

**THE JUNGLE.**

(Continued from Page Ten.)

they could not afford any light; also it was nearly as cold as out doors. In a corner, as far away from the corpse as possible, sat Marija, holding little Antanas in her one good arm and trying to soothe him to sleep. In another corner crouched poor little Juozapas, wailing because he had had nothing to eat all day. Marija said not a word to Jurgis; hec rept in like a whipped cur, and went and sat down by the body.

Perhaps he ought to have meditated upon the hunger of the children and upon his own baseness; but he thought only of Ona; he gave himself up again to the luxury of grief. He shed no tears, being ashamed to make a sound; he sat motionless and shuddering with his anguish. He had never dreamed how much he loved Ona until now that she was gone—until now that he sat there, knowing that on the morrow they would take her away, and that he would never lay eyes upon her again—never all the days of his life. His old love, which had been starved to death, beaten to death, awoke in him again; the flood-gates of memory were lifted—he saw all their life together, saw her as he had seen her in Lithuania the first day at the fair, beautiful as the flowers, singing like a bird. He saw her as he had married her, with all her tenderness, with her heart off wonder; the very words she had spoken seem to ring in his ears, the tears she had shed to be wet upon his cheek.

The long, cruel battle with misery and hunger had hardened and embittered him, but it had not changed her—she had been the same hungry soul to the end, stretching out her arms to him, pleading with him, begging him for love and tenderness. And she had suffered—so cruelly she had suffered, such agonies, such infamies—ah, God, the memory of them was not to be borne. What a monster of wickedness, of heartlessness, he had been! Every angry word he had ever spoken came back to him and cut like a knife—every selfish act that he had done—with what torments he paid for them now! And such devotion and awe as welled up in his soul—now that it could never be spoken, now that it was too late, too late! His bosom was choking with it, bursting with it; he crouched here in the darkness beside her, stretching out his arms to her—and she was gone forever, she was dead! He could have screamed aloud with the horror and despair of it; a sweat of agony beaded his forehead, yet he dared not make a sound—he scarcely dared to breathe, because of his shame and loathing of himself.

Late at night came Elzbieta, having gotten the money for a mass, and paid for it in advance, lest she should be tempted too sorely at home. She brought also a bit of stale rye bread that someone had given her, and with that they quieted the children and got them to sleep. Then she came over to Jurgis and sat down beside him.

She said not a word of reproach—she had to bury one of her children—but then she had done it three times before, and each time risen up and gone back to take up the battle for the rest. Elzbieta was one of the primitive creatures; like the angworm, which goes on living though cut in half; like a hen, which, deprived of her chickens one by one, will mother the last that is left her. She did this because it was her nature—she asked no questions about the justice of it, nor the worth-whileness of life in which destruction and death ran riot.

And this old common sense view she labored to impress upon Jurgis, pleading with him with tears in her eyes. Ona was dead, but the others were left and they must be saved. She did not ask for her own children. She and Marija could care for them somehow, but there was Atanas, his own son. Ona had given Antanas to him—the little fellow was the only remembrance of her that he had; he must treasure it and protect it, he must show himself a man. He knew what Ona would have had him do, what she would ask of him at this moment, if she could speak to him. It was a ter-

rible thing that she should have died as she had; but the life had been too hard for her, and she had to go. It was terrible that they were not able to bury her, that he could not even have a day to mourn her—but so it was. Their fate was pressing; they had not a cent, and the children would perish—some money must be had. Could he not be a man for Ona's sake, and pull himself together? In a little while they would be out of danger—that that they had given up the house they could live more cheaply, and with all the children working they could get along, if only he would not go to pieces. So Elzbieta went on, with feverish intensity. It was a struggle for life with her; she was not afraid that Jurgis would go on drinking, for he had no money for that, but she was wild with dread at the thought that he might desert them, might take to the road, as Jonas had done.

But with Ona's dead body beneath his eyes Jurgis could not well think of treason to his child. Yes, he said, he would try, for the sake of Antanas. He would give the little fellow his chance—would get to work at once, yes, tomorrow, without even waiting for Ona to be buried. They might trust him; he would keep his word, come what might.

And so he was out before daylight the next morning, headache, heartache

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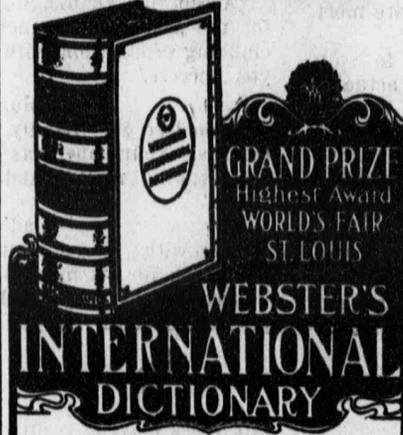
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