

THE FARMER'S BURDENS

A government survey covering 816 farms in Linn county which cash rents were paid showed that in 1920 the average rent was \$2.47 per acre and the average valuation was \$70. This means a gross return to the owner of 23 per cent, from which taxes and other items must be deducted. Farm prices have varied since 1920 it is believed that rents have practically followed them, so that the situation is substantially the same.

On page 3 is a chart showing the farmer's conception of the principal sources of his unequal burdens. The chief of these is low prices of farm products as compared with those of what the farmer must buy.

The government daily market news service, under date of November 14, shows the gauntlet that has to be run by a grower of Oregon apples and the number of profits taken from it before it reaches the consumer in New York. The New York retailer took \$1.87, the jobber took 49c, the wholesaler 39c, the railroad 80c, the shipping organization 27c, leaving \$1.18 of the \$5 the box of apples sold for, for the grower. The retailer got more profit on the sale than the grower got for the entire season's labor and expenses.

The solution of this problem is co-operative marketing. Where this has been tried it has more often been a failure than a success not because the principle is wrong but because of faulty application. Some, like the Pacific Coast Poultry Producers, have been so managed as to relieve the farmer of a portion—a small portion—of the unconscionable toll the middlemen rake off between him and the consumer. More must be done along this line, but wise as the serpent is a co-operator who can so steer the enterprise as to avoid the pitfalls craftily dug in its path by the profit taking go-betweens.

There are those who fear the great Farm Bureau marketing corporation, in acquiring the business of five leading Chicago produce gambling firms, with a seat in the exchange and a string of mid-west warehouses, has paid too much for its whistle. Let us hope not while we await the outcome. Our sympathies are all on the side of the bureau.

The second handicap, in the opinion of these farmers, is high taxes. These are not going to be reduced by another expensive congressional investigation, to discover facts already known, nor by a \$40,000 campaign to beat an Oregon income tax, nor by sending to Salem a legislature composed of lawyers and city traders.

Merrill, 30 miles south of Klamath Falls, has discharged its policeman because there is nothing for him to do. Halsey is equally well-behaved. Both are little towns surrounded by prosperous farms. Compare them, as locations for happy homes, with large cities like Seattle, where police are accused of bootlegging and children get drunk at school.

Soon the legislature will be in session. Then look for the press lobby to urge the publication in the newspapers of the matter now put forth in the voters' pamphlets thus substituting one extravagance for another. Abolish the whole thing.

The department of agriculture recommends paradichlorobenzene to repel clothes moths. No self-respecting moth will stay where such a word as that is tolerated.



SINNERS IN HEAVEN

BY CLIVE ARDEN

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(Continued)

A few minutes, and Croft's illusion of a friendly compact was destroyed. Hostility was evident. He soon realized that an attack was being organized for the following night, though he could not distinguish the plans being laid.

Emboldened by the absence of any sign of their enemy, the men remained standing for several minutes, gazing down the slope at the solitary hut wherein Barbara lay unprotected. At last, after an indistinct colloquy, they moved slowly forward in its direction.

For a moment Croft's heart seemed to stop beating. To expose himself, unarmed, would mean certain death, and the consequent abandonment of the girl, whose life now rested upon his, to a fate probably far worse. Inside the hut, if he could but reach it, lay the suitcase containing his revolver. Should he risk all and dash from his hiding place or—? A sigh of relief escaped his lips when the men suddenly halted. For what seemed an eternity they watched them confer together, evidently divided in opinion on the wisdom of their venture. When at last they turned and made off toward the south of the island, he found his clenched hands, were shaking and his brow was wet. He hurried down to the hut, where he found a white-faced girl ineffectually barricading the door with suitcases.

She uttered a welcoming cry on his appearance at the window.

"How did you escape? Where were you? What can we do?"

To his own amazement perhaps as much as hers, he laughed—almost happily.

"They have gone away," he replied. "We can't do anything at present."

She gazed at him in some bewilderment, knowing nothing of the reaction which had caused that strange flight in his face; and he laughed again, boyishly; then leaned farther in for a closer inspection of the blue-clad figure with its cloud of hair.

"You are better?" she asked.

The paleness of her cheeks changed suddenly to red under his scrutiny.

"I'm all right," she muttered, turning away.

"I will go back for the water," he remarked; and his face disappeared from the aperture.

Barbara's mind was uncomfortably confused. Safe in some refuge, she had seemed to be sleeping for hours. When she awoke she instinctively sought for a hand which proved not to be there. Throughout the terrified moments that ensued, vague impressions of some midnight event chased elusively through her brain. They were intensified by Croft's appearance. Vainly she tried to capture the threads; to separate the real from the chaos of delirium. All was confusion, jumbled repetitions of accumulated horrors. She caught first at one thread; then lost it and caught at another. But ever at one point her cheeks burned. How much was true? Surely not—The more she thought, the more convinced did she become of its incredible reality. How could she face her companion? He alone could place the unraveled threads in her hands. But how to make him do so? How—

So engrossed were her thoughts that she started violently at the sound of his voice again at the window.

"Your nerves are awfully weak," he remarked.

"They are not!" she snapped indignantly. Was she always to feel foolish and, above all, appear so, with this man?

Opening the door, she took in one of the basins, without looking up.

A scented, steaming bath could not have been more welcome than that little basin of cold water. The fresh breeze invigorated her, reviving a girl's interest in appearances. Unpacking a tiny traveling mirror, she proceeded to do up her hair, dressing in one of the cool washing frocks intended for Australia.

Croft was thumping on the hut, demanding breakfast, before the completion of this toilet. His quick glance took in her dainty and very civilized appearance down to the gray suede shoes; but he made no comment.

Again the contents of the old tin box proved invaluable, with the addition of bananas and coconuts. They spread their store upon the ground outside, in the early morning sunshine.

Conversation languished. Croft seemed abstracted, deep in thought. Her riddle of the night lay unsolved.

face, she made a plunge.

"I want to know—"

"Yes? What?" Quickly his eyes searched her own, causing her to lower them confusedly.

"I can't remember what happened—I'm afraid I—did I behave rather stupidly, last night?"

He stretched out his hand for a banana, peeling it with irritating deliberation before replying.

"You were, naturally, slightly unhinged after all your experiences." This guarded reply was unsatisfactory.

She felt exasperated. Looking across at him, she fancied the suspicion of a smile hovered around his lips.

"You realize, of course, that anything I did—or said—was because—I mean, it was not my normal state!"

"Oh, I quite realize that!" His tone caused her to look up quickly again.

"Why are you laughing?" she asked uneasily.

"Why are you so afraid?" he retorted.

Nonplused, she took refuge in a dignified silence. Finishing her breakfast, she looked round the bay—at the rugged hill beside them, the palms and dense forest trees in the background, the coral shingle and white sand stretching down to the magnificent blue of the lagoon, in the distance the reef and vast stretch of limitless sea; the intensely vivid colors and contrast shone in the sunlight with extraordinary brilliance.

"It's all very beautiful," she said at last, conversationally.

"It is!" he agreed warmly, rising to his feet. Bringing his mug filled with water, he sat down close beside her.

"Now, please mend my head."

Barbara was concerned over his pallor and the lines surrounding his eyes.

"You look worn out!" she exclaimed involuntarily. "Didn't you sleep well last night?"

"Not a wink!" He glanced quickly up at her. Whereupon her unraveled confusion returned fourfold; and she finished her job in silence.

"I'm going up the hill to the wireless," he observed then. "You need not fear the natives. They won't return until they have mustered their numbers."

At her look of alarm he continued hurriedly: "I've got a scheme for scaring them off altogether. I shan't be long away. If you shout, I shall hear."

There was no suggestion of her company being required. She watched him disappear, with a sickening sense of the oppressive loneliness that she dreaded; but pride forbade her uttering a word to detain him. Then, with unconscious imitation of Croft, she threw her head a little back; clenched her hands; and entered the hut.

While the natives hurried to the south, to prepare for battle, the man sat on the ground beside the transmitter, staring out to sea, his brain working on the scheme to which he had just alluded; his mind torn between conflicting decisions. In this predicament, at the mercy of a tribe of hostile savages, there were but two forelorn hopes of defense. One lay in the little weapon down in the hut, with its limited supply of ammunition; the other in the inherent superstition of the islanders. If once the latter could be roused; if his ruse, for all its wildness, succeeded, their lives might yet be safe. On the other hand, wireless messages might reach a ship in time. There was not enough electrical energy for both purposes.

Which should it be?

"My God!" he muttered to himself. "Was ever a man in such a d-d position?"

IV

No better tonic could have been given to Croft's mind than this necessity for immediate action. Until he had made his decision and the details were matured, he forbore to alarm Barbara with the prospect before them.

For about two hours he was absent. Then a spiral of gray smoke ascended from the hilltop, and he appeared with his arms full of wire.

"I have left a beacon burning, in case a passing vessel—" Abruptly he ceased, standing still, his eyes upon the figure emerging from the hut.

"A transformation!" he exclaimed; and there was a strange new tone in his voice.

The dainty shoes and stockings had been discarded, the hairpins thrown away. With a long thick plait swinging down her back, sleeves rolled up, bare feet sinking in the sand, she

flushed him a shy look of inquiry.

"It seems more natural—here," she said.

Thus did Barbara take the first step from out the net of lifelong conventions, and tread the free spaciousness beyond.

"You fit in so well—as if it is your natural sphere!" she added.

He smiled half to himself, rather wondering she approached, looking, he thought with compunction, extremely young and delicately made. To inform a sensitive girl of the forthcoming attack of possible cannibals was, to Croft, ten times more formidable than meeting them single-handed. He was not versed in the handling of these situations.

Taking her hand, he drew her down close beside him; then, in a few curt sentences, he told her.

The fingers he held closed convulsively upon his own; her free hand clenched itself upon her knee; the faint color drained away, leaving her face quite white.

"Can't we go—hide somewhere—on the reef?" she urged, turning dark eyes of fear upon him.

He shook his head. Very thoughtfully, from every point of view, had he considered the position. Should they, by hiding, elude the natives tonight, it would be but a respite. The same danger would surround them every moment they spent here; they could never know peace or safety. For some reason these natives were hostile; something must be done to overcome their hostility. Until and unless a friendly compact could be made, they must be forced to leave the two white people alone, through fear. All this he explained to the girl, who recognized the wisdom of it, as well as what she deemed the impossibility.

"Two! Against, possibly, hundreds! How can we make them fear us?" she asked hopelessly.

"Through their superstition," he replied promptly. "Once make them believe we deal with the supernatural, or possess magical powers, and they will make us tabu. The dread of death or disease from violating a tabu will cause them to shun us like lepers."

Barbara, inexperienced in natives' ways, was only half convinced. She listened incredulously to the scheme he propounded, her knowledge of electricity being limited.

"I will get some sticks," he concluded, rising; "and place everything in readiness; then I shall turn in for a bit. This afternoon we'll strengthen the walls of the hut; and I'll put up a partition. Then we shall each have a room until we can build another hut. Plenty of work before us, if rescue doesn't come soon!"

Silently, she helped to collect sticks, an extraordinary numbness pervading her mind. Croft's spirits rose. He had faced and eluded death too often to fear it. His confidence in this simple ruse puzzled her.

Collecting the rubber shock absorber belonging to the wireless outfit, he broke the sticks into short stakes, showing Barbara how to cover them. This done, he proceeded to fix them firmly in the ground round the hut, then attached the aerial to the top of each; thus forming a wire circle a few inches above the ground, as far from the hut as the amount of aerial permitted. The two ends were carried through the entrance and connected to the transmitter within.

"Now!" he exclaimed, "when I wave, press the key on the transmitter here, and watch the result!"

He went out to the wire; and, kneeling down, placed one hand about half an inch above it. Raising the other, he gave the signal.

She pressed the key as directed. Immediately, a series of bright blue sparks flashed, like fireflies, from the wire to his hand, which he repeatedly jerked away; then, delighted with its success, he returned to her.

"You see," he explained, "the volume of current is always large with wireless, therefore it takes effect by sparking at the moment of contact. The human body is, of course, a conductor! Our visitors will get the shock of their lives—especially as they usually approach any object of attack by waddling along on their stomachs!"

He chuckled with the anticipatory enjoyment of a schoolboy over a practical joke; then suggested having some food.

Mechanically she fetched Aunt Dolly's box and drew out tins of beef and coffee, heroically trying to share in his confidence.

He talked on, compelling her to attend, diverting her thoughts until the meal ended, covertly watching her every expression. Then he drew her within the hut, to rest.

Mechanically again, she entered, going to the little window and looking out, dreadingly, toward the palms. He fixed up the door, then came over to her.

"You don't feel at all nervous?" he asked nonchalantly.

She turned, with a forced smile.

"Oh, no! . . . Dear me, no!"

"Of course not," she answered, with terrific emphasis.

"That's all right! You're a plucky soul for a girl!"

She flashed an indignant look at him, which, in spite of herself, faded as she met the unsuspected laughter in his eyes.

"You wanted adventure!" he reminded her. "You wanted to 'feel life,' to learn the 'meaning' of things, to sound the 'deep chords.' Well! You have your heart's desire—at the very bedrock of nature! Seize it, Barbara! Drink to the very dregs!"

Then tell me if you have discovered what—is missing."

Surprised, she listened silently. He turned away, laid one of their coats just inside the door, and threw himself down upon it. Within a few minutes he was sleeping, the sleep of sheer exhaustion.

But the girl sat for long under the little window, lost in thought, wondering over his words. And ever her mind reverted to one sentence. A few words of praise from one whose opinion you have unconsciously learned to respect, and what a world of courage do they bring in their train!

There are no pleasant hours of twilight in the tropics. The sun sets, and soon the world is wrapped in darkness. It had disappeared behind the west hill, and already a few stars were showing in the swiftly darkening sky, when Croft came out of the

hut to where Barbara was collecting the remains of their supper. He carried something in his hands.

"Do you understand a revolver?" he inquired.

She turned round, mingled fear and relief in her face. "Have you one? No; I have never fired one in my life. I wouldn't dare!"

"Well, I want to show you how to use this little beast, in case anything goes wrong and you are left—"

She laughed, miserably.

"If they manage to kill you, they will soon finish me off!"

He regarded her in silence, for a moment.

"They wouldn't kill you," he said quietly. "Do you understand my meaning?"

Her face went very white. For a few minutes she paced up and down.



"They Wouldn't Kill You," He said. "Do You Understand?"

manus crept, racing this new terror, striving to control herself before this man whose very look discouraged weakness. The coolness of his bearing, as he stood playing with the weapon in his hands, calmed her, bracing her to a simulation of the same fearlessness.

"Show me," she said, going to him. Quietly, as if explaining the mechanism of a watch, he explained how it worked.

"I will load it, and fix it ready for use," he concluded.

And the girl who, in England, had shrunk from all firearms, took the little weapon from him eagerly, welcoming it as a valued friend bringing, possibly, the greatest succor of all. . . .

As they sat in the dark hut, upon their upturned suitcases, near the window aperture, the strain upon Barbara's nerves became almost unbearable. With every minute her faith in the electric ruse, never strong, grew weaker; until it ebbed away, leaving only a ghastly death, or worse, creeping nearer with the rising of every star. . . . She faced the moment when, her companion slain, she would seize the revolver, turn the dark muzzle to her fluttering heart, place her finger on the trigger. . . .

She clasped and unclasped her clammy hands, sitting upright; then crouching back against the bamboo. . . . Only fear of disgrace in her companion's opinion restrained her wild impulse to rise and flee somewhere—anywhere—to escape this fearful ordeal. Had Croft touched her or spoken, her control would have snapped altogether. But he sat perfectly still, his gaze fixed upon the dark slope down which their enemies would come, his mind apparently oblivious to all else.

As she watched him, her fevered brain seemed gradually to grow calm, her faith in his confidence and ingenuity to strengthen. . . . The strain relaxed. Hope struggled feebly within her heart. She no longer felt the wild desire to scream or to escape. Her clenched hands parted, and she sat back with a sigh.

Those who, from lack of imagination and its sense of fear, face a terrible ordeal with gallantry, are justly called brave; but those who, tortured by these possessions, foreseeing all with shrinking dread, yet meet it with no outward flinch, deserve the laurels of heroism. Some such thoughts flitted through Croft's mind, as he sat waiting, fully conscious of the suffering silently endured by his companion. When she relaxed against his shoulder, he drew a breath of relief. . . .

What seemed like hours passed in the silence and darkness. Then Barbara suddenly raised her head.

"Have I been asleep?" she whispered, in astonishment.

He turned to answer, whipping suddenly back to the aperture, and craning forward. A sound had reached his intent ears—the faint distant creptition of snapping twigs.

Now that the dreaded moment had arrived, Barbara was conscious of an utter lack of agitation. Save that her fingers closed upon his arm, she gave no sign; her eyes followed his, peer-

(Continued on page 4)

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