

SOUTH ATLANTIC LEGACY

By Sydney Parkman

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CHAPTER XXII (continued) FLIGHT AGAINST TIME

It was little more than half an hour after the end of his interview with the Consul when the sleek blue seaplane took off and roared up steeply over the sparkling blue waters of Niipe Bay. As Toby twisted around in the passenger's seat and looked back at the two little black figures standing at the head of the slip-way, he had to admit that the Consul was a fast worker when once he got going.

A brief conversation on the telephone had sufficed to set the ball rolling and another five minutes found them on their way to the flying ground in this car. They had stopped to pick up the owner of the plane from his surgery—he was a young American doctor of the name of Cranwell—and when Toby attempted to thank him, he scoffed loudly.

"Anything that takes me away from my patients is welcome," he told Toby "and if it gets me into the air as well, it's a plain godsend! But what is the idea exactly?"

By the time Toby had made him acquainted with the general outline of the situation they had arrived at the aerodrome, where Cranwell had already telephoned orders for his plane to be made ready.

"My! My!" he exclaimed joyously "Buried treasure and beauty in distress" He turned to the Consul. "You hadn't told me the half of this, George!"

When Cranwell had given orders for the tanks to be filled to capacity, he took Toby into the Clubhouse, where he changed into flying helmet for his guest.

"You'll find it a bit chilly later on, when the sun goes down," he told him. "But maybe you've done some flying yourself?"

"A bit," Toby admitted. "I was in the R. A. F., for a couple of years." "You mean the British Air Force?" Cranwell exclaimed. "And I was thinking you were a novice! Well, now you're going to be interested in this little old ship of mine!"

He was bursting to show his craft off to an expert, but Toby was equally anxious to be going, and to his secret relief they found that the plane was already in the water when they got outside again.

He climbed aboard into the forward passenger's seat with a hurried word of farewell to the Consul and Father Maloney, and they taxied out into the channel. They turned and in another thirty seconds they were roaring back up-wind with the throttle full open. The floats kissed the water for the last time, and they were off — climbing steeply up through the mellow sunshine.

"Like to take her over?" Cranwell's voice through the telephone as the buildings of the aerodrome dwindled to the dimensions of a child's toy house behind them.

"No thanks!" Toby responded, gratefully. "You'll get more out of her than I could, and time's the main factor now. It'll be dark in half an hour, won't it?"

"About that," the American agreed; and for a long while nothing was said.

For the next quarter of an hour they flew fast and straight to the northward. The needle of the air speed indicator stood steadily at 13, and taking into account the fact that the north-east trades were partly heading them, Toby calculated that they were travelling at something like a hundred and twenty miles an hour. Half an hour at this speed ought to see them over the bank but the flaming disc of the sun was sloping rapidly down to the western horizon and he knew that once full darkness had descended it would be next to impossible to prosecute their search. At the best they could hope for little more than the brief spell of tropical twilight. In spite of his intense anxiety, something of the old exhilaration took hold of him, and he found himself wishing that he had accepted Cranwell's offer to take over the controls.

Occasional drifts of cloud floated by below them looking gigantic masses of cotton-wool, tinged with orange light on the sides facing the sunset glow; but otherwise the sky was clear; with that limpid purity only to be found in the upper air. The blue vault of heaven stretched above and around into infinity, and he experienced a momentary vivid recollection of that serene detachment from the world and its affairs which had come to him on his first solo flight.

Twenty minutes passed, twenty-five minutes; and still they were hurtling forward through the clear pelucid air. For them, the flaring golden shield of the sun still stood well clear of the earth's rim—but already the light was dying out of the sea below. The glimmer was now gone from it, and a sombre leaden pall — the forerunner of night—was creeping stealthily over it from the east. Moment by moment the daylight was fading out from the earth's surface and twilight was already descending.

The engine suddenly cut out, and he became aware that Cranwell had put the plane nose down in a long dive.

The rush of air past the machine gradually rose to a roar as the pull of gravity increased; the speed rose to a hundred and forty — a hundred and

fifty miles an hour; and peering down through the windscreen, Toby saw first one, and then two, then several dim shapes scattered widely like basking whales over the darkling surface of the sea.

"They were over the bank!" "Watch out!" came Cranwell's voice "It's going to be a bit bumpy down here!"

Almost as he spoke, they encountered the first air-pocket, and the machine dropped vertically for fifty feet and hit "solid" with a jerk that jarred their teeth.

For the next ten minutes they were in and out of pockets almost continually. At five hundred feet Cranwell straightened out of the dive and flew the machine as nearly level as possible in the circumstances, while Toby leaned out over the fuselage and peered down at the grey sand-cays closely as they passed over them.

The light was falling rapidly now, and as he stared down with watering eyes, he began to realize fully the forlorn character of this expedition. He recognized that it would be utterly impossible to conduct anything like an aerial survey of this maze of islands, except in full daylight. Even then it would be a matter of the utmost difficulty to ensure covering the ground with any degree of thoroughness, and would require at least two observers. The pilot had all he could do to keep his machine out of trouble, and certainly could not spare any time to look about him.

He had known from the first that it was a hundred to one chance that they would be able to locate the girl and her father, but he had felt that anything would be worth trying.

At the end of another ten minutes he found it impossible to distinguish even the outlines of the scattered cays in the deepening darkness, and he reluctantly

reported as much to Cranwell. "Tough luck!" the pilot commented "We've left it a bit too late. Well say the word when you've had enough of it."

"I don't think it's any good keeping it up any longer," Toby told him resignedly. "I can't see a thing now!" "O.K.!" Cranwell concurred briefly; and he put the machine into a climbing turn.

The dark sea fell away beneath them as the plane nose pointed up towards the glowing, star-filled heavens; and when he had gained an altitude of about a thousand feet, he swung southward still climbing steeply, and set a rough course for the distant Cuban coast.

And it was then that Toby saw it! At first he half suspected that his eyes were playing tricks; and he stared down his breath held in suspense. A tiny spark of light had appeared in the black void below to the southward, and as he watched it, it seemed to him that it was growing steadily brighter.

"Hey!" he called striving to keep the excitement out of his voice. "I've spotted a light!" "Where?" Cranwell demanded easing the stick forward and bringing the machine on to an even keel.

"Just ahead!" Toby told him. "A bit to the right. See it?" "I've got it!" the other announced after a moment's pause. "We'll drop down and have a closer look. But say! Don't go banking on it too much. You get sponge fishers camping on some of the bigger islands here at times." And he put the machine into a steep dive.

Presently they swung in a tight spiral and Cranwell's voice came to Toby's ears faintly above the rushing of the wind. "Well? What d'you make of it?" Toby made no reply for a moment.

They were approaching the glow of the fire at a height of no more than a hundred and fifty feet.

A few seconds later his excited yell appraised Cranwell that the search was at an end.

The next few minutes provided the American with an opportunity for showing his skill as a pilot.

He straightened the machine out barely fifty feet above the surface of the sea, and after heading south-westward for half a mile or so, executed a flat turn and came straight back for the island.

The glow of the fire, showing faintly above the sand ridges, was his only guide; and as the machine dropped lower and lower over the water, his heart was in his mouth lest a sandbank should suddenly loom ahead out of the darkness, and he kept his hand hovering over the throttle in case a burst of engine should be needed.

With the island looming blackly ahead in the starlight, he touched down on the water perfectly and thirty seconds later the floats were grounding on the sand of the beach.

Toby had snatched the belt off, and was over the side and splashing through the shallow water almost before the machine had come to a stop. He had seen the girl's figure silhouetted on the nearest ridge against the faint glow in the sky, and as he plunged up the beach she came running down the slope to meet him.

In another moment she was in his arms—sobbing with relief and pent-up emotion.

"Oh, Toby! Toby! I knew you'd come somehow!" she managed to articulate. "I knew it all the time! And then when I heard the plane pass over I thought you'd gone! I was just starting to light that fire—and I thought it was too late!"

He soothed her as he would a child holding her tightly in his arms and stroking her hair gently; but his heart was singing within him in spite of the pity he felt for her.

It was not till a plaintive voice hailed him from behind that he even remembered Cranwell.

"Say! Am I allowed to come ashore yet?" the pilot wanted to know. "I'm getting kind of tired of sitting here—and anyway I want to meet the girl friend!"

By the time he joined them, Diana had recovered sufficiently to greet him with relative composure, but he laughily away her stammered attempt at

Britain Building Houses Claimed to be "Bomb-proof"

Twenty-five Hundred of Them Said to be Under Construction Now.

London, Dec. 11—The time may come when sounding of the air raid sirens will mean "duck into the kitchen" instead of "run for the shelter down the street."

For Britons are watching with interest the experiment of D. E. Gibson, Coventry city architect who has designed plans for "bomb-proof" houses 2,500 of which are under construction. The homes to be ready for occupancy within a month, will be two-story, and

thanks. "That's O. K. Miss Salter!" he told her. "You've just got to look on me as the transport guy—and one who likes the job! Now let's get down to business. Where's the rest of the folks?"

"Yes, where's your father?" Toby put in, suddenly coming to earth again. "And the two darkies? What's happened to them all?"

"There's only Daddy," she returned. "And he's—he's ill. The others ran off with the sloop, but I don't know what's happened to them. And then Becker came in a motor launch with three other men . . ." And she gave them a hasty and somewhat disjointed account of all that had happened.

"Great Scott!" Toby ejaculated, when she had done. "The ghastly swine! And they left you marooned here while they bolted with the cash!"

"Becker said he'd arrange to have someone come out for us when he got back to Antilla," she said. "But I wasn't building any hope on that."

"That fire will give me light enough to examine your father, if you'll lead the way, Miss Salter . . ." Cranwell began when the situation had been explained by Diana.

"But he's nowhere near the fire," she explained. "I couldn't carry those heavy timbers, so I set fire to them where they were. He's only just over this ridge here."

"Well, I daresay I can make out by starlight," he said. "Anyway, let's have a look at him."

(To Be Continued)

will have concrete roofs and ceilings and will be so constructed as to reduce the effect of bomb blasts. Danger from incendiary bombs a present threat to every building of inflammable construction — will be minimized as the bombs will not penetrate the heavy concrete roofs. Even doors will be made of asbestos-concrete composition. No wood will be used.

The seven-room houses will have miniature shelters, with walls 23 inches thick, built in the corner of the kitchen and also under the concrete stairways. Space will be left between the walls so "damp pockets" will be eliminated and will make heating of the buildings a comparatively simple task.

It is understood the ministry of home security is giving consideration to the possibility of launching plans for mass construction of the houses. A house can be built to these specifications in three months at a cost of £600 (about \$2,670).

If the government decides to embark

on large-scale construction, it is expected that first of the homes will be built in the London area and will be opened to working-class families who have been bombed out of previous residences.

Vancouver Province: Announcement by Brigadier H. F. McDonald, head of the Pensions Board of Canada, that men who suffer lasting injury from war attacks while serving on Canadian merchant vessels, will be treated as if they were injured in the militant services, will receive general approval. "They also serve who only stand and wait," says Milton in a memorable line. How greatly do the officers and seamen or merchant vessels serve the needs of the nation during wartime, carrying food and munitions and keeping alive the trade of the Empire.

Exchange:—Our idea of a tough job is one so hard that no man ever tries to undermine you to get it.

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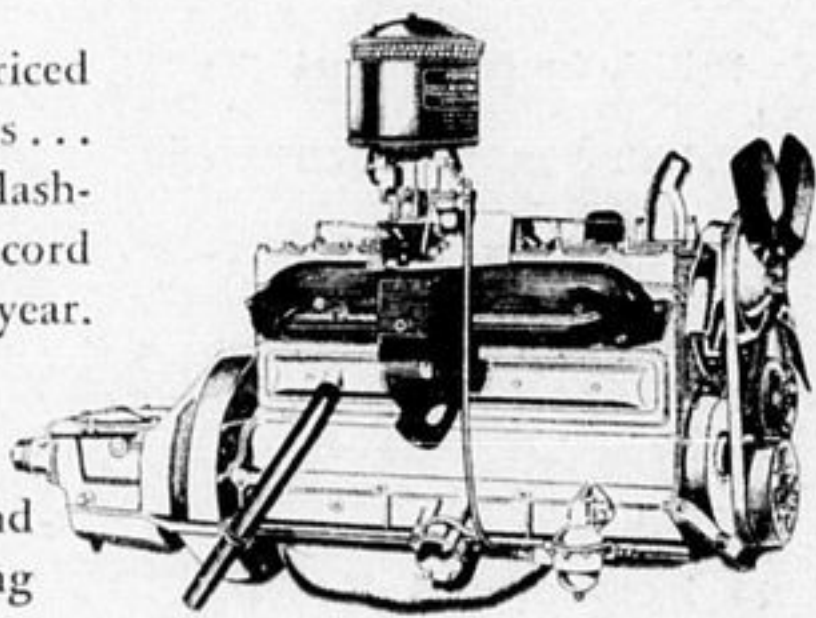
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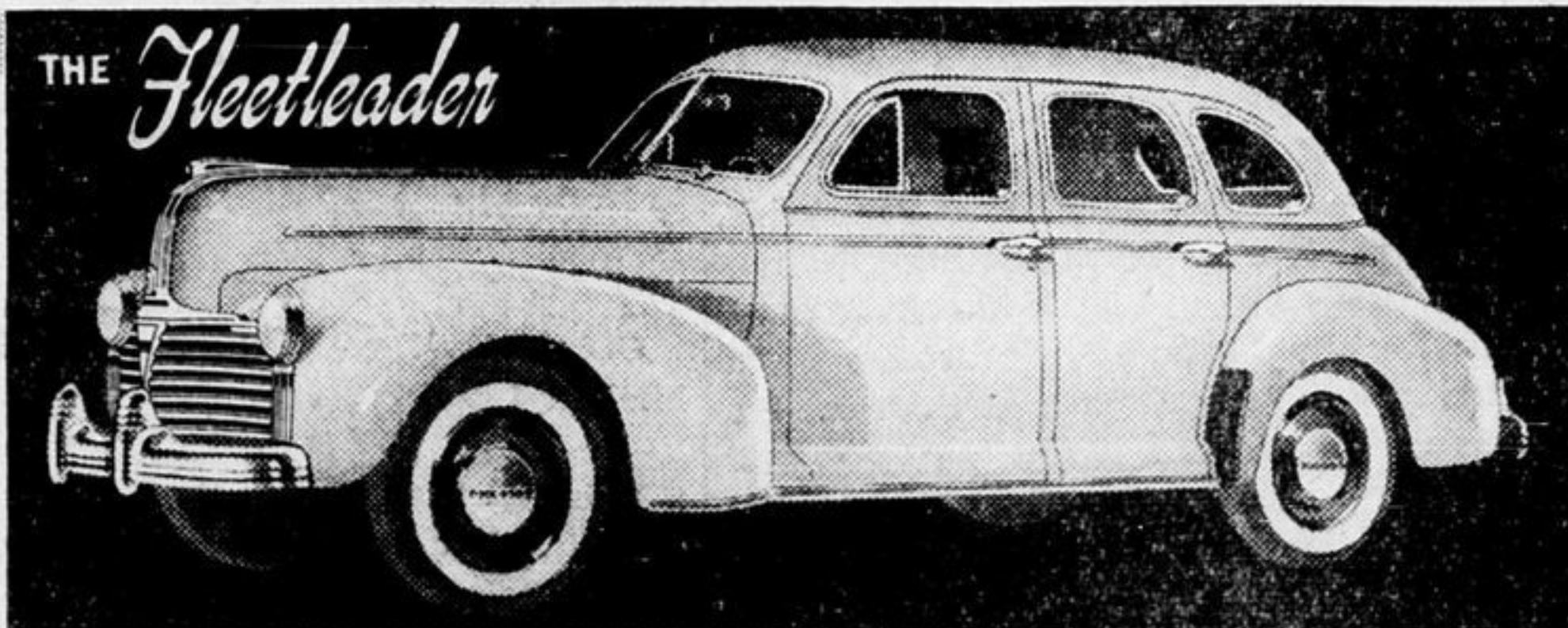
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