

# SINNERS in HEAVEN

## By CLIVE ARDEN

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PART THREE—Continued.

She sprang to her feet, breathing quickly. "Alan! What are you saying! Don't! Don't!"

"Why not?" he asked, getting up, too. "We can't remain blindfolded forever."

The mists fell from a huge mountain peak, and the color ebbed from the girl's face. "Ah!" she murmured, clasping her hands. "Isn't the present—perfect? Don't precipitate—"

He took her by the shoulders, forcing her to face him. "We are only human," he said, in a low voice; "and, Barbara—I want my wife!"

She pressed her clenched hands against him, hiding her head upon them. "Oh, not yet! Don't think me obtuse, Alan. I have thought, too, and—"

"What have you feared?"

She did not reply for a moment; he waited, motionless.

When every accustomed bulwark of life has been demolished, the foundations of a fresh building are laid necessarily in a troubled soil composed of struggle, temptation, agonies of uncertainty. The undeveloped girl, blindly groping after the "hidden want" in a materialistic environment, had gone forever.

As the ripened corn sprung from its buried seed, the woman, sublime in her love, glories in the growing courage of the inner self she had tried to stifle, had arisen.

"We have found the true keynote here," she murmured brokenly at last, "and we must keep it tuned aright. I wouldn't, for the world, spoil the beauty of everything."

"You couldn't—ever," he whispered into her hair. "But love is a terrific force which can't be turned on and off like hot water; or compressed into narrow preconceived channels."

He suddenly threw his arms round her and strained her to him. "Barbara! why should we be done out of our rights? We've been chucked out of the world; stripped of everything that made life worth living. But now we have discovered the greatest treasure of all. Are we to give that up because of—scruples? By G—d!"

With sudden anger he loosed her, clenching his hands, "I won't! I'm d—d if I'll agree to that! It isn't fair. You say I always get my way. Well—some time—"

She met calmly the passion and threat in his eyes. These untamed forces no longer alarmed her, as they would have done six months ago.

"Alan!" she protested, holding out her hand. He ignored it, gazing still upon the peculiar radiance of her face. She went to him, lifting both hands to his shoulders, her lips tremulous. "There is more to be considered . . . not only ourselves. . . My darling! don't you realize we are man and woman, and—? Her flushed face sank on his breast. "Don't you see?" she whispered. "Others! Not—scruples."

A long silence succeeded her broken words. His arms closed around her again, and again he hid his face in her hair.

He raised his head at last; and as he pulled her hands down into his own his face looked strangely drawn. "God help us both, Barbara!" he muttered huskily. "For we are in the very heart of a position." There was a strange blending of fear and adoration in the eyes of both, while they looked upon each other. "But I—I swear I'll—I'll never force you to anything. Always remember that. And, for heaven's sake, don't—let me forget! I'm so d—d human," he added, with naive pathos.

For the first time since she knew him, she heard a lack of confidence in his tone. Conscious of those forces of nature against which they were but puppets, all the woman in her rose to meet him.

"We can never lose faith in each other, Alan. That will help us. But—" she looked at the dearly loved figure. For one illuminating instant, as that marriage would mean between them flashed into her heart, awakening the mother dormant within her. "Ah! But it's going to be hard—hard—hard!"

The cry burst, involuntarily, from her lips. All the love and longing which inspired it shone in the gaze which seemed to envelop him as a glowing fire. . . For a space he stood silent, lost with her in a world which neither had dreamed of before. Then he stepped forward with a muttered ejaculation, and they cling together as they had clung on their first night on the island—two derelict beings swept over the world's edge.

"Go in," he whispered tremulously at last. "I can't come to supper tonight. I must go away alone for a bit . . . and think . . . You've opened a new world to me tonight."

He kissed her with lingering gentleness, and turned away toward the shore. Barbara walked slowly into the hut. But to her, also, food seemed impossible just then. That moment's illumination had opened up a new world for her, too—a world which, it seemed she was never to enter! . . . With a little sobbing breath she went into the sleeping hut and threw herself face downward on her bed.

The mountain peaks enveloped them. Try as they would, they could never quite free themselves from it.

Distractions of any sort became urgent; but to find them, in this small island, was no easy matter. However, Alan, after mentally viewing the land, took what frail material there was and wove it into ropes of support. That the ropes might break he could not foresee.

He turned once more, in pathetic hope, to the natives.

During the months since their first visit to the settlement, he had come to occupy the unique position of a semi-divine Overlord. His orders, issued at first in the spirit of bluff, were obeyed. This at first surprised, then amused, him. After a time, it afforded him intense interest. His orders regarding cleanliness were receiving extraordinary consideration; irrigation work had been undertaken. Now, he plunged with new zest into this novel training of prehistoric minds. He ordered the cultivation of taro to be reinstated; tapestry-weaving from reeds to be revived. All this originating from fear, not inclination, slowly awakened the natives' interest, which increasing, caused much of their lethargy to vanish.

Within a few weeks, the last signs of a threatening new epidemic of sickness vanished, and the settlement became more wholesome. This being attributed to the what man's magic, their fear blended into a crude awesome affection, which struck Alan as pathetic. Gradually his visits became hailed even with delight. For, in matters of dispute, Chimababoi appealed to him, relying more and more on his counsel. And, swayed by none of the opposing elements, he dealt with a severe justness, yet humaneness, which they found both novel and attractive. Withal, he braced them, stimulating their latent powers, much in the same way in which he had stimulated Barbara, by the mere force of his own vitality.

Her own interest in these people grew apace. From Alan she learned some of the dialect, very soon being able to speak a little herself. Some-

times she brought the children odd bits of ribbon or lace, which produced an excited uproar. Weeks later, she used to see these scraps adorning some woman's dark form, with ludicrous incongruity.

But, among these "children of nature," as among other children, not of nature but of civilized education, there existed under-currents of strife, ambition, ill-feeling. These were responsible for a division of which Croft soon became aware. The more savage factions waxed impatient for Babooma to be their chief. Only the superstitious awe in which a chief is held saved Chimababoi from being despatched unceremoniously to the spirits of his murdered sons. The result of that would have been civil war, and deadly peril for the two white people. For Babooma and his friends were not partial to these strange newcomers who forced them to work and frustrated their savage tendencies. Croft knew well the risky ground on which he trod. For reasons of strategy, therefore, he forbore, save for a drastic warning, to take any steps in retaliation for Christmas day's attempt upon his life. "Bait-devils" from the white woman, in swift retribution for what he had contemplated, had frightened Babooma enough for the present. His black face was seldom seen, nowadays, far from the settlement.

Roowa and Meamaa, since their child's recovery, had regarded the "white chief" with little less than worship. And this fact gave Alan the idea wherewith to cause distraction in the increasing difficulty of the life he and Barbara now led. It was, both knew, but catching at straws; yet, eagerly, such frail aids were welcomed.

After a short consultation with Chimababoi, Roowa was commanded to take up his residence in the north, to help the "white chief" in work upon the land, while Meamaa served his "wife."

The ruined huts were strictly taboo, haunted by the spirits of those slain there. Roowa, proudly radiant, began to build a new hut, to which Meamaa and his two children could be fetched. Within a short time smoke arose from Meamaa's cooking; and two small black figures danced, like imps, among the palms.

"I wonder," suggested Barbara, when they strolled together one night, "if we ought to teach them Christianity."

Alan looked down, smiling at these lingering instincts of the parson's daughter; but shook his head. "If they learn gentleness, kindness and cleanliness, don't you think they are acquiring the spirit of it?" he asked. "These will permeate, paving the way, if you think it necessary to teach them Christian creeds later. But don't upset their old faiths yet—they are not ready. It's always a dangerous thing. If it's hurried, it is fatal."

She thrust her arm through his. "You're awfully wise, Alan mine! You seem to know just how to manage the natives. Why is it, I wonder?"

"Because I care for them. You can usually understand those you love, if you try. See how well I manage you!"

She laughed; then felt his arm. "D'you know, you're getting thin Alan."

"Hard work."

"I have noticed it in your face, too. You mustn't work so incessantly—there's no need."

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"I have noticed it in your face, too. You mustn't work so incessantly—there's no need."

"Isn't there? Ah, Barbara! I think there is."

She looked up quickly; but he had turned his face seaward; only the grim set mouth was visible. The woman in her thrilled to him, for she understood. Clasping his arm tightly, she laid her face against it.

"Dear!" she murmured.

"We have been here nearly a year," was his only response.

"I know."

They walked on in silence a while, passing near Roowa's hut. Just outside the entrance the native and his wife sat close together, the youngest child asleep in the man's arms, both too much absorbed in low-toned conversation to notice their approach. The natives' love may be little above that of an animal for its mate; but it contents them.

Barbara's clasp tightened, as these two outcasts from all laws looked upon the group.

"They are very happy. Alan, I often watch them."

"So do I—my G—d!"

She glanced up in surprise at the passionate tone in his voice.

"I sometimes wish I had never brought them here," he continued. She was silent a moment; then drew his hand swiftly up to her face. With her lips against it, she whispered, so low that he had to bend down to catch her words:

"Do you ever look at their little ones—and think—supposing—if—only?"

"Barbara! I do." He turned and drew her into his arms. "I have thought of it all—over and over again! I think of nothing else."

without speaking—searching, proving her in some inexplicable manner.

"How much do you love me?" he demanded, at last.

She looked startled at his peremptory tone. "Why do you ask such questions?" But she collapsed against him. "With my very life," she whispered passionately. "I should die if I lost you now."

He strained her close, pressing hot lips to hers. "How far would you go with me? How far?" he muttered eagerly.

"To eternity!" she murmured, half faint with the sudden passion sweeping them both away. The arms holding her were trembling.

"If we never get rescued? How far then? How far, Barbara?"

Only a little stifled gasp answered him.

All the soft night odors of the forest were stealing down to the beach, blending with the pungent smell of hot earth, mingling with the languorous murmur of the tide. Close in his arms, a weak craving to surrender, to capitulate before the forces arrayed against them both, swept over her. It was easy to let all else go. . . . Twice she opened her own lips, but no words would come; only her eyes told him that which caused his senses to reel. His grip tightened, so that he hurt her; but the pain was an exquisite joy.

The animal in man, longing fiercely for its mate, had been let loose in Alan, stronger for all these months of temptation and repression. The future at this moment lay in his hands—and he knew it, exulted in the knowledge. . . . Half unconsciously he rose to his feet, lifting her, unresisting, with him. Her warm young body lay acquiescent, at his mercy. He took a step toward the hut; but cast one dazed look round the darkening beach—

From Roowa's dwelling the faint cry of a child came to them, wafted upon the soft night breeze down the bay.

The girl heard it, and raised her head. The man heard it, and caught his breath. Their eyes met.

She slipped from his arms with a long quivering sigh. They stood facing each other, struggling with the turbulence of their emotion.

"Reverberations! Do you—remember?" she whispered, at last.

He made no reply, continuing to gaze upon her face, and she went on speaking, almost to herself, standing before him with the darkness closing around her.

"The vast harmony in which each note has unlimited effect upon every other note." You taught me that. Do you remember? Life's harmony, you said. We—we are forgetting."

He turned away and walked to the lagoon, standing there for several minutes, his back toward her, his hands covering his face. When he returned, he had, she could see, regained his self-control. Coming close, he laid his hands upon her shoulders.

"Are we perhaps troubling over what may never happen? Barbara—there might be no—no 'reverberations.' There are not, always."

She smiled at him, a smile that was almost maternal. "That's true. But— She broke off, a little catch in her breath, her eyes dwelling dreamily upon the face above her own, as if picturing something far off and passing beautiful. . . . "But it wouldn't be fair," she muttered to herself.

A flush mounted to his cheek in meeting and interpreting the look which, momentarily, his own eyes reflected.

"The thought of you troubles me most," he owned. "The question of 'fairness' is an open one. This is a grand free life for anybody who—knows no other. The world might think it unfair. But the world doesn't count with us. We are savages now. But you—you! Oh, my darling, Nature is so hard on women."

Her face was hidden on his breast. He went on diffidently, whispering into the dark hair.

"The question of 'reverberations' shall be yours entirely. Do you understand? If you decide not to face it all—"

"Ah! no, no, no!" She raised her head quickly. "Alan, I love you for that. But I won't shirk! Don't ever think I mean that." She turned her luminous eyes seaward. "Imagine a little home with just you and me and a dear little nest all our own. . . . Oh! it's cruel, cruel!" Passionately she gripped his shoulders. "I long for it all—I ache inside. Sometimes I dream we have it together; and then—then I wake up—"

"But we can have it, here, now," he interrupted eagerly. "Only the forms would be absent; the spirit would be there. Surely, in these circumstances, we can make our own laws?" He took her clinging hands in his. "Barbara, have you thought over the matter? Faced it squarely?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL

### Sunday School Lesson

(By REV. P. B. FITZWATER, D.D., Dean of the Evening School, Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)  
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#### Lesson for February 1

##### THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

LESSON TEXT—John 15:1-17. GOLDEN TEXT—"He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit."—John 15:5.

PRIMARY TOPIC—Being Friends of Jesus.

JUNIOR TOPIC—The Vine and the Branches.

INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—Fruit-Bearing Lives.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—Union With Christ.

Under the beautiful allegory of the vine and the branches Jesus set forth the spiritual oneness of Himself and His disciples.

1. The Relationship of Jesus and the Father to the Disciple (vv. 1-3).

1. Jesus the Source of the Disciple's Life (v. 1). He is the true vine. Through the incarnation Jesus identified Himself with humanity, and by virtue of His atoning death and resurrection it is possible for the believer to be a partaker of His life so that between the disciple and his Lord there is a community of life. As the vine pours its life into the branch, so Christ pours His life into the believer. Our salvation is eternal life because it is the life of the eternal Son in us.

2. The Father Has in His Hands the Discipline of the Disciple (v. 1). "The Father is the husbandman." Just as the culture of the vine is in the hands of a husbandman so the discipline of the believer's life is in the hands of the Father. In this disciplinary process he

(a) Removes the unfruitful branch (v. 2). He does not take the trouble to prune the fruitless branch. The nominal church member, the mere professor, He removes.

(b) Purges the fruitful branch that it may produce more fruit (v. 2). He restrains our natural tendencies and desires in order that the virtues of the Lord, the fruits of the Spirit, may shine forth.

3. The instrument by which the pruning is accomplished is Jesus' words (v. 3). The disciples already were cleansed by Christ's words, for Judas the traitor had been cast out. If the believer's life is to be fruitful in character and service the pruning knife, Christ's words, must be intelligently and regularly applied.

II. The Conditions of Fruit Bearing (vv. 4-7).

The supreme object in pruning, the culture of the vine, is fruit.

1. Abiding in Christ (vv. 4-6). As the branches draw sap and life from the vine, so believers must abide in Christ, from whom they derive their purity, strength and wisdom. Indeed, it is a mutual abiding, the disciple in Christ and Christ in the disciple. It is Christ's life expressing itself through the believer. The one thus indwelt by Christ will bear much fruit. So great is the displeasure of the Lord with lifeless, unfruitful branches that they are to be "cast forth," "withered," even burned (v. 6).

2. Christ's Words Abide in Us (v. 7). So mighty is the power of the one who abides in Christ and in whom His words abide that Heaven can withhold no gift from him.

III. The Blessed Issue of a Fruitful Life (vv. 8-17).

1. The Glorification of the Father (v. 8). Through much fruit-bearing, the Father will be glorified (Matt. 5:16).

2. Credentials of Discipleship (v. 8). The only way to prove that one is a child of God is to manifest the characteristics of God in one's acts and service.

3. Abiding in Christ's Love and Keeping His Commandments (vv. 9, 10). The way to abide in Christ's love is to keep His commandments. The one who neglects the words of Christ is destitute of His love. It is folly to talk of being in the love of Christ while disobeying His teachings.

4. Fullness of Joy (v. 11). The way to have fullness of joy is to have Christ's joy in us.

5. Loving one another (vv. 12, 13). The one who abides in Christ and has the life of Christ flowing into him will live a life of love, will love his fellowman, especially his brother in Christ.

6. Friends of Christ (vv. 14, 15). Christ's friends do whatsoever He commands. Being thus obedient He takes us into His confidence and makes known unto us the Heavenly Father's will.

7. Perpetual Fruit-Bearing in Love, With Power in Prayer (vv. 16, 17).

#### Physical Vigor

Physical weakness is not a sign of spiritual power. All other things considered, the man or woman who enjoys physical vigor will be able to accomplish more than those who are puny and ill.

#### How Many?

"How many people," says Jeremy Taylor, "are busy in the world gathering together a handful of thorns to sit upon!"

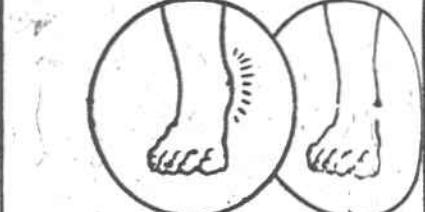
#### Our Fears

What we fear most is not today's trouble, but that which may happen tomorrow.

#### Dumb Love

A dumb love is only acceptable from the lower animals.—Doctor Van Dyke.

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