

The FLAMING JEWEL

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(Continued)
CHAPTER II.

Guided by Quintana's directions, the three had made a wide detour to the east, steering by compass for the cross-roads beyond Star Pond. In a dense growth of cedars, on a little ridge traversing wet land, Quintana halted to listen.

Sard and Sanchez, supposing him to be at their heels, continued on, pushing their way blindly through the cedars, clinging to the hard ridge in terror of sink-holes. But their progress was very slow, and they were still in sight, fighting a painful path amid the evergreens, when Quintana suddenly squatted close to the moist earth behind a juniper bush.

At first, except for the thrashing of Sard and Sanchez through the massed obstructions ahead, there was not a sound in the woods.

But, presently, came a soft, swift rhythm like the pace of a forest creature in haste—a discreetly hurrying tread which was more a series of light earth-shocks than sound.

Quintana, kneeling on one knee, lifted his pistol. He already felt the slight vibration of the ground on the hard ridge. The cedars were moving just beyond him now. He waited until, through the parted foliage, a face appeared.

The loud report of his pistol struck Sard with the horror of paralysis. Sanchez faced about with one spring, snarling, a weapon in either hand.

In the terrible silence they could hear something heavy floundering in the bushes, choking, moaning, thudding on the ground.

Sanchez began to creep back; Sard, more dead than alive, crawled at his heels. Presently they saw Quintana, waist deep in juniper, looking down at something.

And when they drew closer they saw Georgiades lying on his back under a cedar, the whole front of his shirt from chest to belly a sopping mess of blood.

There seemed no need of explanation. The dead Greek lay there where he had not been expected, and his two pistols lay beside him where they had fallen.

Sanchez looked stealthily at Quintana, who said softly:

"Bien sure. . . . In his left side pocket, I believe."

Sanchez laid a cool hand on the dead man's heart; then, satisfied, rummaged until he found Georgiades' share of the loot.

Sard, hurriedly displaying a pair of clean but shaky hands, made the division.

When the three men had silently pocketed what was allotted to each, Quintana pushed curiously at the dead man with the toe of his shoe.

"Peste!" he remarked. "I had place, for security, a ver' large diamond in my pistol barrel. Now it is within the interior of this gentleman."

He turned to Sanchez: "I sell him to you. One sapphire. Yes?"

Sanchez shook his head with a slight sneer: "We wait—if you want your diamond, mon capitaine."

Quintana hesitated, then made a grimace and shook his head.

"No," he said, "he has swallow. Let him digest. Allons! March!"

But after they had gone on—200 yards, perhaps—Sanchez stopped.

"Well?" inquired Quintana. Then, with a sneer: "I now recollect that once you have been a butcher in Madrid. . . . Suit your taste, friend Sanchez."

Sard gazed at Sanchez out of sickened eyes.

"You keep away from me until you've washed yourself," he burst out, revolted. "Don't you come near me till you're clean!"

Quintana laughed and seated himself. Sanchez, with a hang-dog glance at him, turned and sneaked back on the trail they had traversed. Before he was out of sight Sard saw him fish out a Spanish knife from his hip pocket and unclasp it.

Sanchez made no effort to find them. They had been gone half an hour before he had finished the business that had turned him back.

As he stood there, examining his clothing, and washing what he could of the ominous stains from sleeve and shoe, very far away to the north he heard a curious noise—a far, faint sound such as he never before had heard.

If it were a voice of any sort there was nothing human about it. . . . Probably some sort of unknown bird. . . . Perhaps a bird of prey. . . . That was natural, considering the attraction that Georgiades would have for such creatures. . . .

If it were a bird it must be a large one, he thought. . . . Because there was a certain volume to the cry. . . . Perhaps it was a beast, after all. . . . Some unknown beast of the forest. . . .

Sanchez was suddenly afraid. Scarcely knowing what he was doing he began to run along the edge of the bog.

He was tired, or thought he was, but the alarming sounds were filling his ears now; the entire forest seemed full of them, echoing in all directions, coming in upon him from everywhere, so that he knew not in which direction to run.

The next instant he fell headlong over a ledge, struck water, felt himself whirled around in the icy, rushing current, rolled over, tumbled through rapids, blinded, deafened, choked, swept helplessly in a vast green wall of water toward something that thudded in his brain an instant, then dashed it into roaring chaos.

Half a mile down the turbulent outlet of Star Pond—where a great sheet of green water poured thirty feet into the tossing foam below—and spinning, dipping, diving, bobbing up like a lost log after the drive, the body of Senor Sanchez danced all alone in the wilderness, spilling from soggy pockets diamonds, sapphires, rubies, emeralds, into crystal caves where only the shadows of slim trout stirred.

white teeth—and shoved a pistol into the fold of fat beneath Sard's double chin:

"You hear those dogs? Yes? Ver' well; I also. Run, now. I say to you run ver' damn quick. He! Houph! Allez vous en! Beat eet!"

He struck Sard a stinging blow



SANCHEZ TURNED AND SNEAKED BACK ON THE TRAIL THEY HAD TRAVERSED.

on his fleshy ear with the pistol barrel, and Sard gave a muffled shriek which was more like the squeak of a frightened animal.

"My God Quintana—" he sobbed. Then Quintana's eyes blazed murder; and Sard turned and ran lumbering through the thicket like a stampeded ox, crashing on amid withered brake, white birch scrub and brier, not knowing whither he was headed, crazed with terror.

Sard could not run very far. He could scarcely stand when he pulled up and clung to the trunk of a tree.

More dead than alive he embraced the tree, gulping horribly for air, every fat-incrusted organ laboring, his senses swimming.

And now, directly ahead, he saw clear gray sky low through the trees. The wood's edge!

He began to run.

As he emerged from the edge of the woods, waist-deep in brush and weeds, wide before his blood-shot eyes spread Star Pond.

Even in his half-stupefied brain there was memory enough left for recognition.

He remembered the lake. His gaze traveled to the westward; and he saw Clinch's Dump standing below, stark, silent, the doors swinging open in the wind.

And after a long while he ventured nearer, sinking through brush and frosted weed, creeping behind howlers, edging always closer and closer to that silent house where nothing moved except the wind-blown door.

And now, at last, he set a furtive foot upon the threshold, tip-toed in, peered here and there, sidled to the dining room, peered in.

When, at length, Emanuel Sard discovered that Clinch's Dump was tenanted, he made straight for the pantry. Here was cheese, crackers, an apple pie, half a dozen bottles of home-brewed beer.

He loaded his arms with all they could carry, stole through the dance-hall out to the veranda, which overlooked the lake.

And here Sard shook his raging thirst and satiated the gnawing appetite of the obese, than which there is no crueler torment to an inert liver and distended paunch.

Munching, guzzling, watching, Sard squatted just within the veranda doorway, anxiously considering his chances.

In all that panorama of forest, swale, and water the only thing that had alarmed him at all by moving was something in the water. When first he noticed it he almost swooned, for he took it to be a swimming dog.

In his agitation he had risen to his feet, and then the swimming creature almost frightened Sard out of his senses, for it tilted suddenly and went down with a report like the crack of a pistol.

He dimly remembered hearing that beavers behaved that way.

Watching the water he saw the thing out there in the lake again, swimming in erratic circles, its big, dog-like head well out of the water.

It certainly was no dog. A beaver, maybe. Whatever it was, Sard didn't care any longer.

Shivering, Sard gilled his mouth with apple-pie and cheese and pulled the cork from another bottle of home-brewed beer.

(To Be Continued)

STINNES PLANS TO INVADE RUSSIA

Will Place Own Correspondents in Industrial Centers to Aid Trade.

By United Press
MOSCOW, Nov. 2.—Hugo Stinnes, the spectacular German industrial prince, is preparing for a peaceful invasion of Russia by means of thirty correspondents of the Telegraphen Union of which Stinnes holds a majority of stock. The plan contemplates placing a correspondent in every important Russian center, they to submit regular reports on the economic and industrial situation in their respective districts. This would indicate that the Stinnes group intends to force itself into Russian trade at the earliest opportunity.

Paper Money Cancelled
By United Press
MOSCOW, Nov. 2.—The State Bank announced that all paper money issued by the Czarist, Krensky and first Soviet administration had been cancelled Oct. 1. An exception was made in the case of 50,000, 100,000 and 1,000,000, 5,000,000 and 10,000,000 rouble notes, which will not be declared worthless until the next January. The 50,000,000 notes of the 1922 issue were also cancelled Oct. 1.

The Times Fun Family

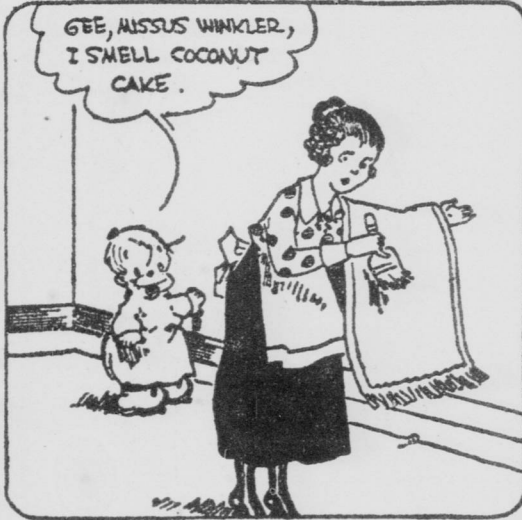
DOINGS OF THE DUFFS—Showing a Sudden Interest—By ALLMAN



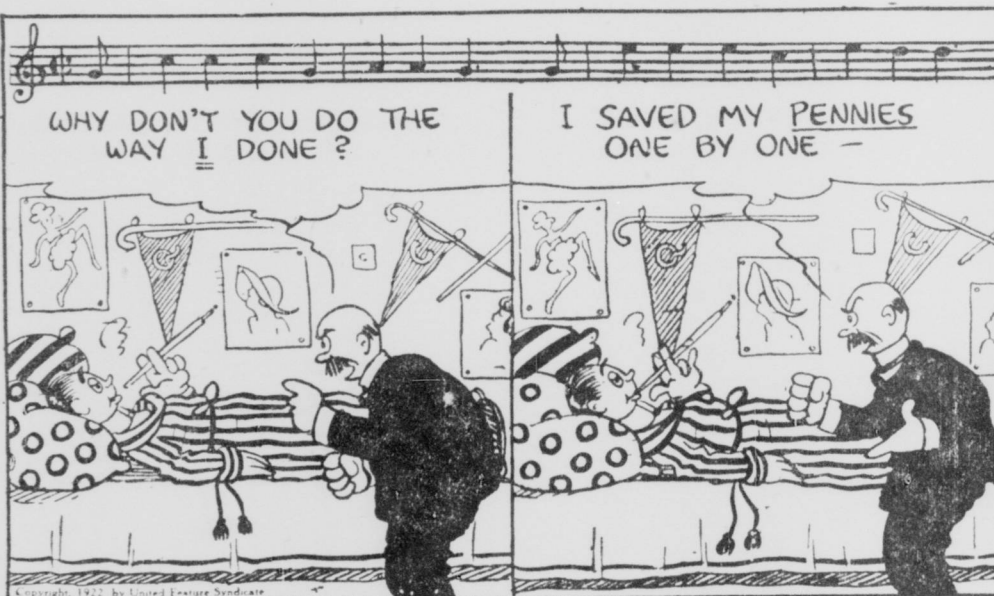
OUT OUR WAY—By WILLIAMS



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS—By BLOSSER



THEM DAYS IS GONE FOREVER—"Nobody Works But F. ther"—By AL POSEN



THE OLD HOME TOWN—By STANLEY



OUR BOARDING HOUSE—By AHERN

