensed Victuallers' interests.

"I propose to establish," he said, in the introductory tract which he sent about the village—these were now so numerous that they ceased to interest the village mind at all, any more than the Sunday sermon—"I propose to establish a bar at which only plain and unadulterated beer, sent to the house by the best brewers, shall be sold, with the addition of a very small percentage for management and carriage. The price shall be exactly that which can repay the producer. It will, therefore, cost about half of what you now pay, and will, of course, be infinitely better in quality. Three-fourths of the crime of this country is due, not only to excessive drinking, but to the drinking of bad liquor; and the same proportion of disease is due to the same shameful cause. My shop will be called the 'Good Liquor Bar.' The beer will be drunk on the spot or carried away, to be consumed among your own families, or while you are following your favourite studies. It will be paid for when ordered. The bar will be under the same roof as the shop."