

FRONTIERS NEW.

Fog, the murky might of winter in the north Pacific, hung over harbor and hills of the city as the dun gray of afternoon drifted into the duller drab of twilight. Beneath it lights began to glimmer in blurs of steel-blue from street arcs, of yellow from windows of shops and houses. Street cars, darting up and down steep thoroughfares, emerged through it with muffled clamor of gongs. From ships, hidden beneath the blanket of mist—rose throaty blasts of signals—signals of goings and comings of liners from the Orient, of coastwise steamers from San Francisco and Vancouver, of ferries, of fishing boats, of the myriad and motley craft of the Sound. It was a world of hearing rather than of sight, an eerie town through which the home-going crowds of the early evening moved like shadows, and David Burt felt something of its usual blitheness of spirit as he started up the hill.

From its beginning the day had gone ill with him. Margie hadn't wakened in time to get his breakfast, and he had quarreled with her while he had dressed in the dingy room. He had fasted until noon. The office auditor had found a mistake in his ledger. At the lunch-counter in the market he had met young Barry, all ready to sail in the morning to China and thrilled to the soul by his chance for high adventure.

"Come on with me, Davy," the boy had urged him. "There's a chance for another man. A fellow dropped out last night. You can get it if you try. Come on!" He had refused curtly, not daring to explain the ties which held him lest they snap under the pressure of defending them, Margie and the baby! All his life he'd have to think of them before he thought of himself—and he wasn't two years older than Barry, who had the wide world before him!

Through the long afternoon he had pored over involved statements of shipments which meant nothing to him except in the luring names of their destinations, Singapore, Malacca, Melbourne, Auckland, Colombo, Bombay. Conning them, he pictured the places, ports of call for the wayfarers of the seven seas. Other Burt's, going out from New Bedford in days long gone, had known them. His grandfather had known them in his boyhood. Back on the Michigan farm to which he had come when the Civil war was over, he had told Davy of their wonders. His father, going from the Great Lakes country to the prairies, had never seen them, but they had been the dream of Davy's youth, a dream he had forsworn with his freedom when he had promised to love and honor and cherish Margie. Well, he couldn't have them now. Facing the prospect of the dreary furnished room of their habitation, he tried to whistle back the courage which had brought him to the north-west, but even the whistling died away as he opened the door to the place he tried to call home.

Margie was sitting in a chair beneath the swaying rib of the electric light, reading. Her short, light hair, elaborately curled, haloed her thin, petulant face with its too rosy cheeks, its too red lips. She looked over her shoulder at David, acknowledging his greeting only by a raising of her clipped eyebrows. On the floor amid a pile of newspapers which she was tearing to shreds, the baby played. She lifted her arms to her father as he turned to her, and he lifted her, kissing her with an intensity of tenderness which he hardly realized had flooded him out of the sense of contrast between his child's environment and what his own had been in the spotless little farmhouse on the Nebraska plains.

"When do we eat?" he asked Margie, trying to keep his voice cheerful. "Whenever you take us out," she said, swinging her silken-clad leg over the arm of the chair. "Why can't we eat in? There's a stove, isn't there?" "Well, if you can make a meal out of a stove and nothing else, you're welcome to try." "Why didn't you get something?" "How could I?" "Why not?" "It takes money to buy food." "But I gave you two dollars this morning."

any farther, you'll have to choose Alaska. But I won't go with you. I can tell you that right here and now." "I'm not asking you to go any farther," he said sullenly. "I guess this is about the jumping-off place." "Then we'd better go back to Miles City."

"My folks never turned back once they started west." "Oh, you make me tired with your folks," she snarled. "You'd think they had an option on pioneering. What do you s'pose brought my gang to Montana?" "I've often wondered," he said. The baby, crying, crept close to him.

"There's no use in fighting like this," he said dully. "Put on her clothes, and we'll go out." She sprang out of the chair with the quickness of triumph and set about getting ready for departure. In an instant all her anger had evaporated, and with the magnanimity of victory she began to recount to him the petty details of her day. He listened apathetically as he put on the baby's bonnet.

"I wonder where you'll go from here," he thought as he stared at the child. "It's lucky you're a girl," he decided. "It'll be hell for a boy when there's no new places left." He lifted the baby and stood, waiting, for Margie's primping to end. "Can't we go to a movie after we eat?" she asked him from the mirror of the battered dresser.

"We can't go to a movie with her." "It won't hurt her." "I'll hurt her eyes." "Oh, she'll go to sleep." "You know she won't." "Well, if she can sleep through the shrieks of your old radio, she can sleep through anything." "That's different." "Oh, yes, it's different because it's yours. If I had something that I spent all the time and money on that you do on that, I guess you'd make racket enough. They could hear your roar up to Bellingham."

"You know why I spend money on it." He faced her over the baby's shoulder. "You know that I'm getting it in shape to do something that nobody else has done. I'm going to get London on that radio yet, I tell you!" His voice rose to conviction, and his eyes blazed. "I'm going to have a radio that'll beat them all!" "What good'll it do you?" she taunted.

"Good? What good did it do Marconi to make the wireless? What good did it do Maxwell to discover what he did? What about Pupin? Didn't all those fellows have to dream, and plan, and test, and tinker, and think before they ever got anything? What good? Why, if I can raise the Crystal Palace on that baby there, I'll have got through what nobody else ever has—fog, and mountains, and storms, and ocean! Think of it, all the way across the United States and the Atlantic Ocean!" "Well, I'll believe it when I hear it."

"You're going to hear it," he said, but the flame had died down with her taunting grin. "Ready?" he said shortly.

"Ready." The baby moved her soft hands over his face as he bore her outward. "Daddy loves you," he assured her in a tone louvered so that Margie could not hear it. She smiled at him and cuddled her head down on his shoulder.

"This is no night to take her out," he grumbled. "Well, it's your own fault," said Margie. She moved beside him, and her spirits rising as they moved with in a zone of clustered lights merging in the fog. "Let's go down the hill to Christensen's," she urged.

"I can't afford it." "You spent eight dollars for that coil," she reproached him. "I saw the bill." "Look here," he told her, "if I can make that radio do what I think I can, we'll all be riding the gravy wagon." "I'm sick of tomorrows," she said. "That's all I've ever had since I married you."

"Love you, Daddy," the baby crooned. "I love you," he told her. "It's a cinch he doesn't love me," Margie told the child.

She led the way into the chop suey parlor, showing toward a table near the wall and calling the waiter sharply. Under the spell of listlessness which he could not explain David fell silent while Margie ordered their dinner without suggestion from him. As she frowned over the card with its mixture of Chinese and English names he studied her furtively. She was just as pretty as she had been when they married, he decided. She hadn't changed much, not even in her assertiveness. He had known that quality in the days of their courtship, but it had amused him then, since it had not been trained upon him. No, she was just about the same, and he wasn't much different. What was it, then, that had come between them? Not the baby. They both loved her, each in a different way, to be sure, but devotedly. What was it? The circumstances of life? That was it, he reasoned. Neither of them was the sort for this haphazard, furnished-room existence. Margie had come from a home back in Montana, not elaborate, to be sure, any more than his own had been. They were both Americans, come out here to the end of the country, and what was it giving them? A sudden doubt assailed him with the memory of some long-forgotten words of his grandfather. "No country can give a man anything unless he gives it something first," he remembered. Perhaps that was why he hadn't made good in this land. He wasn't really giving anything. He wasn't a heaver of wood or a drawer of water. He wasn't making a home for his family. They were drifters, that's what they were, and it was his fault more than Margie's. She was nothing but a girl. But his time was coming. If the radio—

"You stick to me, old kid, and you'll wear diamonds yet," he told her suddenly.

She raised her thin eyebrows. "All the diamonds I'll get from you will come from the ten-cent store," she said. "Here, Baby, don't eat that salt. Why can't that waiter hurry?"

David felt back to his musings. What was the matter with the set anyhow? With the seven tubes it had the volume for raising any station. He'd tested them and retested them for strength. He'd tightened every screw until there wasn't another millimeter to be twisted. He'd brought in WEAJ all the way from New York above the local stations, above Denver, above a jazz orchestra in Omaha, above a concert in Chicago, higher than KDKA in Pittsburgh; but others had brought in New York, and Springfield, and Schenectady on other instruments which he knew could not only he could cut out the blur, if only he could swing through the static which the fog held down like a blanket over the coast, if only he could get London! That was the test. If he could meet it, he knew a dozen men ready to back him for the manufacture of the sets. Fortune—but it would be only the beginning. Other triumphs waited just beyond, just as grandfathers had waited for his grandfather and his father. If only he could win just once, he'd know himself for one of his blood, one of the crew of pioneers. If only—

"Well, why don't you eat it now that it's here?" he heard Margie asking him.

"I was thinking," he said stupidly. "Well, it's about time somebody thought," she retorted. "Don't eat that egg, Baby," she warned. "I believe you'd let her eat leather," she told David.

"Say, Margie," he said, putting down his fork, "would you be glad to live in a regular house if I could make the grade?"

"Would I?" Her blue eyes, lifted swiftly, were so hungrily fish-like that they hurt him. "Would a wild swim? But what's the joke?" "Margie, if this thing goes through, I'll be able to get money enough right away to pay the first instalment on a house. How about the new subdivision out on the hill?" "Toward the lake?" "That's it."

"Oh, David!" Longing throbbled in her voice. "But what the use? I can't bank on things the way you do. We've been living on 'ifs' for nearly four years."

"Don't you believe in me?" "I wouldn't have married you if I hadn't," she choked. "But, honest, I get so tired of it that I think I can't go on. We're not much good, Davy, either of us, I guess. I know my faults, but I know yours, too, and one of them is counting your chickens before they're hatched. You are a dreamer, and I'm not."

"Well, it's the dreamers who do the big things." "Some of them," she said, "and they've been the alphas for the rest of you, I guess, ever since the world began. I'm sorry, Davy, but I can't more gently, seeing the hurt in his eyes, "but you can't get me excited any more about how you're going to set the world afire. Baby, drink your milk!"

"I'm sorry, too," he said, and could say no more.

When they had ended their meal, he picked up the baby and started for the door. "You can leave us at the movie," Margie told him, "if you're going to work."

"She shouldn't go," he objected. "Oh, let's not fight any more," she said drearily. "I'm sick of fighting." "Then why—"

"Oh, I can't sit in that room day in and day out, and one night after night. I'll go crazy if I do. I hate it. You've got some place else to go. I haven't any place but a restaurant or the movies. I don't know a soul in this town, and even if I did, what could I do? I couldn't ask them to see us, and so I wouldn't go to them. If it wasn't for the movies—"

"I'll take you," he said. "You don't have to stay," she said, mollified by his offer. "I know you're dying to be tinkering at that radio. Well, you have it to yourself for a couple of hours. Say 'by-by' to Daddy," she admonished the little girl as they joined the crowd in front of the little motion picture house.

"You'd better buy some oranges for the morning," she reminded him as he turned away after buying her ticket. He went back to the room, but with a lighter heart in spite of his continued battling with Margie, for the knowledge of two unbroken hours for his testing cheered him. He whistled blythely as he sat down in front of the instrument and shouted with delight at the sound of the roar which greeted him as he pulled out the plug. "Attaboy," he triumphed. "Now we're going to go!"

He twisted the dials with expert fingers as sounds of music, of speeches, of ship signals blared forth, filling the little room with strange echoes of distant places. Strains of an orchestra from San Francisco, of a band from Calgary, of a reader from Kansas City, of a chorus in Dallas crowded each other. He was tuning in on KYW from Chicago when the staccato call of an S. O. S. clamored from a ship out at sea, driving all the coast stations from the air. Through Chicago he worked eastward, lifting New York at last. A tenor's voice, exclusively lovely, sang through the horn in heart-melting balladry, but David Burt, pushing toward triumph of his own, recked nothing of the artistry of what he heard.

"She's coming in fine," he murmured, his fingers caressing the delicate instrument. "We'll get through," he told it. "We'll make the grade." Minutes sped as he labored, heeding nothing except in its relation to his ultimate object. His jaw set with the tension, and his eyes grew glazed in his effort. "I've got to get through," he told himself over and over again. The rasping harshness of interference set him swearing bitterly, and

he twisted and turned until he had blotted it out. Carefully he re-examined condenser and transformer, wire connections and batteries. Searchingly he studied the comparative glow of power in the tubes. Tentatively he cut from the seven to the six-tube strength, only to swing back again.

"That ought to get it," he thought, but a tiny ray of discouragement crept into his tone. "Oh, Lord," he muttered, "it'd only clear, so that I could beat this static!" Then, with the grimness of the pioneer, he went back to the dials.

Every possible permutation and combination of condenser dial and wave-length trembled under his lithe hands. Station after station, some big, some little, some on the Pacific, some on the Atlantic, some on the Gulf, some on the Great Lakes, some in Oklahoma others in Georgia stayed in long enough to inform him of their numbers, then faded out under his restless twisting. A magician of long ever since you married me. What's the surprise in that?" "I never said it." "You thought it." "I never did! Davy, what's the trouble? Is it that? Her glance went to the radio.

"Oh, that's part of it. I thought I could make a go of it, but I can't." "Why not?" "I don't know."

"You're tired out," she said. "That's what's the trouble. You work all day long hard at one thing that you don't like, and you try to stay up all night working on something you do." "But what else can I do? It's the only chance a fellow has to get on."

"I suppose so," she admitted. She stood in the yellow light, her lips moving restlessly. "Davy," she went on, "I've been thinking a lot, too. Do you think you'd get on better if Baby and I went away?" "Where?"

"Well, I could go back to Miles City. Pa's kind of lonesome since Ma died, and I guess he'd be glad to have us."

"And leave me?" "Well, I guess you could stand it. Her tone was desolately flat. "We haven't made much of a go of it, and you wouldn't mind much." "Do you want to go?" He was trying to keep his voice steady.

"Well, I don't ache to go, but I don't want to stay when I'm not wanted." "It's because you know I can't make good," he declared.

"You know it's not." She whirled around to face him. "You know that's a lie. I've stood beside you through everything, and you know it. Have we ever been anything but poor?" "Fair," she said. "Say, she's getting heavy."

"Sure, she is. You don't suppose they'd let me keep her through the whole show if she hadn't dropped off? Lucky for me she did."

She began to undress the child, who awakened in the process and cried sleepily. "I wish you'd turn that off for a while," Margie complained. "She'll never get to sleep with it going full blast. I don't see why you can't use headphones. Other people do."

"I've told you fifty times," he said impatiently, "I've got to have some volume for distance that the headphones would blow off the top of my head."

He shut off the plug, however, and set a model for a statue of restrained desire as he waited for her to put the baby to bed. The child sank back into sleep almost as soon as her head touched the pillow, and Margie drew up a chair under the light and resumed the book she had been reading when he had come home.

"Can I start now?" he asked her. "Go ahead," she said apathetically. "Once more he swung back into the wide circuit of sound, but once more the object of his struggle evaded him. "It's in there somewhere," he thought, frowning over the apparatus. "I've got the volume for it, and the range, and it ought to come."

Again he filled the room with every variety of noise, while Margie sat motionless, apparently immersed in her novel.

"Don't you want to go to bed?" he stopped long enough to ask her. "What's the use?" she said. "I couldn't sleep. Getting anything?" "Not yet."

mist before the coming of his tears. He couldn't get it. He couldn't get anything. He was a dud. What was there in life, anyhow?

"Oh, hell!" he muttered, shoving in the plug and staring ahead of him sightlessly. "What's the matter?" Margie's voice came sharp across his musings.

"Nothing." "Something is." "No, there isn't." He turned away his head that she might not see his face, but he knew that she had put down her book to watch him. Suddenly she rose, and came across the room to him.

"Davy, are you sick?" she demanded. "No."

"Then what is it?" "Nothing—new." "Well, what's the old?" "Oh, the same old thing. I'm no good, that's all."

"What?" "I said it, what you've been thinking ever since you married me. What's the surprise in that?"

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"My mother stuck all right." Her voice wavered. "It killed her, though, in the end."

"My mother's alive." "Maybe your father's different from mine. Maybe—are you like your father, Davy?"

"Some ways. Oh, Marge, be a sport! This can't go on this way. I—I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll sell the radio tomorrow for anything it'll bring, and you can buy yourself a dress, and—any maybe we could get a flat somewhere and buy a little on the instalment plan, and—"

"I won't let you sell it," she protested. "It's your way out. You're right about it. It is new country. And I guess we're pioneers. And—and if my mother could stand it when Montana was what it was when she came, I guess I can stand it."

"Marge!" He jumped up to catch her in his arms, pressing her too-rouged cheeks close to him, and lifting her face then to kiss her too-red lips. "I love you," he said brokenly.

"Well, how do you suppose I feel when I'm staying?" she tried to say lightly, but her voice broke. "Oh, I love you, Davy," she sobbed. "I love you enough to do it, if you want me to go."

"I don't want you to go," he said, and knew that he spoke the deeper truth of life. He didn't want freedom now, if it had to be bought with the baby and Margie. He'd make good for them, somehow, even if it weren't on this line. "Life wouldn't be living without you," he told her.

She smiled up at him, then slipped out of his embrace. "Don't you want to try again?" she asked him. "You're going to get it sometime, honestly, Davy," she soothed him as she sometimes promised sweets to the baby. "You'll bring it in."

"Oh, I don't know," he said, but the weariness had gone from his voice. "Maybe some night when the fog isn't so heavy—"

"You'll hear it roar, and then something'll snap, and the announcer's voice'll say—"

"Crystal Palace." "One-two-three—XY." "Two LO London!"

"You'll get it, Davy, tomorrow." "Tomorrow." They stood, smiling at each other in anticipatory joy. "I'll cut down that C battery," he said. "Maybe four-and-a-half's too high for it. I'll try it one less."

"I bet that'll do it, Davy—dear." She moved out toward the window, lifting the shade, and David snapped off the light. Below them lay the lower streets of the city, and beyond that, the harbor. In long streamers of cloud the mist which had hidden the Sound and the hills was floating away. A crescent moon shone dimly through the fleecy whiteness. Lights of street arcs twinkled bright blue; lights of houses gleamed yellow. Searchlights on steamers flared over the water. David put his arm over Margie's shoulders as they stood, watching.

"Fog's lifting," he said. "Static'll be better." "Tomorrow'll be clear," she told him. "Who cares about tomorrow now?" He drew her closer. "Tonight's ours."

"Ours," she said, and closed her eyes under the fire of his kisses.

Old-Fashioned Football Game Thing of the Past. Hard, straight football of the old-fashioned type is disappearing and trickery is taking its place, in the opinion of Dewey Graham, Norwich university gridiron coach.

He believes that the new rules are responsible for less interesting football for the spectators, a loss of the body contact element and inferior play in several phases of the game.

"The game is more of a puzzle than a pleasure for the spectators," Graham complains. "Penalties inflicted in former years were nearly all understood by the spectators, but this year there are numerous weird rules calling for penalties that are entirely unknown to the average fan."

"The new rules tend to distract attention of players from the game. Too much is being left to the judgment of officials. Good officials are few. A great many games will be unjustly won or lost by decision of referee, umpire or head linesman rather than an opponent's errors or luck. The players had enough rules under the old system."

Tenant Has No Right to Make Repairs on Flat. Very often a tenant will assume to make repairs without authority from the owner or his agents and deduct the cost from the rent. This he cannot do and maintain his action.

The courts have ruled that a lease of premises under seal, the parties become merged in the instrument itself, and any evidence as to understanding and intention to aid its construction cannot be used to vary the terms of the lease itself.

Where the lease contains a specific agreement between the parties as to certain repairs to be made by the lessor it would be binding upon the landlord, but under no other condition.

Divorces Exceeding Marriages. Divorce has registered another increase in the United States, census bureau figures for 1926 reveal.

Divorces advanced 31.1 per cent last year over 1925, and marriages only 1.2. If allowance is made for increase in population during the period, an actual percentage drop is shown for marriages while divorces gain.

Marriage vows were taken by 1,202,079 couples in 1926, or 10.26 marriages for every 1,000 inhabitants. The year previous the average was 10.30. The rate for divorce was 1.54 in 1926 against 1.52 in 1925, judges having untied 180,868 knots last year besides granting 3,823 annulments.

The "Watchman" is the most readable paper published. Try it.