

(continued from previous page)

of the new arrival and his bodyguard, two tough-looking desperadoes with very businesslike bulges in their hip pockets.

LATER we crossed the Rio Parana at Tres Lagoas, and I had my first sight of a big South American river. It did not impress me as being particularly beautiful, for, although wide and swiftly-flowing, it had the colour of anaemic cocoa; but few things look their best on a dull, rainy morning, so perhaps I saw it at an inopportune moment.

At intervals we stopped for the engine-driver to replenish his supply of fuel from the wood piles alongside the line. We often saw tumbledown little shacks made of bamboo poles with grass roofs, dumped down miles from anywhere, with just a few square yards of cultivated land reclaimed from the surrounding jungle to supply the owners' scanty wants. Always the family gathered to see the train go by. There were usually two or three small children running about, and a few black pigs without so much energy; some chickens, goats, and the inevitable mangy mongrels.

Sometimes we would stop at a small town where the station boasted a name. Then our distinguished passenger was required to alight—to hear more speeches, to repeat his own—and to bunny-hug the local worthies.

Bunny-hugging is supposed to have resulted from an old form of greeting which enabled both parties to feel each other's persons for concealed weapons. Nowadays it consists of putting one's chest against the other fellow's, while your right hands pat each other's backs. I noticed its use among the "bloods" of Lisbon, and it conveys considerably more feeling than an ordinary handshake. This practice is confined to men only, which, I thought, was rather hard lines on my companion, as many of the young ladies were better suited than the official deputations for making that sort of welcome a real pleasure.

I had heard a great deal about the horsemanship of the men on the fazendas, and it was a treat to see how they rode. With long stirrups, backs as straight as ramrods, and their enveloping panchos, or cloaks, spread right over their animals' haunches, they made picturesque figures. If their ancestors, those early Inquistadors, sat their mounts like these men, I do not wonder that the ignorant natives, who had never previously seen a horse, believed rider and steed to be one.

That night we had no shocks, though, probably due to the incessant jolting and rattling, I had vivid dreams. Next day, the third since leaving Sao Paulo, habitations became fewer and more desolate, and nothing broke the continuity of forest and swampland. At one spot where we stopped for wood there was a great noise, something between the barking of small dogs and whirr of a thousand cogwheels. It went on, and on, and was the croaking of countless frogs.

I learnt later that my travelling companion was the newly-appointed Intendente, or Governor, of Matto Grosso State, which is the wildest of the Brazilian provinces. I have often wondered how he fared, since many of his predecessors in that job have come to a sticky finish. His two henchmen, with their bulging hips, apparently did not underestimate the possibilities of an unpleasant surprise even at so early a

moment in his career, for they shared watches and one of them at least was on the alert at all times.

The Intendente duly presented himself to one or two more small communities, once being awakened from a nap to do so. This particular place was very primitive, not to put too fine a point on it, and, as he returned to his seat, he favoured me with a smile that was as near to a wink as a Governor can be expected to go.

WE reached Puerto Esperanca towards ten o'clock that night, and again I had cause to be thankful for the good advice of my benefactor in Santos. Since it was marked prominently on the map as a railway terminus and a river port, I had imagined a fair-sized town, with a few hotels, some English-speaking folk, and a busy waterfront. He had warned me that it was nothing of the sort: that there was just a collection of peons' huts, a landing stage for the boats, and that that was all. He had told me, too, that I would have to take the launch which meets the train and go up-river to Corumba, the second important town in Matto Grosso.

Had I not known this I should have been in trouble at Puerto Esperanca, for when we got there it was very dark and raining heavily. The passengers all clutched their assorted belongings and splashed through the mud to the waiting boat.

The obvious thing to do on the launch, since it was getting well on towards midnight and pouring heavens hard, was to get a bunk. By that time I had gained enough experience not to let my ignorance of the language prove too great a nuisance.

Therefore I did not waste time in futile discussion but started on a tour of the cabins and after three or four unfruitful ventures managed to find an unoccupied berth. Unoccupied, that is, by a human body, but I soon discovered that an army of creepy, crawly things were disputing possession of it with me. Luckily, they seemed content to pursue their investigations in a spirit of genuine discovery and refrained from all acts of aggression.

Next morning I was able to gather my first real impressions of the Rio Paraguay. The width of the river varied considerably, sometimes being less than 200 yards, with forest and thick tropical undergrowth right down to the water's edge; in other places, the pilot had to pick out the channel from great stretches of flood water, where any one of several routes might have been the right one.

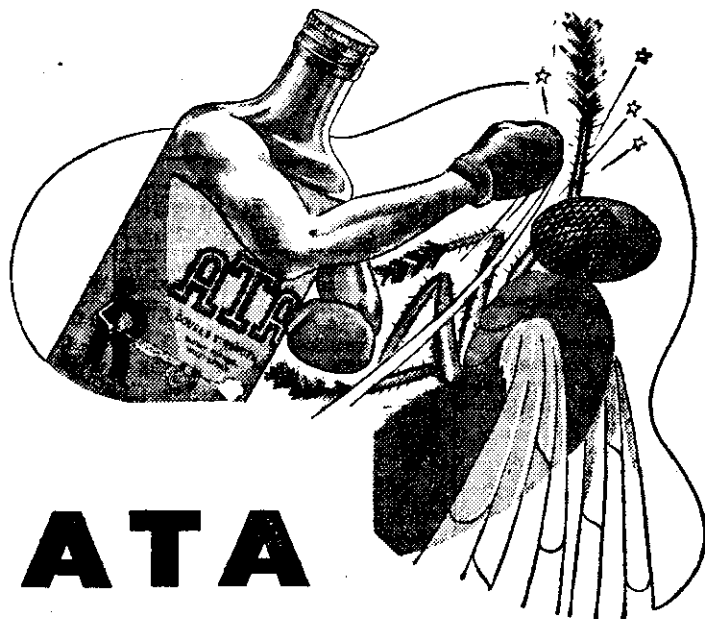
There were many varieties of bird life, from big white storks, water fowl, vultures, and parrots, down to tiny, vivid creatures whose flight was a flash of fire. Several times we saw alligators sunning themselves on a sandbank, and there was something horribly foul in the way they slid into the water at our approach.

Approaching Corumba about mid-day, we were met by an aeroplane and a gaily bedecked motor-boat which came to give the Intendente a welcome. At the landing stage another good reception awaited him, and this time the band really did grace the occasion.

I established myself at one of the two hotels—the wrong one, as I discovered later, because at the other they made ice-cream—and prepared to ascertain the reactions of the local intelligentsia to my plans.

(To be continued next week)

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