

want to know is, are the men talking of me and laughing at my cowardice. I don't even know how many of them saw that I was wearing Juma's fez. What will he do? Of course he is bound to tell; no black man can hold his tongue, even when it is to his own advantage to do so. I am ashamed to show my face, and yet I must go out and about as if nothing had happened. This is indeed a nice way to keep up the traditions of Ellis, and the prestige of the white man! Can I ever retrieve what I have lost? If only Ellis were here I might still have a chance.

February 2nd.

It is over a fortnight since Ellis left - with luck he ought to be back in a couple of weeks. I have had no news of him except one note written two days after he reached Kissembi. - - - - -
The mail is just in, and with it a letter from Ellis. Allah be praised, he is almost well, and says though the doctors insist on his remaining for his full month, he will start on the 15th. without fail. With this certainty to look forward to I feel I can carry on - nothing seems to matter as it did. The men do think a lot of Ellis; after the arrival of every mail Mahomed, with a peering crowd behind him, has come up to ask the news. When I told him just now that Ellis would be leaving Kissembi in less than two weeks, he was quite overcome with relieved delight. He said,
" We black men don't care for hospitals; it so often happens that the doctors wish to cut some part of you off when you are in hospital -

they send you to sleep whole, and you wake up with only one arm, or perhaps, a hole in your stomach, and Allah alone knows what they have taken out. We feared for " Ever-Ready", though we well know he has never feared for himself. Praises be to Allah that he returns so soon".

I saw some of the Chiefs this afternoon, and told them they must hurry up with their hut tax as Ellis will be back so soon. From the 1st. January till the end of the financial year, (31st. March) the bulk of the hut tax comes in. The native ever procrastinates, and he naturally leaves the payment of his tax till the eleventh hour, and this year he seems to be leaving it till the twelfth. It is extraordinary, and a thing one never realizes in Western countries, what a colossal influence one human being can have. Ellis is a force as strong and unwavering as gravity - his presence here keeps natives at the distance of a hundred miles in hand. His word is law. He is a veritable god. His absence, even when he is in Kissembi, causes a visible alteration in the natives, and also in our own men. They are less inclined to obey; they are insistent with impossible demands; they are slack because of the temporary removal of a strong and dominating moral force. They vert with incredible rapidity, and it is their susceptibility to individual influence which hastens this. The right man can do everything, even his mistakes are successes. The wrong man can only do harm, for his right actions, being perfomed by himself, become disasters.

February 28th.

It is all over with me - Ellis is not coming back. At the last moment he had a relapse, and as his leave was long over-due the doctors have bundled him home for six months. He is very sick about it - didn't want to go, but as they told him he anyhow wouldn't be allowed to return here owing to ^{the} bad water and absence of a doctor, he had to give in. To-day he actually sailed. He wrote me a much too decent letter, and said he would put it most strongly that another man, and a senior one at that, should be sent out here at once. He said lots of decent things about me and my work - God, if he only knew what I really am! And yet he's such a splendid fellow that I am sure he would help and not despise me. All I know is that unless that other chap arrives soon, I shall probably do something final - desert and make for Kissembi, or resign, in fact do anything to get away from myself - the self which possesses me when I am alone.

Mahomed nearly broke down when I told him Ellis had gone home. Every single man in the station looks gloomy; the natives, on the contrary have assumed a jaunty, and devil-may-care attitude. I only hope they don't mean to give trouble. The hut-tax has been pouring in since I told the Chiefs of Ellis's immediate return; it remains to be seen what will happen now they know he isn't coming.

March 20th.

I haven't had the heart to write lately, chiefly I suppose, because if I write truthfully it must be to my own discredit. There has been no word of the new man - if he doesn't arrive by the end of the month I must write in and say I decline to remain alone here any longer. I can't do it - at times I feel positively ill and just like turning my back to the wall and having done with it all. When I go out in the Station the men look knowingly at one another as I pass; the very children stop at their play and whisper. If I turn my head I almost see the finger of scorn pointed at me. I ought to go into the district - the hut tax has ceased coming in altogether, and we are still thousands of rupees short of our estimated revenue - but I daren't go. I am sure the natives are restless; certainly those who come into the Station show that things are not as usual with them, and if I go among them they will very likely rise and wipe us out. The Chiefs always have difficulty in keeping the spear-men in order, and next month is anyhow the one in which it is the custom for murders to be perpetrated by the Wa-kiki. They get a sort of lust for blood, and just go out and kill anyone that's handy. Ellis told me about it, and said it was almost impossible to stop. If he couldn't stop it what can I do ?

April 14th.

Mahomed came to see me in my house to-day; he beat about the bush a

good deal, and said he hoped I would not be offended with him, and that he knew I had only been a short time in the country etc. etc. It then came out that he wants me to travel. He says neither the men nor the natives understand my staying in the Fort. Ellis travelled every month, and as he was always popping up unexpectedly in remote corners of the district the natives were afraid of misbehaving, as if they did he invariably turned up and caught them out. He hinted there might be trouble if the district is left to itself much longer. So my surmise is correct - the natives are about to rise. Mahomed knows it, and even he and the men are getting nervous. I told Mahomed I would consider what he had said and let him know what decision I come to. How can I decide ? I can't face travelling through this awful bush, marching in a trap the door of which may close on me any minute - I daren't sleep in a tent, only a flimsy piece of canvas between me and the natives with their spears and arrows. I couldn't face the crowds of hostile looking natives, men, women and children, which would press round me and hem me in in every camp. Their sinister drums and shrill voices would drive me mad. Here in the Fort I have at least a stone house to live in; I can shut doors and windows and feel secure from everyone but myself. After all no one but myself knows what I endure when I am alone. I cannot bear the dark now, and my lamp burns brightly all night; - if the flame flickers I wake with a start, if a step approaches my house my revolver is cocked and ready.

When will the answer come to my letter demanding that someone be sent out? I would rather suffer any indignity, rather be under the heel of my greatest enemy, rather be branded as coward from one end of the country

to the other than continue to remain here alone.

April 16th.

The answer has come - it is what I felt all along it would be.

So many men have gone on leave that at present there is literally no one to send. Every man in the country is doing at least two men's work, and one is lucky if it's not three or four. Collins, the Acting First Secretary (everyone is "acting", as nearly all the heads of departments are on leave) writes very decently, says Ellis spoke so highly of me that though he knows it is a pretty hard job for a man who has been so short a time in the country, to run a district like this, he is sure I shall manage all right. He says it won't be for more than three months at the outside - promises for July at the latest, and says if I would like a change of station when the new man comes, he will do his best to fix it up for me. Says if I am in any difficulty I am to write to him and he will help in any way he can. The only difficulty I am in, I can't write about - at least not to him.

April 29th.

Mahomed has been to me again. There have been a series of murders out north, and Mari has been in to say he is having so much trouble with his people, that if I don't visit his district he can't be answerable for

the consequences. The natives at a distance all believe that Fort Eliot has been abandoned because there has been no travelling since Ellis left. On the other side of the Zara River raiding has ^{started,} ~~begun,~~ and beyond Kathais a number of women have been collared. The whole district is closing in round me; the trap of circumstances has been well laid, and the mouth of it is slowly being drawn to. Mahomed himself is really anxious - he assures me that if I go he will be responsible for the safety of the Fort, but he said plainly if I do not go, anything might happen. Natives are peculiar people, very sensitive to feel any change of conditions, and though when first Ellis left it was possible to put them off with their demands till his return, it is now known that he is not coming back, and something must not only be done but done immediately. - - - - -//

My decision is taken; I have told Mahomed that directly the Station accounts and the monthly report are finished I will go on tour. I allow a week for finishing things here. I have told him he may tell the men and Chiefs that I now mean to travel, and I have told him to see that a good lot of porters are ready for me on the 5th. May. It is the only thing to do, but how I shall get through with it God knows. I cannot see all Ellis's work going to blazes - the foundations of it are already cracking, and once they go beyond a certain distance it will mean beginning at the beginning all over again. Since Ellis first fought his way in here three years ago he has held the Wa-kiki in the hollow of his hand; he has punished them when necessary, but having felt the heaviness of his avenging hand they have given him little trouble. Of course holding them has been a constant strain - a taut string which might snap at any

point, and Ellis himself told me that these people are so tricky you can never be sure of them. Your only chance is never to relax your vigilance for a day, and never to pass over an act of disobedience. You must be aware of everything that is going on, and you must be on the spot directly any trouble starts. You must know more than they do, and you must act and strike with unflinching promptitude. To appear and punish before the culprit thinks you can even have heard of his wrong doing; to come to the help of the weak in their moment of need; to prevent disobedience and insubordination by your constant presence in districts of unrest; to show your trust of the loyal, as well as your knowledge of the double-dealer — I know it all; I know what I ought to do. Sitting here I can think it all out as I know Ellis would wish me to act: I can see myself starting out to do it — it is the end I cannot see.

May 21st.

Why did I ever come here? Why did I ever try to accomplish what I knew I must fail to achieve? Why did I not write definitely to Collins as I made up my mind I would, to say I could not go on alone here. It has all been a hideous failure and I am branded coward as visibly as Cain was branded murderer.

It began badly — the porters, a sullen looking lot, ~~of men~~ arrived on the 5th. but deserted to a man during the night. The 6th. and 7th. were spent beating up a new lot. The Chiefs came in in great distress saying

their men refused to travel with me. Finally the requisite number were got together, and on the morning of the 9th. I started. I took thirty police and a large quantity of extra ammunition, meaning to do a circular tour and be away a full three weeks. Instead of this I was back in a week, and I know now I shall never dare to leave the shelter of the Fort again. The men and natives know this too.

On the first day out five porters threw their loads in the bush and bolted. The police brought the loads in, and from the first camp we supplied the place of the deserters. Every day something untoward happened, and on the fourth day one of the porters had some sort of a fit and died. This did the trick - the other men stood out and refused to carry any more. The faithful Corporal Juma assured me that if I would go on with the advance guard he would bring the recalcitrant porters along, so I finally started. After a good three hours march we halted for the caravan to arrive. At the end of a long wait it came. Juma's methods, though drastic, had been efficacious. The porters were tied together in groups of five - tied with their own reams from neck to neck, one policeman in charge of each batch of five men. The march had been very slow, for the porters had been compelled, their reams being in use as fetters, to carry their loads on their heads, and not, as they usually do, on their backs. Their necessary proximity to one another further impeded their going. I must confess I was horrified to see my caravan arrive in this wise, but Juma insisted, and even on arrival in camp kept the porters tied together.

We started off in the same order the following morning, but after an

hour's going - we were well into the district of the murders - I noticed that there were no natives working in the plantations as there usually are, neither did we meet with any along the road. Instead of this the surrounding hills were covered with people, and momentarily, their numbers were swelling. The farther we went, the blacker the hills appeared - black, only relieved by the glinting of spears in the sunshine. I called my men to halt, I felt I must wait for Juma. We stood on a grassy knoll under the shadow of a large fig tree. I could not take my eyes from the thickly covered hills. As I watched, the natives began to descend, at least so I thought. They appeared to be approaching slowly and shutting us in on all sides. This was more than I could stand. I hurriedly told my men to re-form and started back, on the road we had just traversed, to meet the caravan. The men were obliged to obey me, though my orderly begged me to remain where we were. He assured me that things were all right, and that our only danger lay in retreating - he said :

" The Wa-kiki are all cowards; they are like hyaenas, and never attack anyone who shows fight."

I would not listen to him, but set off as fast as my trembling legs would take me down the hill we had just climbed. I saw myself taken prisoner by these ant-like swarms of natives, and done to death in some hideous manner. I saw myself bound in their midst, subject to indignities and tortures, finally cast out broken and mutilated to the hyaenas and vultures. Horror obsessed me, and as I stumbled on I heard - and this was a reality - the shrill war-cry of the natives who were bearing down on us in the rear. My one idea was escape; blind with fear I increased my pace

till I was almost running. My head was down, my body was bent with terror. Suddenly I plunged right up against the cold steel of a spear - I gave an agonised scream and sank to the ground covering my face with my hands - - - - -

It was Juma and his rifle. Marching at the head of the caravan and coming round a corner he collided with me before either of us realized the approach of the other. I was almost speechless, but after a few moments I recovered sufficiently to explain matters. My men of the advance guard had meanwhile mingled with the others and were obviously giving detailed accounts of what had occurred. Juma looked very grave; the only thing to do ^{he said} (was) to return to the place we had originally been waiting in, and camp there. To this I at first, point blank refused to ~~do~~ ^{accede} but on Juma pointing out that it was our one chance, that if we showed fear we should certainly be attacked and overwhelmed, I finally consented. We retraced our steps, though this time Juma was with the advance and I with the rear-guard. *as* Our caravan slowly ascended the hill, the black wave of approaching natives first halted, and seeing us proceed, retreated - retreated slowly and sullenly, balked temporarily of their prey.

We pitched camp silently, and after all was in readiness Juma with three men went off to the nearest village and fetched in the trembling and discomfited elders. Juma acted as interpreter for what I ought to have said, and gave them a proper dressing down - ordered food and firewood to be brought in, and thoroughly cowed them. I could do little but sit with my head sunk on my hands. I took refuge in my

tent but I could not touch food. I felt horridly ill. All night I did not sleep a wink, neither did the men. As darkness covered the land my fears rose to such a pitch that I must have been temporarily mad. I crawled to the furthest corner of my tent and crouched shivering behind the bed. At 5 a.m. I could endure no more; I called Juma and told him I must return to Fort Eliot. I said I was ill - I believe I wept. Juma, with ~~that~~ initiative a coast native shows after many years close contact with white men of the right sort, again summoned the elders. He told the two most important that I had merely come to fetch them into Fort Eliot to account for their delinquencies, and that we meant to start on the return journey directly camp was struck. Each elder he gave in charge of a policeman. A rope joining guard and captive wrist to wrist precluded any possibility of escape on the part of the elders, and by 7 a.m. we were underway to Fort Eliot.

That day we did a double march, and camped in Kathai's country, where we were safe from attack. In the night I fell ill with a sort of fever. All next day I lay restless and moaning on my bed, unable to eat or move. Finally Juma arranged a hammock with a couple of blankets, and Kathai's men carried me back here.

May 30th.

I have sent into Kissembi for a doctor. For five days I have been in bed, food turns me sick, and though I have no active pain I am so weak I can only just stand. Misery can know no deeper depths than mine.