

# "THE FORGOTTEN FLEET MYSTERY"

by Van Wyck Mason

### SYNOPSIS

On a wharf in Patuxent, Maryland, ex-Colonel Donald Colby, late A.D.C. to General Gonzalo Gutierrez, boat up to Ferguson, burlly oysterman, for insulting Geneva Benet, daughter of Capt. Benet of the "Amerika." Ferguson was fired by Benet and infers someone was murdered on the ship. Later, Geneva confides in Colby that she had brought two men from Leonardtown to work for her father. "They were afraid to stay but you wouldn't be," she says. A new look creeps into Colby's eyes. "Young lady," he demanded crisply, "shall we talk?" Geneva tells Colby that her father is in charge of a fleet of old liners laid up by the Shipping Board awaiting purchasers. It is impossible to get a watchman since three men have disappeared. Colby takes the job. On the pier, the girl calls to the "Monticello" on which she lives with her father. The ghostlike ships and eerie atmosphere fill Colby with foreboding.

### CHAPTER IV

"Monticello, ahoy!" Again the girl's voice echoed eerily over the silent river. "Ahoy!" came a faint answering call. "Be ashore in a minute."

It was not one, but many minutes before a battered and unpainted rowboat drifted up alongside at the oars a squat, thick bodied man with a prognathous jaw, stiff and bushy black brows that grew into a single line. His eyes were keen and alert and openly studied the recruit.

"So you got one mate at least, Miss Geneva?"

"Yes," the girl said briskly. "But he's not from Leonardtown—he's from one of those oil boats."

"I'll sit aft," the girl called and grooped in the stern, there to sit staring ahead, her eyes bigger and more sombre than ever.

It was when the deeply laden rowboat was perhaps half way out to the nearest of the shipyard that Donald Colby received his first shock. He was, with deep interest, studying the web of rusted cables securing the Monticello to the shore when, high overhead, sounded three sharp noises—up, down, up, down, followed by a throat tearing cry. So resolute of agony and mortal fear was it that Colby felt the hairs on the back of his neck lift as they had that time when a pair of Paraguayan warriors had come leaping into his quarters trailing bloodied bayonets and very anxious to kill for the greater glory of La Republica.

As though paralyzed, the oarsman paused in mid stroke and in the ensuing moment a stream of water dripping from his ear blades made a pattering sound—loud out of all proportion.

"What—what was that?" he quavered.

"Three shots generally mean that somebody's getting hurt," Colby observed with macabre calm.

"Oh, oh—" the girl's bright lips writhed, a hand flashed up to her heart and she started violently. "Hurry, Dutton! For God's sake hurry! Maybe it's—where was Father when you came away?"

The oarsman made no reply, only dog his stout ash blades deep into the steaming surface while Colby, snatching up an extra pair of oars, quickly added his powerful strokes to make the little boat fairly fly through the silvery fog.

"Where was Father?" the girl once more anxiously demanded.

"Dunno—I was in my cabin. Everything was quiet."

With magic suddenness a towering wall of steel loomed just ahead of the rowboat's prow. "Back! Back hard!" screamed the girl and the two rowers were only barely able to prevent a crashing impact. "Oh, Dutton, where's the ladder? Quick! We must hurry!"

"Ahoy!" A voice hailed excitedly from the mist above. "Hurry up! Something's happened—hear them shots?"

"Yes! Which way is the ladder?" Colby called.

"To yer right—hurry up!"

A passenger's ladder materialized a moment later and while Colby quickly made fast the painter the girl sprang out and went running up the ladder with Dutton at her heels.

On gaining the deck of the Monticello, otherwise known as the Koster Wilhelm II, Colby found his companions on a wide promenade deck along which many blank portholes stared at them like so many vacant eyes.

"What's happened, Hartney?" demanded the girl in quivering accents.

"Don't know," growled the watchman, "and I don't give a damn." Buttoning up a frayed pea-jacket the blunt featured individual started for the rail. "I've had enough of

hurry!" the girl's eyes became dark pools of anxiety. "Somebody—Father may be hurt or in deadly danger."

"Steady—get a hold on yourself," Colby flung at her and then transferred his attention to Hartney. "Where did you last see Captain Benet?"

"He 'lowed he was goin' over on the Monticello," mumbled the swarthy watchman.

"Any other watchmen on the fleet?"

"Yeh. Mears oughta be on the Amerika, and Norton on the George Washington."

"Miss Benet," Colby announced as he checked Hartney's 32 automatic and the contents of its chamber—she was careful on such points. "Dutton and I are going to take a



Hartney started down the ladder, but Colby's hand shot out and rounded the deserter up short.

look around. You'd better stay here on the Monticello."

"But you can't quit!" protested the Benet girl catching desperately at the would be deserter's sleeve. "You signed on for two months. Hartney thrust her roughly aside.

"Lay off. I wouldn't stay no longer on these rotten floating coffins for five hundred grand."

"But you've got to stay," the girl insisted, her voice harsh with desperation. "At least until I—we can get somebody to take your place."

"Nothin' doin'!" Hartney started down the ladder, but Colby's hand shot out, closed on the pea-jacket's collar and rounded the deserter up short.

"Hartney, you're staying here," he announced, quietly. "You've signed Articles."

"Mebbe. But gettin' murdered wasn't in them," snarled the prisoner and aimed a stinging left at the tall stranger's head. Curiously enough that narrow dark head wasn't there any more and it was Hartney who fell sprawling on the deck—as a man in a apt when he catches a jolting uppercut under the chin.

"Now maybe you'll obey orders!" Colby with a tight smile jerked an automatic from the fallen man's coat pocket. "I'm borrowing this just in case you might get some unwise inspiration."

"Now you—and you, too," he included Dutton, "are going to do just what you're told to do and when you're told to do it. Get that?"

"Oh hurry! For God's sake

## Adam and Eve: Temptation and Sin

HIGHLIGHTS ON THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

By NEWMAN CAMPBELL  
(The International Uniform Lesson on the above topic for July 12 is Genesis 3, the Golden Text being Ezekiel 18:4, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die.")

THE STORY of man's disobedience to the first command laid upon him is the subject of the lesson today.

The Lord God had placed Adam and Eve in this beautiful garden where they had everything that heart could wish. There was plenty to eat without working for it; all the beasts had been named and were subservient to Adam, and life was very beautiful to Adam and Eve. Of the fruit of all the trees in the garden were they permitted to eat, save one—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

But "the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." Of course serpents in our day do not speak, so it must have been an evil spirit which spoke to Eve out of the serpent's body.

"Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" he asked her.

We may eat of the fruit of every tree in the garden except one. Eve answered—the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God hath said, Ye shall not eat it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."

Now God had not said just that. He had said if they ate of it they would die, not if they touched it, so you see Eve was exaggerating, if not lying. She knew very well that she should not have been standing talking to the serpent about such a thing, but have gone right away and avoided temptation.

The serpent answered her, "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

Yielding to Temptation. That was indeed subtle for the fruit of the tree looked particularly tempting, and added to that it would make her wise, the serpent said; so she ate some of it, and offered some to Adam, and he too ate. Now they had been created wearing no clothes. They were perfectly unconscious about it as the primitive peoples are today. There was no reason why they should cover themselves. They were beautiful, just as God had made them. But now they began to feel naked and they made

themselves aprons of fig leaves to cover them.

"In the cool of the day," they heard God calling them. They were accustomed to meet and talk with Him then, but now they were ashamed and hid. "Where art thou?" asked the Lord, and Adam answered, "I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."

And He said, Who told thee thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?"

"The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat," Adam answered. It was a contemptible answer, was it not? Not a manly admission that he was wrong, but throwing the blame on "the woman."

And Eve, too, when she was asked about it said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."

Then the Lord God cursed the serpent, saying that he should crawl on his belly all his days, and that there should be enmity between man and serpents forever.

And to Adam and Eve the punishment was that they would no longer be allowed to live in the garden of Eden, but outside, where Adam must work for his bread by the sweat of his brow.

Not only fruitful plants and trees would flourish there, but also thorns and thistles. He must till the ground and labor hard for the rest of his life, and his children after him.

Eve must accompany him, and her children should be born with pain and suffering. But the merciful God provided them with garments of skins to cover them.

They were driven forth, and a cherubim with a flaming sword guarded the tree of life, lest these two who had disobeyed the Good God's command, should eat also of the tree of life and live forever. Thus death, too, came by the disobedience of these two whom God had made, and provided for so abundantly.

No man, woman or child can live without obeying certain rules. Unhappiness and suffering, even death, come to those who disobey even earthly laws. Resist temptation, strive to live blamelessly, do what is right in the eyes of man, but yet more, by the laws of God, the Father, if you would really live. For "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

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CANDIDATE'S ENTRY BLANK FOR KING AND QUEEN

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate for King  Queen  Out-of-Town Queen

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1. Return this blank to Windsor Center or one of our playgrounds before July 15 mid-night. Complete entries to receive votes from clubs and businesses. Each club or business may cast one vote for King and one for Queen. Voting period is from 9 a. m. July 27 to August 6. Ballot boxes will be at playgrounds and Windsor Center only. No voting for Out-of-Town candidates. All candidates who agree to take part in the Festival parade Thursday, August 13 at 3 p. m. and competition at 8:30 p. m. at Windsor Center. A few prizes for the Contest. Complete entries will be held at Windsor Center until the contest on July 16 and returned announced on or before August 10, 1942.