

Appearances

(Continued)

no need to replace it.

Ettie put the cake in front of him. "It really doesn't cook good, and it's dirty, too," she said. "Besides the association is meeting here next week. I'm almost ashamed for the ladies to see my kitchen with that old-fashioned stove in it."

"The association?" Burr asked. He couldn't keep track of her various clubs. Ettie was a joiner, and where there was no existing club, she organized one.

"Yes," Ettie replied a little testily, "the D.C.B.A." Burr had little interest in her causes. He kept forgetting which one was which.

"The Dickinson County Beautification Association," she explained. "We're going to visit all the farmers who have agreed to let that advertising man put up sign boards on their property. It's a disgrace: disfiguring our lovely countryside with all those ugly ads!"

"Well," Ettie went on, "I've got to have a new stove before they come here for a meeting. After all, we've got to keep up appearances, you know."

THAT WAS A PHRASE Ettie used frequently. Burr didn't know why they had to keep up appearances, nor for whom, but Ettie was always repeating it.

"A state beautification association will be organized this Fall," Ettie said importantly. "The ladies who are coming Monday are sure to be on the nominating committee. So—" she added archly.

She came and stood beside him. "So there's a good chance I might be nominated for the presidency," Ettie closed her eyes and smiled. "Just think, state president." She glanced at him quickly and added, "But I've just got to have the stove."

It didn't quite make sense to Burr, but he did not want Ettie to explain further. "I don't know where I'd get the money," he said. "It'll be a month before

the hogs are ready to sell."

"Maybe you could get a loan at the bank," she suggested.

Burr sighed again. He enjoyed the old stove, the comforting sound of the fire roaring and the wood crackling as it burned. He shivered a little thinking of the house without it.

"I think I'll go into town this afternoon," Burr said. "Anything you want from the store?"

"No," ETTIE SAID. She prided herself on her efficiency. She went shopping once a week and never forgot anything. "Now don't you waste all afternoon with those loafers at Chapman's," she cautioned. She knew the men at Chapman's garage said she had worried her first husband to death.

Burr used to spend a lot of time at the garage. The crowd who hung out there nearly always had a card game going. The stakes were usually a penny a point, and Burr used to go home with the comfortable feeling of having won 40 cents or so. But not any more. Ettie was against gambling.

Burr reached in his pocket for his plug of chewing tobacco. Ettie frowned and cleared her throat. Burr knew from the sound that she was going to correct another of his faults.

"Chewing is unsanitary," she began, as if she were giving a lecture. "It's not healthy. It stains your teeth."

"Look, Ettie," Burr said slowly, "I've chewed tobacco ever since I was 15. It's just part of me now. You can't change 30 years of my habits."

He hadn't spoken out before at Ettie's attempts to reform him. He had gone along with everything. He was a quiet man, but he could be pushed too far.

After Burr's old truck had rattled off toward town, Ettie took a scrub brush and a can of lye and went to work. Burr had an old brass spittoon which he kept beside his chair. It was very heavy, and she had to drag it to get it outside.

After cleaning it, she placed it be-

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