



Adventure

Registered in U. S.
Patent Office

First October
1920 Issue
Vol. XXVII ~ No. 1

Published Twice a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

J. H. GANNON, President

C. H. HOLMES, Secretary and Treasurer

Spring and Macdougall Streets - - - New York City
6, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the
Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

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Yearly Subscription, \$4.00 in advance

Single Copy, Twenty-Five Cents

Foreign postage, \$2.00 additional. Canadian Postage, 40 cents.

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off the Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

BUSHFIGHTERS

"THE BUSHFIGHTERS," by Hugh Pendexter: A tale of the French and Indian War in New York, and of the dark year 1755, when Ticonderoga was lost and folk trembled lest the scalp-yell rise in the streets of Albany. Israel Putnam—"Wolf" Putnam—does the work of many men in killing Montcalm's "praying Indians." A full book-length novel complete in the next issue, by a man who knows.

Other stories in the next issue are mentioned on the last page of this one.



THE MCINTOSH

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

Charles Beadle

Author of "The King's Sword," "The Bowl of Alabaster," etc.

I MAY explain that in those days of which I write I knew nothing at all of adventure, but I had decided to adopt it as a profession. That's how I came to be in Suez, which is a forsaken hole but as good a jumping-off place for the East—Africa or India—as anywhere else.

After poking about for a few days and finding it only a weak imitation of Port Said I made up my mind to get out by the first steamer coming through the canal. This proved to be the *S. S. Umbanghu*, a squat tramp.

I paid up my account, which seemed rather a respectable thing to do for a determined adventurer, and wandered down to the jetty where I found a small Greek agent putting off. He didn't want to take me but I thought better to argue the point on the way and stepped into the boat, suggesting that he would be at pains to put me out. He shrugged his shoulders somewhere around his ears and accepted fate or whatever he called it. As soon as I had scrambled up the rope ladder I made straight for a stocky, grizzled man on the bridge, whom I took to be the skipper.

"Mornin', cap," says I cheerfully.

"An' who the — are you?" The shaggy eyebrows twitched irritably.

"Me? Oh, I'm your new passenger as far as—your destination, wherever that may be."

"Passenger! What in the month o' May d'you mean? Think we're a crimson purple liner out o' Liverpool or what? — my eyes, sir, we're an honest tramp; that is, honest west o' Suez."

As he turned to the little Greek agent there was a gleam in the weather-beaten eyes which confirmed my suspicion that some of the English have a sense of humor.

"Who the mischief is he, Mr. Ricardo?"

"He gennelman come from Cairo. He say he come passengaire. I tell him no passengaire. He mus' wait for linair. But he say no. He have what he call hunch. Nossaire? Yessair?" quizzically to me.

"That's right," said I.

"He say he have hunch he come dis boat."

Ricardo's shoulders convulsed.

"He come 'long my boat. He biggaire man dan me."

"Humph."

The captain looked again at me.

"You're an American, ain't you?"

"Surely."

"Thought so. Been there. Sorry, can't be done. Better wait for the Austrian or German Lloyd. Now, Ricardo—"

"See here, cap," I interposed, "I want to come along. I—I'm willing to pay fare and for privileges—"

"We're not passenger, I tell you."

"Mebbe not," I drawled, "but mebbe I can work—on the ship's roll at any rate."

Captain Smith looked me over again and smiled.

"Where d'you want to go?"

"Wherever the good God takes me."

"Right! But what about your dunnage? Can't wait to send for it."

"I've got it with me."

Captain Smith grinned this time.

"That's American all right. You're fourth

engineer. Sleep in the chartroom. Now get off the bridge. Ricardo——”

“Have a cigar, cap?”



THE captain took one and I retired from the bridge to take stock. Beneath the upper bridge I found the chartroom, a cozy little room containing a table, bookcases filled with charts and nautical books and a cushioned locker.

I dawdled round the iron decks smoking, watched the little Greek clamber down the sides with five perfectly good dollars and grinned. A bell clanged somewhere away below and was answered by the heavy sort of sea and the tremor of the engines.

As I stood watching the ship's bow slew against the flat land of Suez into the shimmering expanse of the Red Sea I recollected that I was an engineer, and, walking around the lifeboat, stuck my head within the upper skylight. The hot smell of steam and oil didn't seem good, but as I listened to the pounding of the engines a rasping drone rose and became intelligible:

“Ma faither was a braw cock lair-rd;
Ma mither came fra Perr-rth.
Aiblins Ah'm no' a sony lad,
A bungfu' fra ma bairr-rth!”

“Suffering cats,” thought I, “what a lingol Sounds Scotch, but anyway it's a lament all right. Lordy, I suppose I'm of Scotch descent myself,” I reflected, “but never did I suspect that we were such a dismal race. I wonder if anything is the matter with the man or whether he thinks he's singing.”

I turned away, a little depressed, to meet the captain descending from the bridge.

“Hal! Hal!” said he, grinning like a friendly terrier. “Here's our friend Paul Jones! Come into the chartroom, lad, and we'll sign you on.”

He glanced up at the incandescent sky.

“I think the sun's over the yard-arm, so maybe we'll seal it with a glass of grog. Be——”

He stopped with one foot over the sea-step.

“You don't come from them prohibition States?”

“Virginia,” said I, smiling.

“Ah!” sighed the captain. “I mind when I was in Portland, Maine, and be —— they drank the ship dry!”

A Chinese steward appeared noiselessly in the doorway.

“Tell the chief to come up for a grog. Grog; savvy? That's the only way to get the McIntosh under an hour or two.”

The skipper laughed as he reached for a bottle and glasses.

“Did you say Macintosh? That happens to be my name too,” said I.

“What? McIntosh? Be ——, you'd better

not tell him or there'll be red murder aboard! Why, lad, he's *the* McIntosh, he says, although personally I think he's a vat. But he's a great lad, is Mac, when he's drunk; and be —— no mortal's ever seen him sober.”

Terms were amicably arranged for the trip. As the captain had hinted, the signing on was purely a farce as the regulation of the Board of Trade scarcely worried them east of Suez.

As we were drinking to the agreement the glare was blocked out of the doorway by a tall figure clad in blue dungarees with short cropped blond hair and enormous yellow mustaches, viking-like in the size and droop beyond the line of the prominent chin. As the man strode in and sat on the locker-seat I noticed the high cheek-bones and the great shoulders, the manner in which the length of limb was controlled, which somehow reminded me of my own native mountains.

“Mac, lad, this is your new fourth—for the trip; you understand? If you don't like him you'll put him on as a trimmer,” added the captain, grinning slyly, “and if you do maybe you'll drink with him.”

I was very conscious of the turquoise blues of the eyes which regarded me.

“Ah'm pleased to meet ye!” said the Scot dourly. “And where w'ud ye be fra?”

“Virginia.”

“Vir-rginia! Ye'd no' say!”

The eyes twinkled slightly as he raised his glass.

“Well, here's to the Buickskin! Man, cap'n, but he's got the luik aricht! I mind the first voyage— But whbat will ye name be?”

“Macintosh,” said I, conscious of a kick on the leg from the captain.

“Macintosh did ye say, laddie?”

His eyes had become like matrix.

“I did. Julian Perton Macintosh.”

“An whoo was ye fairther?”

“Julian Baird Macintosh.”

“And where did ye fairther get the Macintosh?”

“Now, now, Mac,” interposed the captain, “I won't have anybody insulting my guest. This is my ship and——”

“Aricht, mon. I'll no huirt the pair body.”

“Look here, cap, Macintosh is my name,” said I firmly, “and if this gentleman doesn't approve I'm perfectly willing right now——”

“Be quiet, lad,” admonished Captain Smith. “Now, Mac——”

“Mon!” exclaimed the Scot, thumping a fist like raw beef ribs upon the table. “D'ye no ken that Ah'm the McIntosh of McIntosh? Mebbe Ah'm juist an engineer and mebbe juist no'.”

He rose to his height imperiously.

“But Ah'm the las' of the clan McIntosh and any wee body whoo——”

I ROSE to my feet.
 "Now, look here, Mr. McIntosh, I've as much right to my name as you have—"

"Now stop it, you two fools!" exclaimed Captain Smith. "For —'s sake, have I got to fight all the Smiths in the world?"

"That isn't the point," I began. "This gentleman—"

"Ah'm telling ye that Ah'm the las' o' the McIntosh and any puir body whoo—"

"Sit down, Mac," commanded the captain and added: "When a Macintosh goes to America it becomes a raincoat. Now, shut up!"

My temper isn't too soft, and anyway we both had Scotch blood. I pushed around the back of my swing chair.

"My name, suh—" I drawl slightly when I get mad—"is Julian Perton Macintosh, and, suh, I am at the service of any man who wishes to dispute my right."

"Och," commented the bony Scot, pulling at one enormous mustache, "ye sairtainly are fu' o' bluid an' spunk, ma young blaw-in-malug! Aricht, cap'n, we'll no be fechtin' the noo."

He sank down leisurely.

"And hoo will ye be spellin' yon name, Meester Buickskin?"

Still standing with one hand on the table and eying the Scot, I spelled the name slowly.

"Och, mon, we've been clishmaclavering fo' nicht! Yon's no' the McIntosh!"

I stared bewilderedly.

"Sit down and have another drink," said the captain. "If you'd said you spelt your name with an 'a' I'd have told Mac here and he'd not be after your blood."

"Och," said the McIntosh contemptuously, "an' whhat wud ye Southrons know, ye puir gaberlunymies stravagin' the airth!"

His cluster of raw beef-bones clumped across the table.

"If ye're no' a McIntosh ye're ilka clan, Ah'll dare swear by the kinderlands o' Mahoon. Ye've got the height; aye, an' ye've got the spunk; and a buickskin can na be sae far fra a Redshank (Highlander)! Will ye no' shake?"

"Sure I'll shake," said I a little embarrassedly, dropping my hand into the hairy paw extended. "But I don't understand now what the — made you sore. Was it just because my name is the same as yours?"

"Same as ma ain!" exclaimed the Scot.

His eyes glowered for a moment.

"Am Ah no' tellin' ye ye're no' a McIntosh?"

"Oh, shut up, Mac," said the captain, grinning covertly, "and have a drink. Don't take any notice, lad. Nobody understands Mac any more than his outlandish lingo."

"Och, ye wee blastie!" ejaculated the McIntosh to the captain. "Ye nobbut a puir

body o' a Southron. Misteer Buickskin, ye'll ha' noticed that where'er ye go ye'll find the bluid cock o' the airth? Ye ha', Ah make no doobt? Noo Ah'll give ye a toast that ony a guid Scot'll drink: Ta ower the water! Na clink ye glass wi' yon loon. Ah'm o'erfond o' the mon, but he's no' a Scot."

Still puzzled and rather amused, I drank as bidden. The McIntosh tipped his glass as if he were pouring the liquor down a well.

"Ah'm obleeged ta ye, Meester Buickskin," he continued, "for the pleasure o' drinkin' wi' a brither. Many a mon's guid company, but he's no sae guid as a Scot. If ye're no' o' the puir clan of McIntosh ye'll sairtainly be o' the hinder end. But ony man whoo hasna smelt the bonny braes o' Ochils has na ony susceepteebeclities to the vairtues."

As if absent-mindedly he helped himself to another stiff whisky and swallowed it.

"And where will ye be going?"

"Where are we bound for, cap'?"

"Durban."

The McIntosh regarded me steadily.

"Ah obsair-rve ye're a man o' pairts. 'Tis only a fule whoo kens where he wud be going."

He paused a moment and glowered doubtfully.

"Ah'm wondering if ye'll have a lug fo' museec?"

As I glanced at the captain questioningly the Scot broke into a doleful song.

"D'ye ken R-robbie?" he demanded when he had finished, pouring out another drink.

"Some."

"D'ye no' like him?" suspiciously.

"Sure I do."

"Aweel," added the McIntosh, rising, "Ah'll be awa', and if ye' ha' a lug fo' museec come awa' below after six bells an' Ah'll seeng ye some o' ma ain songs."

"Oh, my —!" muttered the captain, who had his hand over his beard.

"And whhat are ye haverin' at noo?" demanded the McIntosh from the doorway. "Ah'll have ye to know that R-robbie wasna the only poet that came fra bonnie Scotland, an' R-robbie was no' a Redshank, the puir wee bodie!"

II



WHILE we were thumping through the heat of the Red Sea I learned more of the McIntosh and learned to like him. When I had paid my footing by listening politely to weird laments which he said were of his own composing, the McIntosh would entertain me with stories of the forays of the clan McIntosh, bloody and furious tales. I could never make out whether they were genuine family tradition or taken from records such as Walter Scott used; sometimes the latter

suspicion was uppermost, for the Scot would betray scraps of ancient and modern lore that only a deeply read student could possibly have known.

This fact, connected with the statement that perhaps he was "just an engineer and mebbe juist no'," whetted my curiosity. But any further than that I could not dig. Of himself the man would never talk, and on any attempt to probe, no matter how politely, he would respond by immediately beginning to sing. Some system!

The amount of whisky he consumed was incredible. Yet he never appeared actually drunk, and his professional work was above reproach. I remarked one day to the captain that Mac would surely kill himself drinking liquor so freely in the tropics.

"Not he," said Captain Smith, smiling. "You don't know Mac. Why, lad, he was suckled on whisky. He'd drink the devil under the table in hell.

"I've known Mac these five year off and on. He'll never see fifty again or I'll eat my own charts; and look at him! He doesn't look a day over forty.

"He hasn't always been at sea. Once or twice when he was off his guard he let out technical knowledge that no sea-going chief ought to know.

"Of course he's crazy; but, lad, what's that to do with us? He never stops long in one ship. Shouldn't be a bit surprized to have Mac disappear at any port.

"I mind I picked him up first in Singapore. My chief had died of cholera, and when I goes to the consul he puts me on to this crazy giant. What his last ship was or why he left her I don't even know to this day. His papers were all right.

"As soon as he comes aboard he starts trouble with me—just because I'd signed him up as M-a-c-Intosh."

The captain grinned and bit off a cigar end.

"Well, I had to threaten to put him in irons. He invited me to get the ship's company to help me! Well, a skipper meets all sorts in this wet world. I wanted a live chief for the engines, not a crazy lunatic in irons.

"But I got mad, too. I told him that while on board he'd have to do his job, and at the end of the voyage if he wanted a row he could have it ashore. He told me exactly how he could pick me up with one hand, said he liked me even if I wasn't a Scot, and went to his job."

"Oh, just bluff then?"

"No, sir. There's no more bluff in Mac than beer in his boilers. He's got some queer kink in his brain, I guess.

"That trip, as it happened, we had a holy mob aboard—pilgrims for Mecca, y'know. Cholera was floating round, and they took a

holy panic into their heads and wanted the ship to put into Parang and started a riot when I refused.

"You don't know 'em, eh? Well you've missed something! I held 'em up with a gun, but Mac here, the darn fool, starts dancing; yes, he —, dancing, I'm telling you, like a bear on hot bricks.

"Then when he'd got their attention well on him he lets out a screech enough to scare the fish out the sea and charges 'em with bare hands! You've seen his hands, eh? Be —, they must have thought their own pet devil was after 'em! I laughed so much I couldn't hold the revolver.

"But the ruddy fool goes whooping and yelling—guess he thought he was having a border raid or something—and threw a lot of the poor devils overboard. Well, I had to turn back and pick 'em up—those who weren't drowned. But there was never a murmur after that. They were more scared of him than of fifty plagues.

"And when I told him off for being such a bloomin' idiot for not using the steam-hose pipe as I wanted he called me a poor wee body—y'know how he talks—and that the English hadn't 'any metaphysics.' Yes, Mac has a sense of humor away down under that hide of his."

"I've noticed it," said I. "Five days after you told him he suddenly began to make weird noises and told me I might be a wee bit r-raincoat even if I wasn't a whole macintosh, and roared like a bull."

"Eh, they're a queer race, the Scots. But y'know there's sometimes I think that maybe Mac's never grown up properly or maybe has a throw-back to some bleedin' ancestor of his, for he seems to think life's nothing but one foray after another."

"Yes, that's so. Perhaps that accounts for his mania about Highland history. I just can't get him. One moment he seems a boozehound and the next— Do you know, cap, I've caught him talking with scarce an accent at all—no more than many a Scotch professor I've met, and—"

"Have you ever heard him swear real mad? Why, lad, he's just incomprehensible. Must be Gaelic or something. It's not French nor any of the lingos of which I've picked up a smattering. Aye, but he's a white man an' all—that he is!

"And his knowledge of Border yarns! Have you ever read Scott?"

"Sure I have; but have you ever mentioned Scott to Mac? It's almost like calling a white man a nigger in the South."

"Yes, I know. I'm a bit of a border man myself, lad. Geordie, y'know—from the Tyne-side. Talkin' an' all, what would you be doing so far away from home?"

"Oh, I don't know," I replied, a little embarrassedly. "Just wandering around."

The little skipper eyed me quizzically.

"Finding out where you belong? Is that the idea?"

"Yes, I guess it is. I sorter wanted to wander some."

"You're like Mac a bit. Born outer your century. Same for me, I guess, else I shouldn't be foolin' round at sea. Crazy guys, as you say over your side; eh, lad?"

"Eh, but I wish I had the old days back. Clipper days; none of your dirty steam where there's nowt doing. It's good to be young with the world to kick an' all."



A TREMENDOUS roar startled us. As the noise continued the engines began to slow down. We ran out of the chart-house. From the open skylight rose volumes of steam. With a muttered oath the captain made for the engine-room gangway.

"Stop there," he commanded as I followed him. "You'll be in the way. Keep out."

I obeyed, but I stuck my head in the skylight. I couldn't see a thing for the steam. I pawed at my eyes and withdrew.

As I wondered what had happened, pacing about the deck I was conscious of that queer lame feeling as the ship slid slowly through the water. The engines had stopped.

Presently the density of the steam lessened and I saw the tops of the cylinders emerging like mountain-tops through clouds, and heard voices away down below.

After a while the captain clambered up the ladder from the depths. His eyes were swollen and red. Behind him came the McIntosh, his face looking like a lobster ready for the dish. But the captain was swearing so healthily that I guessed that the accident was not serious.

"What's happened?" I asked as we moved behind the McIntosh, who was striding to the chart-house.

"Bust the ruddy steampipe."

"Can they repair it?"

"Dunno till Mac gets enough spirit in him to see again. It's a ——— nuisance an' all. Well, Mac, what d'you think?"

"Hoo the de'il can Ah think when Ah can na see to find ma mouth, ye loon?" demanded McIntosh, raising the glass to his lips.

"Do you think with your stomach?" I inquired.

"Ou, aye, ma bairnie. D'ye no' ken ye maun ha' ye thochts i' the belly afore ye ken spit 'em i' the mouth? Och!" he ejaculated, pawing his great mustaches tentatively. "Ah was at havers less Ah'd lost ma head sporrant

"Aweel, cap'n, Ah'm afeerd we'll ha' to run for the nearest poort. We can no more than patch her a wee. There never was an engine built anywhere but i' the Clyde worth mor'n a

bawbee. And where wud we be the noo?"

"Somewhere off Beira," answered the captain.

Mac considered, meditatively pouring out another whisky.

"Ou, aye. We'll ha' to wire to Delagoa for a spare pairt and bide a wee."

Captain Smith swore.

"Tch! Tch!" the McIntosh reproved. "Ha' ye no thoct for the wee bairnie?"

Captain Smith swore again.

"Ou, aye, it's all ye wud say and muir. Ah'll awa' and get the lassie wi' splints on."

He reached the engine-room in four great strides, and immediately from the depths I heard the droning voice rising:

"Ma faither was a braw cock lair-rd;
Ma mither came fra Perr-rth,
Aibins Ah'm no a sonsy——"

The captain looked at me and laughed.

"Now what the —— can you do with a wild galoot like that!"

Two hours later we began to make way again under half-steam, for the McIntosh dared not give her full pressure. At ten o'clock next day we were anchored before a town straddling its tiny self like a dazzling white bird across a sand-bar at the mouth of the Pungwe River. As the gig was being lowered to take the captain to the mole the McIntosh appeared on deck.

"Ah'm lookin' for a cateran to gang ashore wi' me," said he.

"Wull ye come?"

"Sure," I assented, wondering what a cateran might be. Later I found that it was a Highland freebooter.

"Eh, but you're a brave laddie," said Captain Smith, grinning. "If you knew Mac half as well as I do you'd know you'd better throw a bucketful of reis into the harbor and save the close view of a Portuguese jail."

"Ye maun na scairt the bairn," reproached the McIntosh solemnly. "These Englishmen are overfond o' havrin' o' their home sweet home."

"All right," laughed the captain. "Wait for him, lad, and I'll be bailin' you out before the day's twenty-four hours older."

A couple of hours later I embarked with the McIntosh, who looked like anything but a ship's engineer in his immaculate lawn suit and Panama, a cigar stuck in his sporrant—as he called his great mustaches—and a mighty flask bulging from his hip pocket. To enliven the long pull to the mole he obliged with a new ditty which was evidently his own:

"A braw galoot was the Portugee.
He clasped his dirk an' he put to sea.
Put to sea, did the Portugee.
Oh, the Portugee, he put to sea."

"He passed the Hor-rr and pursued his nose. This black-avised chief smelled like a rose. Red was his nose, just like a rose; Like a rose was his purple nose.

"He sailed the sea till his guts were dry. He drank sea-water and longed to die; Longed to die, for his guts were dry; His guts were dry, so he longed to die."

"For why are ye greenin', ye marauderin' caterans?" demanded the McIntosh of the grinning seamen. "Wud ye no' lang to die an' ye guts were dry?"

"Not 'alf," assented a cockney sailor, and the rest guffawed.

"Row, ye de'ils," roared the McIntosh at them. "Ye can na row na mair than a Hielan' donnal wassie. Mon, but ye ower set the r-rhythm o' ma musec."

Nevertheless he continued with the sad adventures of the gallant explorers, and by the time we had reached the mole he had reduced the ship's company to half by various grim and awful scourges of the sea. On the top step we were stopped by a Portuguese soldier in white smothered in gold lace and borne down equally by an enormous hat and rifle nigh as big as himself.

"Mon, ha' ye seen the like ooter a buik?" exclaimed the McIntosh delightedly.

"Sheep?" demanded the soldier, pointing a brown hand and a cigaret at the ship.

"Ou, aye," assented the McIntosh, and began to sing:

"Ma faither ha' ten thousand sheep
On the bonny banks o' Doon.
But ha' none at a' ye ken
Ah'll hie me off and droon!"

"Sheep?" persisted the little man, grinning amiably.

"A muckle o' sheep, Ah'm tellin' ye."

"St, st."

I rushed to the rescue, whereupon the soldier stepped aside.

"Och," said Mac, shaking his head, "yon mannikin makes me owersad. Ah'm juist nobbut but a wee bairn wi' ma tin sogers. Ah'll sing ye a lament," he added.

"No, no," I interposed hastily. "Let's get aboard this outfit here and go to the hotel."



THE McIntosh consented to mount a garden seat, set upon a trolley on rails, pushed through the streets of Beira, which are ankle deep in sand.

"Ah'm a wee roupit i' the thraggle," complained the McIntosh, caressing his brawny throat; and he thereupon proceeded to moisten his "thaggle."

As our trolley came round a corner we saw advancing a most dignified being in immaculate white uniform more heavily laden with gold

lace than the "tin soldier" on the mole—no less a person than his Excellence el Capitán General Porfirio Fernandez Diaz, I learned later.

"Och, laddie!" exclaimed the McIntosh, clutching his flask in ecstatic delight at the approaching magnificence. "Ha' ye e'er seen sic a wonnerfu' speectacle o' glory on airth? Ma certic, but he's mair magneificent then the Lorr'd Provost o' Edinboro ugh toun."

"It must be the governor," I suggested. "Governor, ye senseless loon! Losh, man, but yon's the Archangel Gabriel, Ah mak' no doobt at a'! Wae's me, for ma sins are coom upon me."

As it happened in that street, there was no handy siding for the two trolleys to pass, and in such case it is the etiquette for the lesser personage to dismount while his natives drag the trolley off the rails. Officialdom is paramount so that there was no question of a nicety of rank.

Our boys stopped the machine and stood waiting for us to get off. But the McIntosh seemed in a trance of admiration. Grasping what was expected I stood up, touching him on the shoulder.

"Come along, chief; we'll have to let this bird pass."

"Sit ye doun, Buickskin!" exclaimed the McIntosh. "For why wud ye no' admeer sic a grand speectacle o' mcelitary pomp?"

"Oh, come on," I urged as the soldiers and boys about began shouting and waving their arms. "It's no use arguing with—"

Without removing his fascinated eyes the McIntosh's great hand bore heavily upon my shoulders as he said:

"Ah'm the McIntosh of McIntosh! Ha' ye no respect for ma deegnity? Wud ye ha' me gi' the richt o' the causey (street) to yon potato bogle wi' the whirligigums? Hoot, mon! Quit ye phraisin'!"

The governor was now halted immediately in front of us. To the uproar from the indignant escort was added the vociferous explanations from our own unhappy natives, who dared not attempt to thrust our sacrilegious selves from the machine. Face to face sat the McIntosh and the governor, and as he stared into the angry black eyes in the swarthy face the McIntosh grinned, still gripping my sleeve.

"Ah'm the McIntosh," roared the Scot above the babel. "Git oot o' ma way, ye black-avised rapscaillon."

Furiously the governor twirled his black mustaches upward, and as furiously the raw-beef hand of the McIntosh pulled up first one and then the other of his own great blond mustaches which touched either temple. The uproar grew. Our three natives bolted beneath the wrath of his Excellency.

"Come on, Mac; there's no sense in—" I was protesting when the irate governor thrust out a dramatic hand toward a building immediately upon our right, above the gate of which were gilded arms.

Instantly the door opened, and to the assistance of the escort poured out a stream of police who charged recklessly. The McIntosh rose with a mighty screech and began to yell:

"A braw galoot was the Portugee,
He grabbed his dirk and he put to sea.
Put to sea, did the Portugee.
Oh, the Portugee, he——"

They were upon us. Now I was an amateur and had no intention of aiding the McIntosh in disturbing the peace, yet I couldn't stand being hauled off. But the sudden capsizing of the trolley from the other side upset my intentions and I was shot forward into a bunch of bristling soldiery. I let out a right and left and then found myself pinned against a white gate by a circle of bayonets.

Jabbering ferociously, they tried to urge me through. Their bayonets were too long for my fists. It was too much of a joke to pull my gun, so I used my feet.

Then I caught a vision of the MacIntosh coming toward me amid a swaying crowd up to his waist, and in his great arms was the wriggling form of his Excellency the governor.

I began to laugh. Then just as I had swung one of my little men aside by seizing his rifle-muzzle the whole bunch surged against the open gate with the McIntosh trumpeting like a elephant and the governor squalling. Following the Scot's example, I picked up my victim to use as a battering-ram to prevent being forced through the gates when the McIntosh turned and hurled the governor into the midst of his men.

As he stooped to pick off the two heroes clinging like leaches on to his legs there was a general rush by the screeching crowd, and as we were swept inside the great gates slammed.

III



INSIDE was a sandy square formed by whitewashed, barrack-like buildings of one story, into which the two unarmed policemen had disappeared at high pressure.

"Now," said I, "what the —— are we going to do, Mac? There'll be the —— to pay for this! His Excellency——"

"Och, I'm hotter than ma own furnaces. Wait till I can think a wee," said he, lugging out his gigantic flask. "Mcbebe the loon will be galling up his army," he added, stroking his great mustache into place and straightening out his rumpled and torn clothing. "Be the hinder end o' Mahoon, I'll have the law on 'em for damages."

Outside a terrific commotion was in progress, the hoarse voice of the governor bellowing orders which apparently nobody wanted to obey. In a far corner of the square another hubbub arose, evidently from the guardhouse.

"Come on, Mac," said I impatiently as he continued placidly to smooth out his ruffled plumage. "We can't stay here. If they don't put us in jail for months for this jag they'll fine us the Lord knows how much."

"Assaulting the governor? Och, he's no' worth more 'n aboot ten thousand reis apiece."

"Ten thousand!" I echoed, aghast. "But, man, where are we going to get that money?"

"Hoot mon, 'tis no muir than five-and-twenty pound."

"What! Ten thousand reis is only a hundred and twenty-five dollars?"

"Ou aye; but Ah've no mind to pay for a wee bit dance wi' a gay Portugee! Ah'll lulk around."

We walked across the empty square, conscious of eyes from the corner watching us. As we approached a light voice cried out—

"Hullo, you fellows."

"Where are ye?" called the McIntosh, wheeling about. "Ye sound like a white man."

From a window on the right a hand was waving. We went across to the window at a run as the voice continued:

"The ruddy sons of gods have got me here. I'm a prisoner."

"What are ye?" demanded Mac beneath the window.

"English. Let me out, for ——'s sake."

"Bide a wee," said Mac and proceeded to investigate the door, which was locked from without.

As he turned the key a new uproar of protest came from five of the police gesticulating wildly in front of the guardhouse. Mac turned, bellowed and made as if to rush at them. As they disappeared promptly a small fair man in a dirty suit of khaki with rumpled fair hair emerged from the room.

"Oh, thank —— you've got me out!" he exclaimed. "How did you get in here without——"

At that moment, amid shouts and screeches from without, the big gates began to open, revealing what appeared to be the head of a small army in column formation.

"Quick!" shouted the little stranger. "I know."

He darted toward another tall door in the near corner of the square.

"Come on, Mac," I urged, dragging him by the sleeve. "We can't fight unless we use a gun, and that——"

He consented to follow me, shouting incomprehensible epithets of defiance over his shoulder. The stranger had already opened the gate which led into another and larger

square. As we entered, the column of tiny soldiers broke into a double, uttering ferocious cries. As we slipped through, our guide, who evidently knew his whereabouts, shot the big iron bolt into place.

"They'll have to go round the square to the far high wall," he commented.

We ran swiftly across the square to the far wall.

"Oop wi' ye, Buickskin," said Mac, and, cupping my knee, hoisted me on top.

The little man followed, and together we yanked Mac up. On the other side was a narrow, sandy lane with a similar wall opposite.

"What's ower yonder, ma wee blastie?" demanded Mac as the little man started down the lane.

"Not there! Not there! Why, that's the governor's palace!"

"Aweel it's no' there the mannikin will be luiking for us," decided Mac instantly. "Oop wi' ye, ma bairnie."

And, catching the late prisoner by the seat of the pants, he lifted him on to the wall.

"Awa' wi' ye, Buickskin, if ye'd no' pay for ma fun."

Seeing sense in the plan, I followed mighty quick.

"But," began the prisoner as the McIntosh straddled the wall, "I tell you we can't hide here. I know——"

"Don't ye blether wi' me, ma son!" retorted The McIntosh.

He dropped over the other side, plucked the protesting man from the wall and set him on his feet. "We got ye oot o' jail, Ah'm thinkin', and ye'll no' go back an ye hold ye gab an stick wi' us."

We found ourselves in a garden fairly thick with palms and tropical stuff which I'd never seen before. Following along the wall, we came to the back of a house, whitewashed like all the rest, with a barred window giving on the garden. The McIntosh peeped inside. He drew back, making a sign to be silent.

"Yon's four bairns having a wee bit game. Mebbe we'll join 'em. Awa' follow me!"

"Look here," interrupted the stranger but talking softly, "who the —— do you think you are? I'm about fed up——"

"Are ye wild to be back in yon hoose? Hoots mon," retorted the McIntosh in the same strain, "if it's a fecht ye wud have——"

"Listen," said I, recollecting my own experience with Mac. "Not so much hot air. If you fellows want a fight, wait till we're out of this; otherwise we all three'll be back in the pen."

Mac glowered at me and at the bantam-like small man.

"Ou aye," said he. "Buicksin's richt. We ha' got to lie low a wee, or lose our bawbees, ye ken. Noo awa'!"

He began to explore cautiously along the wall of the house. I whispered to the pugnacious Englishman to keep quiet until we were free.

"You're American, aren't you?" said he. "You're all right. But this blighter's got too much of an idea of his own importance."

"What the ——'s the good of getting mad at him and trying to bowl him out now? Anyway we rescued you——"

"Quite all right, old man," said he quickly. "Let's cut the cackle. Come on!"



WE HASTENED after Mac, whom we found dourly beckoning to us from a vine-clad porch.

"Buickskin," he whispered, "and you, ma mannie!"—pointing a bony finger at an open door from which we could see the four card-players—"ye take a mon each, ye ken, and Ah'll joist the ither sorners. But there maun na be a clishmaclaver, ye onnersten!"

"Wait, Mac," I whispered. "I've got a gun. I'll——"

"Ou aye," he whispered back; "but, laddie, ye might let it go off. Ah've no mind for murthering the puir beasties! Mon, but they'd cost a thousand reis!"

Now to tell the truth, although I felt a bit sore at that time, I'd never handled a gun overmuch, so I gave in. As a matter of fact he didn't give me much chance of arguing the point.

It was a way Mac had, I discovered.

He crept softly toward the door like an enormous half-starved wolf and we two stole behind him. As our shadows darkened the door four black muzzles like greasers' looked up. In a bound Mac deftly caught the two nearest by the throats and I leaped upon the next. A startled squawk came from one of them, but which one I never knew.

Mine was an agile little runt and wriggled like a snake. His darned neck was so sweaty or oily that I could scarce keep my grip on his throttle while I tore off the handiest thing, the sash, about his waist, to gag him. When I turned the Englishman was binding his captive with the cloth on which they had been playing and Mac was squatted on the floor in a corner with the black eyes of each victim staring desperately over each red wrist, and their white-trousered legs plunging frantically in the air like trapped rabbits.

"Wull ye tie the wee puddocks?" inquired the McIntosh. "I can na take ma hand off their weasands."

I hastened to fix up one and the Englishman attended to the other. After we had dumped the four of them in the corner, one on top of the other like so many bales of cotton, Mac squatted down and solemnly took a long swig from his flask. He sighed and stared at the

Englishman, who was wiping his forehead with a handkerchief meditatively.

"Ye're no' so bad," said the McIntosh, solemnly thrusting the bottle at him.

"Thanks," said the other, and drank. "Phew, that was — good. I haven't had a drink for two days."

"And for what wud ye be there?" demanded the McIntosh.

"Oh, that's a long yarn," said the stranger. "I'm much obliged to you two fellows for getting me out. My name's Forsayth. Here, stop it, you bally idiots," he added to the prisoners, who were wriggling about in their corner like a can of fish-bait. "Who are you?"

"Forsayth," repeated the McIntosh. "Ye'd no' say? Hech mon, but ye maun be a Scot." "My father was. What about it? Who are you?"

"Me? I'm the McIntosh"; and with a convulsion of the great mustaches he added, "and ma wee frien' here is the r-raincoat!"

Forsayth, leaning against the window, looked at me inquiringly.

"Is this a joke?" he inquired politely.

"Och mon!" exclaimed the McIntosh. "He's no' a Scot. Hech, the mon's just a Southron, for he can na see a joke!"

I introduced myself, ignoring Mac's peculiar form of humor.

"I'm on board or I was on board," I added, wondering by the look of things when I was due back, "the *Umbanghu*; and Mac here's chief engineer——"

"Mebbe Ah'm just an engineer and mebbe just no!" interrupted the McIntosh.

I smiled and Forsayth smiled.

"You're certainly a couple of quaint birds even for this forsaken side of Hades," he remarked. "Are you the second mate or something?" he inquired of me.

"I'm supposed to be the fourth engineer," I explained a little uncomfortably. "I sort of started wandering round, and——"

"*Por Deus!*"



THE exclamation ended our polite conversation; for standing in the door with the startled expression of a scared cat about to spit was an officer, glorious in epaulettes and lace with a sword almost as big as himself. We three rose as one with the consequence that we hit the doorway together, creating a confusion which gave our visitor time to recover and take to his heels.

I was the first to break away and went after the funny flying figure in the bright sunlight with its sword dangling like a wooden tail and Mac at my heels. My long legs have brought me cups at college, and they brought me this time up to the fugitive just as his cockaded hat fell off, revealing a most respectable-looking bald head.

But as I caught him under the armpits he let out such an appalling screech for help that I was sure they had heard it on the boat in the harbor. In our eagerness to carry the wildly struggling man back to the shelter of the room and quiet his cries at the same time we nearly tore him in two. However, Mac tucked his body under one arm and I hung on to his head with my hand upon his windpipe.

But we were too late. Before we could get out of the garden we heard cries behind us and there appeared a half-dozen or more native servants, men and women.

"It's no good!" exclaimed Forsayth. "We'll have to get out, for they'll bring the whole blessed army here!"

"Ye richt, mon," agreed Mac. "Let the wee blastie free, Buickskin," letting go of his captive. "We can na tak' him awa' wi us, an' he'll roon faster than a lizard. Bide a wee, ma mannie," he added, clutching the shoulder as I let go the head; "mebbe yon dirk wull make a canny souvenir."

He flashed out the scarlet-faced officer's sword. The officer, spluttering oaths, took no pains to conceal his violent desire to get out of sight.

"Now," said I, "where to?"

"Make for the hinder end o' the garden," said Mac, leading the way at a lope. "Mebbe we'll find anither hoose."

We hurried along the wall and came to another running at right angles. The uproar among the domestics had grown louder and nearer; evidently they were being driven on by the officer man at least to keep us in sight while some one brought up the police. As we paused in the corner the McIntosh whispered:

"Hoots, mon, there's on'y one place they'll no' be speiring for us in a' the toun, and that's where they want to put us. Awa'!"

I grabbed the idea and so did Forsayth, and over the two walls we went again. They must have hunted out every man, dog and woman in the place after us, for the jail seemed entirely deserted. However, we did not go exploring back into the inner courtyard where we had found Forsayth; but, locating a large room which seemed to be an office of some sort, we locked the door on the inside and sat down to decide how we were to get out of a mess which seemed to me to be growing worse every minute.

"Aye, but it's awfu' hot!" remarked Mac as he dragged out his flask again. "Noo mebbe ye'll tell us what kind o' a body ye are, Meester Forsayth?"

IV



FORSAYTH looked at me and then at the giant figure of the McIntosh sprawling on a cane chair, meditatively wiping his great mustaches with a scarlet silk handkerchief.

"Awfully good of you fellows to lug me out of jail," he began. "I suppose I ought to thank you and that sort of thing."

He cocked one leg over his chair-arm so that he could keep an eye on the window.

"And as we seem to be more or less comfortable here perhaps I ought to tell you what you've done."

"Lordy!" said I, "You don't mean to say you're a thief or a murderer?"

"Not in the meaning of the act," said he with a grin. "Besides in this glorious country both those occupations are government monopolies. According to them I've been trespassing on their preserves. That's why they arrested men when I was drunk and banged me in jail on a general charge of drunk and refusing to fight. They just want to keep me quiet for a few weeks."

"Well, if you weren't guilty," said I innocently, "why didn't you appeal to your British consul? There's one here, isn't there?"

"Oh, yes; there's one here, my dear babe. Quite a nice chap too. Dined with me the evening they pinched me."

"But then why——"

"Hold yer gab, ma bairnie!" interposed the McIntosh. "There was never a braw cateran was owerfriendly wi' the provost, ye ken. Let the mon ha' the word."

"Well, you see," explained the Britisher indulgently, "this country is peculiar. There are occasions when——er——it isn't healthy for the government to interfere with certain speculations, so then they have a trick of arresting you on false charge so——"

"I get you," said I. "A frame-up."

"Yes, I've heard that term. Well, to get along with the yarn. I've been trading and shooting up the Pungwe Valley for some years. The Portugee ain't an adventurous beast these days, whatever he was before. Up-country they don't give a —— for 'em. Usually when they try to send a punitive expedition they get wiped out. You see, their officer people are born-tireds; they insist on going into battle in *machilas*—hammocks, you know—which is very comfortable but not conducive to military discipline and that sort of thing.

"Well, away up I became friendly with a certain chief, and he and I went into partnership in ivory and gold. Now according to the Portugee law we're supposed to hand over about fifty per cent.—or I am, for a native isn't allowed to have any at all.

"Well, my friend the chief—he's quite a good chap even if a bit rough at times—doesn't see the point. Neither do I. If a government runs a country they ought to provide certain things—protection if you like—in return for the taxes, what? Well, up there or within twenty miles of here they have no more power than I have in Timbuktu. Of course the cus-

tomary way is bribery, but their hands are too darned large and besides——" he grinned—"that don't appeal to my Presbyterian conscience."

"Ou, aye," agreed the McIntosh with a convulsion of his mustaches. "Ah'm wi' ye. Sic wud be relations wi' publiceans an' seeners, Ah mak no doot!"

"That's it," agreed the Britisher. "Well, the row started some time ago. I was pretty well established up there at Umfangala. We'd done a fairly decent trade with ivory and had sent several loads out through Umtali. The rail runs up from here to Rhodesia, you know, through Umtali. Then old greedy Porfirio Diaz got wind through his native spies——"

"And wud Meester Porfercio be?" inquired the McIntosh.

"Oh, old Porfy's the governor—little fat chap with bloomin' great whiskers like yours, only as black as a nigger's."

"Why, that must be the man you assaulted, Mac!" I exclaimed. "He was the governor, I'm dead sure."


"What's that?" demanded Forsayth eagerly. "This Highlander here assaulted him? How?"

"Ou, aye," the McIntosh admitted. "But 'twas naething to blaw aboot. The galoot wud na give us the right o' the causey an' I had ta remove the wee mannie."

"He picked him up in his arms and threw him at his own soldiers," I explained and began to laugh at the recollection.

"Then they lugged you both in here, I suppose?"

"They did nae sic thing," denied the McIntosh. "The army pushed us in and slammed you gates."

 FORSAYTH looked at the McIntosh. "I can imagine!" said he, and laughed. "Once more I'm much obliged to you."

"But what were you saying?" I interrupted.

"Oh, yes. Well, we were doing a pretty fair trade as I told you when old greedy, your intimate friend, heard of it through his native spies. He sent up a funny little devil with ten pounds of gold lace on his unwashed neck to demand that I turn over the gold dust, which according to him I had stolen from his territory without a license.

"Well he got rather offensive. My friend the chief wanted to fry his toes for him, a little trick he had learned from the Portugeese; but I had scruples and merely spanked him and shut him up in a hut to cool off. They're apt to get frightfully excited, you know."

"Well, of course he came back down here with a yarn that I'd defied the whole majesty of Portugal invested in the vast paunch of Porfy himself *et cetera ad nauseam*. Porfy prances about and talks to the British consul,

who of course replied that he didn't know anything about me, which was perfectly true as he'd never even seen me; moreover, that he had had no evidence at all that I was a British subject.

"Porfy got more news from a servant of mine who had bolted and spread a report of the fabulous amount of gold I'd hidden away up there. Probably a vision of himself with all that gold plastered all over him worked him up to such a state that he decided he couldn't trust any of his deputy thieves, so up he comes himself.

"Lord, he was funny! He came on the rail with two trucks of troops as far as Manzani—nearest station to me, you know—hammocks and tents and — knows what *impashle* necessary to support his dignity. Then he squats down and summons me to appear.

Forsayth laughed.

"As a matter of fact I hadn't known that the idiot was there until he sent the message. I immediately sent the gold out of reach and told him he could come and fetch me if he wanted to. I had my camp well fixed in a *kopje* which with my own men I knew well that all the bally Portuguese couldn't shift me from without artillery."

"But why," I interrupted again, "didn't you send the gold out through Rhodesia—Umtali you said, didn't you?"

"Very good reason, my son. We British run our territory on business lines. I don't mind paying my ten per cent. or whatever it is for a claim in which I'm protected, as I've inferred before. But I do object to paying an ad valorem for passing through with gold which I didn't get in their territory. Follow me?"

"Another thing was that I didn't want advertising and making a second Klondike of it. There isn't the gold anyway to pay a mob.

"Well, to go on. Old Porfy threatened to start a regular war. I sat quiet and left matters to my partner for the time being.

"Now Porfy is a greedy old bird and wanted to bag all the loot for himself with the natural consequence that his lieutenants weren't dying to get shot or speared. He sat around and did what he thought was besieging me. Then he sent a private messenger suggesting that we split the difference. I told him to go to blazes; but I kept that letter, you bet!

"Then he really got mad. Burnt several *kraals* down in the valley and collared a chief who was allied to my partner and bastinadoed him to death because he wouldn't play traitor.

"Then I began to get my shirt out. I warned him that if he didn't play fair I'd raised the whole country against him. That scared him a little. I had trouble in holding my partner in. Naturally he wanted revenge.

"It's a — of a country up there, you know, and the way Porfy handled his troops was a

crime. He simply asked for a massacre."

"Now a Portugee's a Portugee, but a white man doesn't like turning natives on to massacre whites. He had about a hundred Portugee soldiers with him and about four hundred blacks. If it hadn't been for my chief friend I'd have slipped out and let him take the bally 'place, for the gold wasn't there, as I've told you. I wasn't taking any chances.

"Well, he simply forced it. I had to let the natives defend themselves as best they could and sent a warning to old Porfy that if he attacked me personally I would fight."

"Well, they tried to take the place. It was a silly business. I sat up in a baobab watching the whole show. Very few Portugee got hurt because as usual the officers remained in their hammocks and the men were always covered by the blacks."

"Well, after that he returned here, informing me that I was an outlaw and that I was to be taken dead or alive. Of course that was bunk. He hadn't forgotten his letter and he knew I would keep it. It was the gold he wanted.

"Then he tried other tactics. Sent a creature they call Matakini—the jigger flea, y' know, which burrows in your toes and lays eggs. He's a cross between a Portugee and the Lord-knows-what. He turned up at my place as a trader. I had known him as a trader before; but I didn't know then, although I suspected it from the first, that he had been bought by friend Porfy.



"FIRST of all he tried to turn the natives against me. He could speak the lingo like one of 'em. Then he tried to burgle me, although again the gold wasn't where he thought it was.

"After that he tried to poison me and the chief as well, but he merely killed a couple of native dogs. I told him to get out and he tried to knife me. Well, we had a little scrap and he went off with a bullet in his thigh.

"Then old Porfy tried another game. He lay doggo for a while and then succeeded in pinching a load of ivory I was sending out through Umtali. Somebody gave me away. Of course I didn't try to send it by rail from Manzani, but sent it by porters to the first station over the border.

"I tried a raid to get it back but I was just too late. His people had got it away by rail, and we arrived just in time to see her steaming away round a bend bound for old greedy's pocket, for I'll bet that not ten reis of that goes into the government's treasury. He got one over on me that time.

"Before this row started and he got wind of what was going on I used to come down here for supplies—cheaper here direct from the boat than paying transport at Umtali. Afterward for a while I was forced to go there. But after

the pinching of my ivory I decided to come in here as if nothing had happened.

"But first of all I slipped over the border and sent his compromising letter with a bunch of other papers to care of the consul here with instructions to keep them for me and waited for his acknowledgment. Then I came straight on down. As soon as I stepped off the train here they arrested me.

"They searched me of course. All they found was my official receipt from the British consul for certain papers. They knew what they were, you bet.

"Well, they took me to old Porfy. He tried to talk it over. I merely grinned and refused to talk until I had my ivory back. He stormed and threatened, but he had to release me.

"I made straight down and located my ivory—down there on the goods track—and camped near it. I couldn't lift it on my own and went off to think the matter over.

"Well, then I slipped up. Usually I don't touch liquor, but living up there, you know, a fellow gets a sort of thirst as well as a hunger. I dined with the consul that night and he's sort of lonesome-like and we made a regular night of it.

"After I left him I got an idea into my head to have another drink and went into one of the dens here. Well, you know a fellow's bound to make an ass of himself occasionally. I did, and got myself into a row with a drunken Swede off a ship.

"The bartender started to be insolent—because we were making a noise, I suppose. Don't quite remember. Anyway I let out. These bally Portuguese are darned fragile little animals. He got hurt and bawled for the police."

I laughed, for Forsyth wasn't so very big himself.

"There you are," he said. "Of course they had found the excuse they were looking for to bottle me up."

"But couldn't you have used the threat of the governor's letter to get out?" I asked.

"Could have if I'd had half a chance, but they kept me mewed up there, you bet. That was just what they wanted. I'll bet a hundred quid that as soon as I was safe under lock and key old Porfy send half a regiment scuttling up the line after that money—if he doesn't go himself."

"But what's the use of that if they don't know where it's hidden?"

"Get my servants, my boy, and tickle up their imagination with hot irons. They know well enough that some one or two of them must know."

"Aweel, an' what wud ye be doing the noo?" demanded the McIntosh.

"Well, thanks to you chaps I'm free—ör practically so," he added with a laugh. "Un-

less we get bagged again I shall make traps tonight to see what's happened to my camp by the station yard. If they've pinched my boys and gear as well, as they probably have, I'll have to get back somehow up the line."

"Take to the rods?" I suggested.

"Yes, if there's no other way."

"Hoot mon, ye ha' no imageenation," said the McIntosh.

"No what?"


"Imageenation, Ah'm telling ye. Luik-ahere, the Buickskin and mascl' ha' naething to do for mebbe a couple o' days. Ah'm juist an engineer as Ah've told ye. Ah'll drive ye awa' oop the line an ye want. There's mebbe an engine or twa 'i the station yard."

"By —, you're a sportsman!" exclaimed Forsyth. "If you do you're welcome to twenty per cent. at least."

"Awa' wi' ye! Ah'm no' a cullion! Buickskin here wud like to see a wee bit o' the country. Wud ye no', Buickskin?"

"Sure I would!" I agreed, laughing.

V

 BY THE time Forsyth's yarn was finished the sun was setting. Cautiously pecking out of the window, Mac reported a couple of little men lounging about by an open door farther down rolling the eternal cigaret with one hand.

We decided to wait for the time the *gendarmerie* would probably be occupied with dinner and bolt under cover of darkness by way of the wall into the quiet lane between the palace and the barracks. Then we held council of ways and means. The police had taken Forsyth's weapon, but the McIntosh had his toothpick, as he called it, and his beef-bone fists. I had my gun. Arms we must get, also food.

Forsyth knew a small saloon on the outskirts of the town kept by an Irishman who wouldn't give us away—the man, he said, who was to look out for a suitable boat in which to ship the gold when he could run it through.

By this time I was mighty hungry in spite of the clammy heat. Trumpets blared close to hand at the sunset, and we heard voices shouting commands and the sound of marching.

Presently more trumpets tooted a signal which we reckoned was the mess-call. A few figures moved across the end of the yard in the short twilight, and when things seemed fairly quiet we slipped out and across to the wall, dropping into the narrow sandy lane without seeing a soul.

As we plodded along in the hot dark in the wake of Forsyth I heard the McIntosh chuckling to himself, evidently hugely delighted with the prospect of some amusement. And I felt good too; for certainly the cards to instruct

me in the gentle art of adventure seemed to be falling mightily well.

I had often wondered before exactly how a fellow counts adventure, but I have learned later all you've got to do is to find the likely environment and sit and wait. But one thing is; you can't make it. Some are lucky; others not.

Under Forsyth's leadership we avoided the one main street where the shops are and the trolley runs, dodging down dark alleys and through the red-light district as they call it. Once we bumped right against two little brown devils, but they seemed too interested in smoking and chattering to notice us; anyway they probably thought that we were just three ordinary foreigners from some boat or down from Umtali.

We reached the saloon of Forsyth's friend. As Forsyth was well known and I was less conspicuous than the McIntosh, I was elected to go ahead to see who was there. Under the lamps on the patio were a couple of British sailors and another foreigner; and within, I caught sight of a small, red-haired man with a cropped bullet head.

As there was little chance that any one but a Portuguese would run off to give us away we three entered boldly. As soon as he saw us the host began to laugh, but led us quickly into a private garden at the back.

As Forsyth introduced us the bullet-headed Irishman who had been a sailor before he started this caboose in Beira, looked us over and began to laugh anew. It appeared that he had already heard of our—or rather the McIntosh's—exploits with the governor. There were a dozen versions of the story, all exaggerated of course, but which had been received riotously by all the foreign element in the town.

Also old Porfy, as Forsyth called him, had offered a reward of some thousands of reis to any one who captured us or led to our capture. On the quay was a special guard specially armed, said our host, with a Maxim-Nordenfelt.

Captain Smith had been in the bar not an our ago. He had been tickled to death by the yarn, but was anxious about the safety of his chief, whom of course he did not want to lose.

As we were stowing away a not bad-tasting mess of Portuguese stuff O'Grath the host told us that when we had upset the governor he had been on his way to the railway station for up-country and had left about an hour ago, evidently after he had got over the McIntosh's embraces.

"There you are!" exclaimed Forsyth. "What did I tell you! The old devil's gone up after my—" he stopped cautiously and concluded—"goods. Probably been torturing my servants while I've been in jail and taken them with him."


"Ou, aye," assented the McIntosh. "I ken yon cullion. Ye say he ha' juist gone the half-hour? Losh, mon, what a peety; for we cud ha' driven the old pirate ou ain sel's."

"Lordy!" cried I enthusiastically. "That would have been a wonderful stunt."

"Ou, aye," grumbled the McIntosh dourly; "but we're owerlate for the fechtin'."

While we sat on under the warm stars with a few mosquitoes buzzing around, Forsyth got all the news possible from O'Grath, arranged for a parcel of food and borrowed a couple of revolvers for the McIntosh and himself—with of course ammunition and a wire-clipper. Forsyth wouldn't drink anything except wine; he said he had already paid too dear for indulgence in liquor. With such adventure ahead I fought shy of even the light claret; but the McIntosh gullet was of course busy, and he took care to secure an ample stock of the host's Scotch.

Now Beira's main life is at night to about five in the morning, when all strangers are in the town and most Portuguese are busy bleeding or trying to bleed them and the police are on hand to see that they get odd cigarets and general backshish. The moon was due about four. It's light would be of use once we had secured an engine, but the approach had to be made in the dark. So at three we slipped out of the back into the sticky night to the tinkle of a mandolin somewhere, the yell of a cricket and the regular pulsing throb of millions of frogs in the swamps around the town—a kind of bass accompaniment to the shrill mosquitoes.

 THE McIntosh and I had no idea of the lay of the land and just slogged along in the sand after Forsyth. After about half an hour we seemed to have left the town and were slithering along, apparently in the open, in a swarm of mosquitoes.

"Wull yon scutts ha' a guard on the sheds?" I heard the McIntosh inquire.

"Supposed to," replied Forsyth, "but they're usually asleep or playing cards, particularly when old Porfy is away, because he always takes his horde of generalissimo and the whole shooting-match with him."

Presently through the night miasma I caught the loom of some white buildings and the red glow of a fire.

"That's the goods and engine-sheds," whispered Forsyth. "Station to the right there in the open veld. That's the guard by the fire. They seem to be awake for a wonder. No sign of my camp. That — old swine's evidently pinched the lot."

"Hadn't we better scout around and come in on the other side of the trail?" I suggested.

"Gude! The laddie's richt," assented the McIntosh. "For we'll ha' ta tie oop yon wee mannikins against they start a concert. Ou,

laddie," he added with a sigh, "but Ah'm fair bursting wi' song."

And he began to chant beneath his breath:

"A braw galoot was the Portugee.
He drew his dirk an' he came for me.
He came for me, that Portugee
That Portugee he came for me.

"I stroked his nose and pulled his lug,
An' slapped his face and gave him a hug—
Pulled his lug and gave a hug;
Gave him a hug and pulled his lug!"

"Sssh," expostulated Forsayth as the McIntosh's enthusiasm began to grow. "Follow to the right. We'll circle the shed and come round on 'em."

We worked our way around along the swamp-edge in a swarm of mosquitoes. What little noise we made shuffling over sand and swamp was safely drowned by the row the frogs made.

We reached the sheds and peered around the corner. Twenty yards away five soldiers squatted in the lee of a fire playing cards. I was so bathed in sweat and bitten to death that I began to lose a little of the enthusiasm for adventure.

"Wait a moment," whispered Forsayth. "I want to see if my bally ivory is still here."

He disappeared into the darkness. I heard his boot kick metal which clanged, but the frogs were helping us. He returned in about two minutes, saying that the wagon was still there. After a whispered discussion we decided that Forsayth, as he spoke the lingo fluently, should be the spokesman in holding up the guard.

As a matter of fact between those blessed frogs, the hum of mosquitoes, the shrill of crickets and the interest those fellows had in their game, whatever it was, we could have galloped up. They didn't see us until the three of us were poking our guns under their noses.

The expression of those five swarthy faces in the firelight was so funny that I could scarcely hold my gun for laughing as Forsayth advised them what they ought to do. And they did it—*prompt!*

One by one they stood up and I disarmed them. Yet although they were scared to death not one dropped his cigaret. When they were standing in a row like naughty children Forsayth jabbered at them.

"They say," he interpreted, "that the engineers and firemen and cleaners have all gone into town to gamble as old Porfy is away. That's luck. For they might have raised a — of a shine and brought down the army."

"Ou, aye," said the McIntosh skeptically. "Mebbe's aye or mebbe ev'ry son of a goat's no' gone for a wee bit booze."

"That's right," agreed Forsayth. "I say,

you two, look after these fellows and I'll run over and see. I know where the bunk-house is."

He ran off and returned in less than a few minutes with a lantern and three bewildered-looking buck natives.

"Look here," said he, "we'll turn 'em into stokers."

Having rounded up the guard—Forsayth knew that the relief would not turn up until four o'clock—we were pretty well free. We herded them into the engine-shed and made the soldiers load fuel-wood—of course under my gun—while the McIntosh examined the engine and Forsayth superintended the natives stoking the furnace. The moon was already over the tree-tops when a sufficient head of steam was on to get under way.

"Look here," said Forsayth, "the guard will probably be a bit late. Let's try to hitch on my load of ivory. We'll have to do a bit of shunting, but I'll go out with this fellow here and switch the points and cut the telegraph wires."

"Aw' wi' ye," assented the McIntosh. "Buickskin, make the loons put a' the guns in the cab and keep ye een for the guard. Ah'll tak' the blackamoors and run her oot."



WHEN I had placed all the rifles and bandoleers in the cab the McIntosh started the engine out of the shed. Lordy, I thought that the first exhaust of steam sounded as loud as a big gun.

Meanwhile Forsayth had gone off with one of the native cleaners to fix the switches and I was left with the lantern and the five little soldiers. I never knew before what a row shunting makes.

While Forsayth seemed to be yelling his head off and Mac was making that engine do trapeze stunts I peeped through the gates of the shed and caught in the rising moon the glint of a body of white-clad soldiers coming from the town. I called a warning as softly as I thought would carry, but the only answer was a terrific snort of the engine and the clash of metal, followed by an oath from Forsayth to the effect that the coupling had broken.

There was more snorting and clanging. I peeped again. The relief guard was mighty close. I had just shouted, "Shall I come along, Mac?" when I heard a yell from the guard marching across the swamp-road. They had discovered that something was wrong. Then above the row of frogs, mosquitoes and the shunting came Mac's voice at full blast:

"My father was a braw cock laird;
Ma mither came fra Perth—
Aiblins Ah'm no a sonsy—"

"He's crazy," I thought, and figured that we ought to leave that ivory and get. I couldn't

speak to my prisoners to tell them what to do, but I opened the door and pointed. They understood and went with a rush.

I left the lantern in the shed and ran along the track to where the engine was bumping against the truck of ivory, with Forsayth between the two swearing like a fireman.

"We'd better get," I bawled. "The guard's here."

"Hold 'em off," he yelled back. "I'm roping the — thing."

"Coom oop here, Buickskin," shouted the McIntosh. "On the tender, mon, and sprinkle 'em a wee wi' ball."

As I clambered, up came a hullaballo from the guard, who had encountered the released prisoners.

"A minute more and I'll fix her," yelled Forsayth. "Keep 'em off."

I seized a rifle and banged into the air rapidly to make as much noise as possible. The McIntosh thrust a rifle into the hands of each of the two natives who had been stoking for him. They couldn't understand what he said, but they got the idea and promptly began to shoot—not in the air but to kill.

A yell was followed by a command, and a volley whistled over our heads and spattered on the cab of the engine.

"Ah didna tell ye ta mak' murder, ye rapscallions," roared the McIntosh, and hit up their rifles, pointing in the moonlight at the engine-shed.

The natives, not comprehending, ceased fire, jabbering excitedly. Came a yell from Forsayth:

"All clear. Let her go!"

The McIntosh sprang back into the cab as another volley spattered and whistled. The jerk of the engine nearly threw me off my perch. Then against the moon appeared Forsayth, waving his hat derisively at the little white figures running, shouting and firing wildly along the track.

For a few seconds they gained on us as the engine gathered way; then they ceased firing and raced level as she bumped across the points on to the single main line. I heard the McIntosh's roar of delight as he broke again into his favorite chantey.

They fired a futile volley or two after us, but we were quickly out of range, rocking at speed as the McIntosh forced her through a swampy jungle. Once we were steadily under way Forsayth and I squatted on top of the tender's stacks of wood and smoked while Mac from his cab yelled defiance at the rising moon.

That rush through the miasma of the swamps alongside the Pungwe River—too fast for the mosquitoes to keep up, fortunately—was quite enjoyable. Just as the sun rose we hit a cutting and dashed past a few sheds constituting a station of a Portuguese fort that,

Forsayth said, was situated on the river about five miles away. After that we began to rise gradually on to firmer ground and more timbered forest, when we pulled up to cut the wires again.

According to Forsayth there was no fear of meeting any train, for the biweekly express from Umtali was not due to leave until the noon next day. So it was that on rounding a long curve where the rail wound up a valley to climb on to the next plateau we were surprised to see in the distance an engine with two coaches approaching.

"Now what the devil can that be," exclaimed Forsayth, standing up to view the better. "Slow her down, Mac, until we find out who they are."

Very slowly, hoping that they had not noticed us, we crept nearer. Fortunately the track wound so much between the trees, seeking the easiest incline, that we had a good glimpse right across the valley.

"Holy suffering snakes!" exclaimed Forsayth. "It must be old Porfy coming back. Quick; stop her, Mac, and run back to that last siding. That's our only chance."

The McIntosh pulled her up as soon as he could and we started back, rocking with such speed that I thought she would jump the rails every moment. We gained a good deal. Forsayth was off the engine as she slid past the switches and lugged them over. We had just bumped a bit roughly against the wooden buffers when we heard the other fellow coming. We herded our stokers under our guns on the far side of the tender so as to make her appear like an empty engine. Naturally not expecting anything, the other train did not slow up. Peeping round the edge as she slid past, Forsayth swore.

"It isn't Porfy's outfit, and it isn't a regular. What the deuce can she be? There were soldiers on board too. Come on; let's get along, Mac."

We shunted back to the main line as rapidly as possible, and in case they might have got sort of curious the McIntosh let her out. But just at noon as we were lurching we swung round a curve to see ahead of us four stationary coaches.


"My hairy aunt!" yelled Forsayth from the top of the tender. "There's old Porfy's coach. He's broken down. But how the Michael and Henry are we going to get by?"

The McIntosh slowed down the engine and clambered up for a look. We could see what appeared to be a camp of soldiers in the bush to the right, and dim figures in white on the platform of the coach.

"Ou, aye; that's ma guid frien' Porfy, as ye call him," assented Mac as he descended. "Yon's the second time the wee mannie

blocks the r-road. When ye ha' a wor-rm in the causey ye maun poosh the laddie oot!"

VI

 WE HELD a hasty council and decided that as it was noon old Porfy would probably be lurching in his private coach. He would have no reason to keep a guard actually on board, and more than probably his generalissimos would not be armed with more than their usual swords and possibly a gun or so. As the McIntosh pointed out, the last people on earth of whom the governor's party would think would be ourselves; more than probably they would imagine that it was their own engine coming back for some reason.

The McIntosh, chucking with delight, put her at normal speed and broke into joyous song. As we came out of the belt of trees into open sight of the camp he whistled shrilly. We whites hid ourselves in the cab, making one of the natives, under a gun, lean prominently out on the foot-plate for all to see. As we approached we slowed down as if about to pull up.

"D'ye mind whaat the track wud be like beyond?" asked the McIntosh.

"Not sure," replied Forsayth; "but I think it's fairly level grade and a fairly straight run for a mile or more."

"Tell this native to wave his arms and grin as if he was tickled to death to see 'em," I suggested to Forsayth. "He looks more like a frozen corpse."

We could see the soldiers squatting round their fires, engaged in eating and smoking, with their rifles stacked in more or less military order near to them. The figures in white on the platform of the first coach, which was evidently the dining-car, had disappeared within. My native waved a stiff arm in obedience to Forsayth's commands, but nobody appeared to take the slightest notice of us, evidently thinking that we were about to draw up.

As we drew in, the McIntosh slowed her down to a fast walk, enough to give a healthy jerk on contact. A figure possibly remarking that we were apparently very clumsy in approaching so near his Excellency's coach, got up and began to shout instructions.

The next moment we hit with a fair bump. As the coaches got in motion, there immediately rose an indignant clamor from the party within, echoed by cries from the camp. Naturally the train-crew had been too lazy to set the brakes.

The McIntosh jerked open the throttle. The engine snorted and the wheels raced—gripped; and we followed up with another good push which started the coaches going fairly.

With this second concussion my native fell

off the foot-plate. However, that didn't matter now. As we charged again, snorting like a furious buffalo, a crowd of excited figures appeared pellmell upon the platform of Porfy's coach, yelling wild curses and instructions.

Had they got on to the idea of what was happening they still would have had time and safety to make a jump for it on to the grassy way. But, perhaps naturally, they could not grasp the truth; and they certainly were too excitedly indignant to reason—oh, far too excited! I could see old Porfy, his bald head shining and his furious black mustaches standing almost on end, waving fat hands wildly in the air.

At the third collision I gasped, for we nearly lost him over the side. The weight of his tummy was his center of gravity, which I think saved him for us.

We were now about fifty yards away, and this time the engine raced after and got contact with the coaches, and the speed was jumping every yard. Behind we could see the whole army streaming from their camp, some running futilely up the track, others around the native who had fallen off.

At first I couldn't make out why they didn't fire, but I suppose they were scared of hitting the governor. In another two hundred yards we were going far too fast for any of the governor's crowd to risk a jump.

To the triumphant screaming of the whistle the McIntosh broke into song:

"A braw galoot is the Portugee.
He drew his dirk and he came for me-e.
Came for me, that Portugee.
That Portugee, he came for me!"

Within half a mile we were rocking with speed and out of any possible touch with the camp. The dancing-party on the platform were still yelling, but at one another, each apparently screaming advice and orders.

As we had not yet revealed ourselves and the native had fallen off they must have thought that they had been kidnaped by a runaway engine; yet, although they perhaps could not catch Mac's wild chant above the row, they must have wondered at the insistent whoops of the steam whistle.



THE next move was to take them prisoners. The two remaining natives declaring themselves joyously willing to help us, stipulated that Forsayth should take them under his protection; but as they were Shangaans, a tribe whom Forsayth said were utterly undependable, we couldn't take the risk.

After they had stoked the furnace full we tied them up so that they couldn't, even if they knew enough, get at the throttle. Then just as the McIntosh was slowing her down a bit to a speed that prevented any attempt at jumping

we spotted a courageous generalissimo climbing on to the engine from Porfy's coach.

"Och, bless the wee mannie!" crooned the McIntosh. "We maun na scairt him."

We didn't, until he approached in the door of the cab revolver in hand. But three guns poked under his nose startled him so that he nearly fell off the foot-plate. Forsayth invited him to join us. He did, bewilderedly expostulating and threatening us with the wrath of his Excellency O Captao-Geral Dom Porfirio Fernandez Diaz, Governor of Beira and the Lord knows how many castles in Portugal.

Still as Mac remarked Portugal was "sair far awa'," and Porfy himself so close that possibly we had better go and see him. We tied the general in the immaculate white uniform—considerably greased from his adventures over the engine; gold lace as well—beside the natives and thoughtfully added a gag.

Then with a last defiant screech on the whistle, and opening the throttle a little so as to keep the engine close up against Porfy's coaches, we presented ourselves, the McIntosh and I on one side and Forsayth on the other. We had arranged that simultaneously we should fire over and around just to put the fear of God in them; but the clear vision of old Porfy's whiskers beneath his enormous gold-plated helmet tickled my vanity as a marksman and I tried to put a hole in the latter.

The result of the volley reminded me of a conjuror's trick: "Now you see it! Now you don't!" They were there, five of them, and then they were not.

Scrambling swiftly along the foot-plates, we leaped on to the platform. As arranged, I threw myself at the door, and Mac and Forsayth slid along the footboards and poked their guns through the window, Forsayth yelling that they were to put their hands up.

At the first attempt the darned door didn't give. I heard a shot and an uproar and charged again. The door gave.

Inside I almost fell on the four generals or whatever they were grouped gallantly around the fat figure of Porfy. At one window was Forsayth with his gun, but minus his helmet; at the other was Mac with both arms in the window, a gun in one hand and an officer's saber in the other, roaring incomprehensible sounds.

As I distracted their attention I noticed that one man's hand was bleeding at the wrist and his revolver was on the floor. I jumped and put my foot on it. While Forsayth was shouting in Portuguese one bravo tried to draw his sword, but the McIntosh with a howl poked him in the ribs with the saber. Jabbering and swearing, they submitted.

"Disarm 'em," shouted Forsayth to me, "while we hold 'em!"

I did. They all had swords and two others

had revolvers, but only the one had been quick enough on the draw to knock off Forsayth's helmet, and I noticed with joy that the governor's magnificent head-gear was on the floor of the swaying car with a hole through the brass fixings. As soon as I was through and had them coralled in a corner the McIntosh and Forsayth entered respectably by the proper door.

"Aweel, ma mannie!" exclaimed the McIntosh, twirling his enormous mustaches toward his temples in mockery of the little governor's hirsute decorations. "An' hoo are ye the noo?" But the little fellow, more furious than scared, spat back like a tormented cat.

"Let's lock 'em in the next coach," suggested Forsayth, "and pull up to couple the engine properly."

Portuguese cars are built on the Indian plan; each small coach is divided into two with sleeping-berths longwise like our Pullmans. Into one of these we ordered them, still fluent in language. While Forsayth and I guarded them Mac climbed back and slowed down.

Fortunately the track going up-country is on the up-grade; otherwise he might have had to chase the coach with speed on all the way back to the coast.

As soon as we stopped and the coaches were properly coupled to the engine the McIntosh and I went along to examine the other carriage while Forsayth kept guard over the prisoners. The two compartments of the first one were empty save for the belongings of the staff. The next compartment communicating with the second coach was evidently the sleeping-quarters of old Porfy himself.

The blinds of the windows of the last were down. As the McIntosh rattled the handle we heard an extraordinary moaning noise. Wondering what on earth could be within, the McIntosh put his great shoulders to the door and forced it.

For a few moments we could not see in the comparative gloom. Then I heard an unintelligible oath from Mac, accompanied by another wailing sound.

Lying on the floor of the compartment, the berths of which were piled with liquor and general stores, were the figures of two natives, bound. At first I didn't comprehend why they were there, nor particularly why the balls of their eyes rolled wildly like a terrified animal's. When I did I was nearly sick.

VII

UP TO that moment the McIntosh, like me, had taken the whole adventure as a joke, but after—I don't know now how he was restrained from—well, beating up the governor and the staff at the least.

To Forsayth the affair was not so surprising.

Although he had already hinted that they would probably fry the feet of his servants to force them to reveal the hiding-place of the gold, I had vaguely imagined that he had exaggerated. He hadn't. On the contrary.

I admit I would dearly have loved to riddle that fat hide with holes. But one atrocity doesn't justify another, although I did experience for the first time the lust to kill—in a bloody way too.

We interviewed the governor and his staff right there. Exactly what Forsyth told them I couldn't follow, of course, but the McIntosh's gray-blue eyes and beef-rib fists surely put the fear of God in those pretty gentlemen.

However, it was no use trying to make a public scandal of the matter. As a matter of fact, Forsyth said, in Portuguese circles such was not at all considered anything out of the ordinary. I realized then that the Portuguese certainly had been in Africa since the fourteenth century and apparently had never got out.

As we went on we discussed what we should do and unanimously adopted the McIntosh's plan.

We arrived at Manzani about sunset. Here Forsyth rounded up some of his people and unloaded his ivory, arranging that he would be waiting for it on a certain date at a certain village over the border in British territory.

We armed some of his people and put them as a guard over our Excellency and his amiable cutthroats—I couldn't even think of him any more as just old Porfy. Next morning at sunrise we had another interview accompanied by copious ink and paper, of which the governor was persuaded to use quite a quantity.

After Forsyth had sent a head man to his friend the native chief with instructions to clear over the border with all that was his, we ran down the line to the place where the gold was

hidden. The McIntosh insisted upon showing the gold to the Meester Porfeerio—as he persisted in calling him—who had ceased to chatter so volubly and had grown more whiskers and a putty complexion.

Then as we fled back to the coast the McIntosh—if I am to tell the truth—indulged in deliberate torture. Nearly all the way he made the five generalissimos sit in a half-circle; and, holding "Meester Porfeerio" upon his great knees, thrust whisky down his throat at intervals and tickled him in his fat ribs. But never once did Mac break into song.

What else Mac did I don't know, but by the time we arrived at Beira station, where apparently the whole army was gathered to greet us, Dom Porfírio Fernandez Diaz looked more like a gibbering ape than a man.

As Forsyth explained from the balcony—one hand holding a gun and the other waving sealed documents in their horrified faces—the most illustrious Captain-General had been gracious enough, in return for services rendered, to grant us a pardon and a permit to leave the country without let or hindrance with all our possessions free of customs dues; and moreover, so great was his affection for us, his Illustrious Person would accompany us in his private launch to the honorable steamer that waited us. Then the McIntosh returned from the engine, and, pulling up his enormous mustaches above his bony cheeks, began to stroke the bald head of the torturer of natives, who visibly trembled.



IT WAS not until we were off Durban, where Forsyth was due to leave for Rhodesia, that once again I heard rising through the smell of oil and steam the doleful lament:

"Ma faither was a braw cock lair-rd;
Ma mither came fra Per-rth."

