



HUMBER in ACTION



Watch for the Peace-time HUMBER

The HUMBER (as also HILLMAN & COMMER factories of the Rootes Group) has never been out of production—but the vehicles produced since 1939 have all been for war-time purposes. Quickly, when the moment comes, Rootes will switch to peace-time production. Until then we say "Watch—and wait—for the peace-time Humber with its many new battle-tested features."

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The other questions conveyed nothing to me at all, although since I thought they would want to know where I lived and what my occupation was, I filled in these particulars in the likeliest-looking column, and hoped for the best. The man had a whole lot to say about the blank spaces I had left on the form, but he might have saved his breath for all the good it did, and finally shrugging his shoulders, he gave it up as a bad job.

After that it was his turn to copy down a few particulars, and he began by taking my finger-prints. I dabbed my fingers on to an inky pad, and impressed them, one after another, on the bottom of the form. He inscribed various distinguishing points about my physiognomy, and even measured my ears with a pair of callipers, a novel though probably quite helpful means of identification.

Following this he called to an orderly and presently a prisoner came in who could speak English. His mission was to help me with the unanswered questions, but since nobody could understand us we did not keep strictly to business. He told me that he was a Canadian, though he had lived for many years in South America. He, too, had fallen foul of the authorities and had been arrested on suspicion of being a Bolivian agent. That was three weeks ago, he said, and although the British Consul knew about him, all efforts to obtain his release had proved unavailing. I did not like the sound of that piece of news in the least, and for the first time felt a sudden qualm of apprehension.

He was from the British Legation, and with a few pertinent enquiries elicited all the information I had to give concerning the incidents on the voyage from Corumba, and the reason for my presence in Paraguay. He interpreted my replies to the Paraguayan, who apparently found them satisfactory, for my passport was handed to me, and the young man said I was at liberty to go. There was a brief exchange of remarks between the other two, and they took formal leave of each other. Outside, we waited only until a minor official had endorsed my passport, and my bags had appeared, before we climbed into a taxi and were being driven to the British Consul.

He expressed his pleasure and his surprise at my speedy release, and smilingly observed that I had been at pains to make things look very black against myself. I apologised for the trouble I had caused him, and thanked him for his timely services; also, at his request, I gave him a signed statement describing the whole affair.

The young man then conducted me to a hotel near by where Mr. Walker had arranged to stay the night, for, luckily, the connecting boat to Buenos Aires was scheduled to leave at noon on the morrow. Mr. Walker was keeping his delayed appointment in the town when we arrived, and the young man arranged to return later in the evening, and to join us at dinner.

That hotel seemed positively luxurious, and I discovered what it felt like to wallow in a hot bath again after an interval of nearly three months. The bed in my room, too, was big and soft, with snowy sheets, and did not look as if an unconsidered movement would cause its collapse like another one I remembered. I was prepared to yield to its charms just as soon as I had done justice to the best dinner the hotel

could provide, and hoped that Mr. Walker would not suggest anything more energetic, or more ambitious for the evening's entertainment.

MR. WALKER arrived back from his appointment, and we were unfeignedly glad to see each other again. Except for his gallantry in following me from the boat early in the morning I certainly should not have been there then, for nobody was expecting me, nobody would have missed me, and the Consul would have known nothing about me. It was not an entertaining prospect, and during dinner our friend from the British Legation further emphasised my exceedingly lucky escape.

It was a very enjoyable meal, and my hunger was appeased at last. Our guest did not stay long afterwards, and Mr. Walker proposed an early night, a proposition I seconded with acclamation.

Early to bed, early to rise—and we were up betimes in the morning. The boat was due to leave at noon, and we both had to visit the shipping office before then to purchase our tickets. Moreover, it was necessary to attend at the Argentine-Consulate to have my passport vised, and I wanted to call for my letters at the Post Office, a programme likely to entail a full morning's work, at the speed at which South American officialdom operates.

Mr. Walker's help was again invaluable. We bought our tickets within a minimum of delay, and proceeded to the Argentine Consulate. For some reason, they were loath to vise my passport except at a fee of approximately fifteen shillings, although this, my companion insisted, was an extortion, since a traveller was entitled to this service free of charge. The oily little man who attended to us was at first excessively polite, obsequious even, in his ministrations, but when he found I was a mere hoodlum of the steerage, his manner underwent a marked change. I wondered if the odour of my tiger-skin still clung to me, for he turned his nose up in an offensive manner, and sniffed his disgust. When Mr. Walker stubbornly refused to pay the fifteen shillings, his indignation at our churlish behaviour was unbounded. Flinging his pen on the desk he stalked away in high disdain, and it was left to a subordinate to smack my passport with a rubber stamp marked "Gratis."

WE drove to our hotel in a taxi, and collecting our bags, we arrived at the quay with only a few minutes to spare. Asuncion, however, had one final thrill to give us before we left, for at the gangway to the boat a squad of soldiers was formed up, and the officer in charge was the one whom we had seen early the previous morning, the owner of the French doll. For one nasty moment I thought he was there for our benefit, and I heard a word escape Mr. Walker's lips that reflected no credit on his profession. But the officer's presence must have been to speed the parting guests, not to delay them, for he did not interfere with us and we went aboard without molestation.

The boat was a magnificent vessel, considerably larger than the one operating on the Corumba-Asuncion service, but built on the same attractive lines, and gleaming just as brightly in a dazzle of white paint. Her motors, too, were

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