

"Yes, I'm an inventor," said Carter, growing confidential at the breakfast table. "I invented that new car coupler you've read so much about; and I invented a new steam engine that is just coming into use. But six months ago I said to my partner who manages our factory. The food and the clothing of the country come from the farmers. The hard work is on the farms. The inventor that is to be of lasting benefit to the race must invent something to make farm work lighter. There's the money, too," I says, for of course we could not be expected to turn out machines without profit.

"So I began to study farm needs and the first thing I invented was a churn."

Yes, he had one with him, and would show it to them after breakfast.

It was a remarkable churn. It was easy and quick, and brought out ninety-nine and two-fifths per cent of all the butter.

You could fasten it to the cradle and churn while you rocked the baby. You could connect it to a rocking chair and churn while you rested, or you could attach it to the windmill, or a little water wheel at the spring house, or pretty near anything. It would almost run itself.

Billy examined it with great care. "Pears to be a mighty fine thing," he said, when through.

"Are you selling them?" asked Mrs. Houck.

"Oh, my, no," laughed Carter. "I haven't time to be selling churns. I merely wanted to show it to a few of the leading farmers of the state, and I may get them interested to help push it."

"You see, I have it patented, and we intend to sell the state and district rights. The men who buy can then sell county and township rights and appoint agents."

"There's a mint of money in it. I've already been offered fifty thousand dollars for it, but even a hundred thousand would not touch it. Why I was offered three thousand for one district in this state last week, and refused."

Carter stayed a week, studying the needs of the farmer and taking notes for future inventions.

"I say, Billy," he said confidentially, as he handed the farmer a cigar and took one himself, "you've treated me mighty nice and I'm going to let you

in on this thing big. Your name will be worth a whole lot to me, for you have lots of influence in this part of the state.

"Now, there are two districts with twelve counties in each of them, down in this end, and I'm going to let you have the patent right on that churn for four thousand dollars."

He paused until his generosity took full effect.

"It means a cool ten thousand clear money to you," Carter added, holding his cigar between his fingers.

"Let me show you," and he drew his chair up near Billy's and tapped him on the knee with his pencil.

"There are twenty-four counties with an average of fifteen townships to the county. There are three hundred and sixty townships. Now I could sell every one of them for one hundred dollars, if I had time. But say you only average fifty dollars, that gives you eighteen thousand dollars. Deduct four thousand dollars that you paid, and allowing four thousand dollars for your work, you have a cool ten thousand clear."

"Do you think I could sell them for that much?" asked Billy.

"Think? Why, I know it. I'll guarantee it."

"I'd shorely like to have the ten thousand," said Billy, with an interested smile. "I'll talk it over with the old woman. I don't like to be hasty, you know," he added apologetically.

"Certainly, certainly," said Carter, waving his hand indifferently. "Do as you think best of course. I may be called away, however, to-morrow or next day. Better decide pretty quick."

"The trouble," said Billy, as they sat in the yard after supper, two days later. "is we ain't got the money. It does look like a paying investment, shorely, but we can't raise four thousand dollars. That's all the whole place would sell for."

"That needn't bother you a minute, said Carter easily. "I'll take your note for it. You can give me a mortgage on the place as security. I'll give you six months. By that time you will have taken in any where from ten to twenty thousand."

"If I was only shore it could be done," said Billy, hesitatingly.

"Why, I'll guarantee it," said Carter. "Let me tell you what I'll do. I want to see more of farm work anyway.

I'll go with you twenty days and show you how, and if at the end of that time we haven't sold three thousand dollars' worth of territory, I'll give you back your note."

"Would you mind makin' a written contract to that effect?"

"Certainly not."

"Then I guess we can trade. We'll go to town to-morrow and fix up the papers."

"We needn't go to town. I have some blanks. We can fill them out here and go before a justice of the peace to sign them."

"Just as good as any. You fill 'em out to-night, all exceptin' the dates and names, and we can sign 'em to-morrow or next day."

The next afternoon Carter suggested they better fill out the papers, as his time was valuable.

To the farmer who has never known debt, the giving of a mortgage on the homestead is as tragic as a funeral.

They were in the squire's office at Buckeye Bridge. The papers were all spread out ready for them to sign; a four-thousand-dollar note due in six months, secured by mortgage on a certain quarter section of land.

Then there was a sale authority given by Carter to sell a patent churn in twenty-four counties, named, and a written contract whereby Carter agreed to assist in the sale for twenty days, guaranteeing three thousand dollars as the result of the sales.

"Now they are all right and square, are they, Mr. Carter?" Billy asked.

"Certainly," said Carter. "I ain't examined 'em, as I'm trustin' you as man to man."

"You can trust me," said Carter. The justice had given a warning cough, but Billy had not heeded.

"It dont pay to sign no papers till you've carefully examined 'em," blurted out the justice.

Billy hesitated. Carter looked blue flames at the justice.

"You may be sure they're all right, Mr. Houck," he urged persuasively.

"I'm trustin' you," said Billy, looking up at Carter.

He picked up the pen and his wife began to cry.

"It's all right, Mrs. Houck," said Carter, turning to her. "It means ten thousand dollars to your husband."

"All right for you to sign, ma," said Billy, getting up from the table.

She reluctantly signed, wiping her eyes as she laboriously scrawled her name on the papers.

Carter picked up the note and pocked it together with the mortgage. Billy took the patent right and the contract.

"I must drive to the county seat to-day and send some telegrams, said Carter, early next morning. "Will you catch my team for me?"

"Your horses are in the back pasture," said Billy. "You can ride in with me. I'm going that way."

They took two or three, and then went up until Carter ran upon an old friend.

"Well, what in thunder are you doing here, Carter?" asked the friend.

Let's have one," was the only reply. They took two or three, and then went up to the friend's room to have a chat.

"Here's to the Rubes, say I," toasted Carter, as he tipped the bottle again.

"Been workin' the Rubes?"

"You bet, said Carter. "No more of the city for me. A man has to work too hard for what he gets. Let me show you. There's four thousand in cool cash and two weeks' board thrown in. It's too easy," and Carter laughed exultantly.

"I intended to cash it to-day but the Rube loves me so he wanted to drive me in. I cash to-morrow and then fare you well my bonny hayseed. It's to the red lights and a flowing bowl for Johnny."

"What did you sell him?"

"A right on twenty-four counties to sell a patent churn."

"Good Lord!" and they laughed until tears ran down their faces.

"Whose churn?"

"Oh, the Lord only knows. One I picked up at a second-hand store."

"This thing comes in handy, too," he said, tapping the note. "I've only twenty left."

"Ma's been takin' on somethin' awful," remarked Billy, as the two men sat on the lawn that evening.

"Oh, she will get over it," he replied, rather lightly.

"To tell you the truth, I'm a little uneasy myself," said Billy.

"You see," he continued, "we think a powerful lot of this place. We commenced when we were first married in the little log cabin you see down there."



The Farmhouse Attic

By Frank Wakcott Hull

Oh, a day indoors when the tempest pours,
And the farm-roads run like rivers,
And the warp and woof of the gambrel roof
In the wild wind throbs and shivers!
Let the storm's full tide with its fierce broadside
Run its heedless course erratic,
I've a mind to stay where the children play—
In the ample farmhouse attic.

Play the old games through, as they used to do,
Oh, a century and over;
Wake the songs, my dears, of a hundred years—
Little Billy, Bell and Rover.
Shall we ever fail of the Red Man's trail,
Or the ocean voyage piratic,
And a score or so of the joys we know,
In the brown old farmhouse attic?

With a what care we for the storm's decree,
With our wholesome fun and laughter,
Let the rattling rain beat the window-pane
And the winds search eaves and rafter.
We are all storm-bound, but we're safe and sound,
And our pleasure's so emphatic
That our hearty shout drowns the noise without,
As we romp the farmhouse attic.