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Bill Is Famous This Year

By GEORGE DIXON SNELL

WHEN he came in they all looked to see. But he didn't have anything under his arm. He acted like nothing was changed about him. The kids didn't run after him when he went into the hall to take off his coat and hat. They sat on the floor and kept on playing with the cat that had wandered in. The missus waited for him to come back into the kitchen and she looked kind of disappointed.

He came in sniffing around. "What you got to eat?" he asked.

She pointed to what was on the table and the stove, some bread and what looked and smelled like a stew of vegetables. He went and sat down and began to cut the bread. The missus called the kids to sit up to the table. After they were all started lapping up the thin soupy stuff he looked around slyly. Before ducking his head for another spoonful he said, "Well, what do you think?"

She said eagerly, "You ain't keep'n' a secret from us, are you?"

He continued to slurp up the stew, the kids watching him expectantly.

"You ain't got it, have you?" the missus said.

He wiped his mouth along the back of his hand and hitched back in his chair, tilting it off the floor. Across his face came a dignified look.

"I guess I'm a famous man," he said.

"You got it, Bill, huh?" she exclaimed, half getting up.

He was grinning and trying to look pompous too, looking as if he was mighty proud of himself.

"Let me see it!" she said.

The kids didn't know what it was supposed to be, but it was something important, they thought, from how their

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ma and pa were acting. They forgot to keep on eating, all except the smallest one.

"There ain't hardly a person in the country but will know who I am," he said.

"Didn't you bring it home?" the missus said, acting out of patience. She leaned over closer and demanded, "Did you get the money yet?"

"Oh sure, I got the money all right, that ain't bother'n' me," he said, acting as if he never thought about the money.

"Where is it then?"

He reached into his overalls and pulled out a folded, smudgy check, and she snatched it out of his hand.

"Why, it's only twenty-five dollars," she said.

"Well, what do you expect?"

"We can't live on that!"

He screwed his head around uncomfortably, avoiding her eyes. "They might start work again pretty soon."

"Yes," she snorted, "I know how that is. You'll be laid off until spring the way it always is."

The kids began to eat again because talking about money wasn't important. They were disappointed because they thought it was going to be something important.

"You act as if you don't care if I'm famous or not," he said.

"Yeah, I do," she said, looking at the check, "but when you ain't work'n' I can't help worryun."

"You act like you don't care if twenty million people know who I am."

"Twenty million people," she said in awe. "Think of that."

"Yeah, twenty million or maybe even more. You can't tell, it might be even more than that."

"Have you got it, Bill?" she said, insisting.

The kids looked at him again now, perking up because it began to sound important again.

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He pretended not to hear. "I'm pretty satisfied with the job they done," he said judiciously. "Yes, I might say I think they done a pretty good job."

"You seen it already then?"

"Oh, they might have put my name bigger but I guess nobody'll miss who it is."

"Bill, you show it to us if you've got it!" she commanded.

The kids wanted to see what it was but none of them said anything because if ma couldn't get to see it they certainly couldn't.

"I bet you ain't seen it yet at all," she said.

"Do you know who I am? I'm the great American workman with the courage of honest labor."

"You're a stubborn mule, that's what," she said. "You ain't a workman now neither, without you find a job pretty quick."

He looked at her as if she were too ignorant to understand what he was talking about.

"All right," he said, "if that's how you feel I ain't go'n a-show it to you."

"You better let me see it right now!"

He tried to look disgusted as he rose, but mainly he looked like he couldn't get to his coat fast enough. The kids all were climbing off their chairs, getting excited to see what was going to happen. The missus got up and began to follow him out, but he came back in immediately and he had it.

"All right, I'll show you someth'n' now," he said impressively, shoving the dishes aside and spreading the magazine out on the table. "It ain't every family can have a famous father."

Everybody was crowding around now, and he kept wetting his big thumb and turning the slick pages over, passing bright-colored ads and pictures of people in stories. All of a sudden he came to the page.

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"There's Pa!" the biggest kid crowed.

The missus took a good long look, and she couldn't say anything but, "Well, I'll declare, what do you know about that, I'll declare!"

He had a grin all over his face, he couldn't keep it off. One of the kids ran a sticky finger over the smooth paper, touching the face in the picture.

"Hey, leave off!" his pa cried, snatching the little hand away. "Don't you mess that up already."

"I'll declare," the missus said.

"Now, you see they ain't nobody could miss see'n' me there," he said.

"You take up a whole page," she whispered.

"Sure, that's a two-page ad. Look how it shows me work'n' on the lathe," he said admiringly.

"There ain't nobody else in the picture."

"What's it say, what's that read'n' say?" the biggest kid asked.

"It says, 'Bill Roberts won't be out of a job *this* year. Bill is the Great American Worker, he puts his faith in America. His confidence reflects the optimistic courage of honest American labor,' " she said.

"Think how many million people are look'n' at that picture right this minute," Bill said.

"I'll declare," the missus said. She kept looking at the picture and then at Bill. "I never noticed how handsome you look before."

"It goes to show you, a man can get famous overnight."

She read the whole ad through, and then she said, "It's wonderful. I think it's just wonderful."

"How much do you think it cost the Company to put that ad in there?" he said.

"I don't know, maybe a thousand dollars?"

"Say," he said deprecatingly, "this ain't a newspaper, this is a *magazine*! Why, I'll bet it cost five thousand dollars."

"The company spends that much for an ad?"

"Sure, easy that much."

She clucked in astonishment, sitting down to eat some more. The kids started asking if there wasn't something besides stew, and she gave them a little bread.

"Only why did they lay you off, when that says—"

"They laid off the whole shift," he said absently, staring at the picture. "But just think," he marvelled, "you can be nobody one day and famous the next."

Liturgy of Eagle's Nest Lake

By NORMAN MACLEOD

Graciousness is unselfish love extended, like a samaritan
 On the kindly roads of beauty: give us the generosity
 To be good to our own souls. Peace as an Indian word giver,
 The meaning lost through the long tradition of the years
 But the music soothing and ripe for the happiness
 Of content, firmly subsidual of rock. Whatever lover
 Comes on the low road of poverty, it is better
 To clasp loneliness to the heart and forget.
 In each personal body is the only salvation
 (Though words break barriers something is lost
 In the mad insanity of escape from one solitary prison
 Into the concentration camp of the earth). So as autumns
 Fly to winter and the cold breath of snow
 Frosts the land from valleys to mountain tops,
 Seek companionship in the knowledge of the heart
 (The handclasp of eyes in understanding) and hold
 The flickering blaze of firelights to the candle of beauty
 That wavering shadows be cast over the walls of your life.