

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 realised 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 was, he said, to return to the place we had originally been waiting in, and camp there. To this I at first, point blank refused to accede, but on Juma pointing out that it was our one chance, that if we ^{should} ~~should~~ 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 discomforted 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 horribly 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 the 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 under way 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.

W 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. Failure, hopeless failure - and I have not even been able to hide my cowardice from the men. Mahomed has put an extra guard on my house - the men sleep on the verandah. Early this morning when the new guard arrived I heard the relieving Corporal say,

"Well, and how is "Heart of Water" this morning?"

My boy Hamis was by me and saw that I had heard; he slipped out and I could hear him whispering angrily on the verandah.- I have turned my face to the wall.

Fort Eliot.

June 9th, 1906.

Dear Longden,

Under separate cover I am sending you the official report of poor Holden's death. With the exception of what I now enclose, I have sent all the private papers etc. I could find to the Administrator General to be forwarded to Holden's mother ^{the} his father died only a few months since.

You will see from my report that I reached here just twelve hours before Holden died. He was in an extremely weak condition, so weak that any really thorough examination was out of the question. After his death I performed a P.M. The point of my writing this to you now comes, - Holden was suffering from no organic disease; in fact with the exception of a weak and rather flabby heart he was otherwise perfectly sound. His blood showed very trifling anemia, and there was no malaria. His condition perplexed me considerably: it was obvious he was making no effort to recover, and it was equally obvious he feared to die. He died at 2 a.m. during a night alarm. I was sitting close to him, as earlier in the night he had been very restless. When the bugle went (a second before a shot had been fired) he was sleeping quite peacefully. Almost at the first note he started up, and as the call was repeated and re-iterated, a look of the most horrible fear became stamped on his face. He seemed quite oblivious of my presence, and, literally, as if struggling with some actual possession. I called his boy, who was asleep in the bathroom, and telling him to watch Holden for a moment, I ran on to the

verandah. The police had fallen in just in front of the house. I told the Sergeant old Mahomed bin Hamis (you probably, by the way, remember him; he was with us in that Somali show, and a finer pluckier chap never lived.) I was ready to go with the men if a sortie had to be made. I also added that Holden was very sick, and that unless it was necessary I didn't want to leave him. Mahomed seemed curiously nervous, and it occurred to me that he might have been drinking. While we were standing together, one of the market guards ran in to say it was a thief in one of the Indian shops, and they had shot him. I gave the order for the men to dismiss, and they all pattered off with the usual ejaculations and yawns, unloading their rifles as they went, obvious relief from tension in all their movements. Mahomed hesitated and evidently wanted to speak to me, but I told him he must come up after morning parade.

I went straight back to Holden - he was dying as I entered the room. He was quite conscious, and as I bent over him he raised himself and whispered, "I have failed in my duty - failed from fear." He lifted his hands as if to push someone from him, and again his face became convulsed with that hideous look of terror, and he fell back dead. I am not naturally jumpy but I must confess to being considerably upset. The circumstances, Holden's unaccountable condition, the strange nervousness of Mahomed and the men - the whole atmosphere seemed charged with something uncanny.

The boy refused to remain with Holden; he was shivering, and the sweat was pouring down his face. He said, "If I stay here alone, the coward who is still in his dead body will leave it and come into me, for he must already be seeking for a new house; his is already almost cold, and ghosts must be warm to live."

Finally I stayed by myself, and spent the time going over Holden's papers. Those I now enclose I found tied together just as they are. Having read them I decided to send them to you - it strikes me as inhuman to send them to his mother, but you must decide. I felt inclined to destroy them then and there, but they throw so much light on Holden's case that I think you ought to see them. Holden's death is another of Africa's unnecessary brutalities. You may remember that I travelled out with Holden ten months ago. I liked him genuinely; he was an honest, straight fellow, rather ordinary, very domestic, and full of some girl he was engaged to, but who had refused to marry him till he ^{had} "done something". He was well fitted for the life of small country squire he had lived in England, but unsuitable in temperament and mental equipment for a solitary life in tropical Africa. The imagination he had was of the wrong sort, and he was only capable of seeing one side - the menacing - of the African shield.

Six months ago he was sent up here to be with Ellis (there had been trouble with the natives on the Zara river) and one month later Ellis was invalided home. Since then, and though this was no district to leave in the hands of a new man, Holden had been here alone. Such a demand is unfair on the white man, the police, and on the natives.

After the funeral Mahomed had a long talk with me. He and the men were much affected at Holden's death - they liked him, he was kind and patient, but he had succeeded in infecting them and the whole station with panic. The place and people were strained almost to breaking point. Yet Holden had never said anything: he had kept his fears to himself and his diary, but he had tainted the at-

mosphere, and the natives had absorbed it most thoroughly. It's another proof of the fact that the native takes his colour absolutely from the white man who is his temporary master.

I suppose I shall stay here till the new man arrives, and I'm not objecting, - its a beautiful spot though none too healthy. What I want to suggest is that you get at H.E. and insist, for health reasons, on two men being sent here, and for not longer than twelve months at a time. Your case is strong: Ellis was invalided, and now Holden has died - rub it in. This is no place for a youngster alone; its too far away from other humans, (a good four days trek) and the natives are not settled. The responsibilities are too heavy to be borne single-handed. I know they'll argue that the district isn't of sufficient importance to necessitate two men being stationed here, but this line will mean further disaster, as apart from other considerations the police are not fit to stand any more upheavals.

Forgive this outrageously long screed, but I want you to know the facts as soon as possible - and to act on them.

Yours

P. O'Brien.

Addressed to: Colonel J. Longden,
Principal Medical Officer,
Kissembi.