

THE greatest homage we can pay to truth is to use it.—R.W. Emerson.

## The Best Laid Schemes

(New England Homestead)

I GUESS we'll just hev to come to it, Ma."

Pa Turpy leaned up against the sagging gate, at an angle which favored his rheumatism, and chewed gloomily at a long substantial straw. The gloom, however, was distinctly lightened by a twinkle at the back of shrewd gray eyes under shaggy, grizzled brows.

Ma Turpy knew that twinkle of old. She had not summered and wintered Pa Turpy fifty years for nothing. She threw broadcast to a score of plump chickens the last handful of a measure of corn—all except one kernel, which hit the tip of Pa Turpy's grandly jutting nose with nonchalant precision.

"Elihu Turpy, what hev you got in your mind? Out with it! For I know you don't mean to sell this place, any more'n I do!"

"Easy, Ma, easy. You must admit that John an' Julietty kin put up quite an argymint agin our stayin' here. It does sound kinder bad to hear of an' old duffer seventy-one years old, an' his wife, who owns up to sixty-eight, livin' in a farmhouse on a crossroad, where it is middlin' lonely from November to May!"

"Elihu Turpy, ar you goin' to put up a 'Fur Sale' sign? An' after all you've said? I know that John an' Julietty ar the best children thet ever lived, an' they each hev a good home ready for us; but this house—thet you brought me to when I was only a schoolboy—an'an—the babies thet died—the little graveyard, Elihu!"

Elihu Turpy straightened up, took three firm long strides, and flung a sturdy brown denim arm about the plump, shapely blue gingham shoulders that were shaking piteously. "There, there, Mehitabel, I am goin' in on to remark that I had to promise John an' Julietty that I'd put up a 'Fur Sale' sign through June, when there's the most passin'—hed ter do that to pacify 'em—but, Ma, listen!"

—hed drew the dear head with its thick gray curls close to his strongly-beating old heart—"I reckon, Ma, thet ez long ez you an' me ar jest ez peart an' strong ez John an' Julietty, an' kin raise enough truck to keep ourselves, an' pay the taxes, we—shell—fall—to—get—a—customer—fer—this—place!"

And with this oracular utterance, Ma Turpy had to be content, for the time. But as she resumed her evening chores, she felt strangely comforted, and the strains of "Duke Street" and "Coronation" sounded forth triumphantly in the ringing soprano that for years had led the village choir.

That night, Ma and Pa Turpy lay awake for a full hour conversing in whispers, like the two old conspirators that they were, and giggling and snickering in a way quite in keeping with the buoyant kiddishness which neither had ever outgrown.

"The mouse in the wall" may have heard, between snickers, "malaria," "rattlers," "tramps," and "the ghost,

if he hev to!" But there were no other listeners, and the gray-headed bright-eyed plotters were scandalously safe from detection when they finally fell asleep in each others' arms, as they had done each night for fifty years save that dreadful three years when Elihu Turpy was away, fighting for his country.

The next day was June 1. Faithful to his agreement with "the children,"



The Substantial Home of a Well Known Ayrshire Breeder

Mr. Alex. Hume, Northumberland Co., Ont., whose home may be here seen, is one of the best known Ayrshire breeders in Canada. It was at this home that over 50 guests were entertained recently at the time of the Menie Ayrshire Breeders' Meet. The house is of squared stone; a most substantial structure.

Pa hoisted him on the firmest gatepost a finely flamboyant "Fur Sale" yellow letters on a sideboard of a derelict wheelbarrow.

That very afternoon, a big touring car, speeding by, was abruptly brought to a standstill, and its occupants, a lady and a gentleman, got out and came hastening up the walk with faces of shining expectancy. They had several times noticed the fine old colonial house, and spreading and splendid villas with its shadowy elms, of grand arbors, set amid green fields and pleasant pastures, and had coveted it for a summer home, and now it really seemed too good to be true, that it was really for sale.

Ma blew the horn for Pa, who was cutting bean poles down in the back pasture, and then proceeded to show off the old house—dutifully, and yes, even with enthusiasm. She quite let herself out in fact. She felt that she could trust Pa!

Pa came strolling up from the pasture, greeted the delighted prospective purchasers with elaborate courtesy, and took the job off Ma's hands. The lady waded enthusiastic over the grove, the maple groves, the pine grove, with its carpet of trilliums and arbutus—and when her eyes fell upon the fine, craggy old ledge at the back of the house, green with poplars, and birches and rock ferns, her adjectives gave out. "Such a charming eye to

climb, and there sit and read and write and muse!"

Pa Turpy smiled indulgently, but with a suggestion of melancholy, but we never had time to set an' muse there, an'—well, I guess I'd better be teetotally honest with you—if you buy the place you'd better—wall, there's been catters set there, an'—the lady gathered up her skirts and fled to the car, and the gentleman followed. He had not appeared quite as impressed as she by the snake story but evidently he was fairly well acquainted with his wife.

Pa watched the car fade away in a cloud of dust. Then he went in and sat down beside Ma, and took her hand.

"Didn't he use to anything but the snake story for this one? Ain't that economy, hey? They didn't even ask when a rattlesnake was seen on that ledge—but I don't believe it would hev made a mite of difference to the lady if she hed learned that the last one was killed fifty-six years ago!"

Ma giggled comfortably, unbound Pa's arm, and proceeded forthwith to concoct for him a distracting strawberry shortcake, filling it with berries which she had gathered that morning

in the fond of his would-be adoptive parents, he decamped one night, leaving behind him only an unwashed onion bed. But yes, there was another characteristic souvenir—an old bottle neck so adroitly fitted into a knot-hole beside the south attic window that as the wind, however light, brought forth walls and mounds that had rejoiced youth's imaginative sketch.

Marianny Tompkins, who came in, at strenuous supplications, so 'help out,' was scared nearly out of her wits one dusk of day, shortly after Tad's departure, as she opened the door at the foot of the attic, thinking to seek herbs suited to her "morality." The blood-curdling shriek that swept down on the wings of a rising east wind, which at the same time extinguished her candle, impressed her so indelibly that never again could she be induced to enter that attic, even in broad daylight, and when the winds were still, not even after Elihu Turpy had ferreted out the genesis of the "ghost." For some reason, however, because he had grown fond of that impudent Tad, and missed him—Pa Turpy had grown away that bottle neck. For twenty-five years he had survived the annual cleanings and cleanings—now, and at last, it came again to its own. There was never a more impressive illumination. Pa Turpy's benevolent countenance as he settled that bottle in its ancient place of business.

Ma aiding and abetting!

A stalwart lady who wished to fit up the place for summer boarders had nearly consummated a bargain, in spite of Pa's most adroit marshaling of the trio of terrors, when he hesitated, hummed, hawed, and asked her to come around and finish the business in the evening, as he must hurry to save some hay from a shower that threatened. His practiced weather eye saw exactly the right kind of east wind coming!

That evening as they were gathered around a table strewn with papers in the gloomy sitting room, Pa Turpy suddenly recalled that an attic window had been left open. Another shower seemed due, which would surely come in that direction. Excusing himself, he opened the door at the foot of the stairs. A shriek that far more than met his expectations ramped down the narrow stairway. The lamp flared wildly. The big willow beat sobbingly against the windows. The lady sprang to a leap and stood shaking like a leaf. Pa looked sheepish, and essayed, stammering to excuse the bargain. He would not own up to a haunted house, but his confusion of face was enough for the lady—"not that she was a nervous woman, nor the least bit suspicious of herself—far from it—but the boarders, herself—She rushed away, "nor cast one look behind!"

The conspirators fled to each other's arms, and roared and fro with inextinguishable laughter. And so the prospectives came and went—a tide of summer travel was at its height, and the old silver-gray house had never looked more attractive.

It was the evening of the thirtieth of May. Pa Turpy came in from milking old Bessie, and set down the brimming pail at the door. "Down comes that sign 't-morrer to-morrin'—early, sun-up. By hemp, Ma's fun, though it her ez into my mind like rum, though it's a hoin' is in a state. But we've fulfilled bargain—an' no harm done. Eh! Ma! But what of John and Julietty should find out?" He pinched Ma's plump, pink cheek.

"They won't—they won't! An' now they'll leave us in peace for a while. Seven o'clock—no danger of any more house burners! We can—"

(Continued next week)

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