



Wellcome Film Project

The Gambian Case

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Dr Forde: Alexander John

Dr Dutton: Andrew Solomon

Kelly: Malcolm Rogers

Sister Watson: Sandra Berkin

Keba: Ebo Wilson

Researched and written by Dr Billie Williams.

Director: Anthony Palmer

Photography: Paul Bernard

Micro Photography: Douglas Fisher

Assistant Cameraman: Eric Marquis

Sound Recordist: Tony Dutton

Make Up: Karen Turner

Chief Electrician: Bob Brown

Sets: Steve Hall

Production Secretary: Rosemary Tilden

Production Assistant: Lindsay Bennett

Post Production: Visions

Music: Kevin Pyne

Colour

Duration: 00:22:03:13

00:00:00:00

<Opening titles>

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<Opening scene of a man, Kelly, entering room. Pouring water from a pitcher into a bowl, he washes his face. He briefly looks into a mirror on the wall and then sits down at his desk; he looks unwell as he loosens his collar. He unrolls a map and looks at it>

<Intertitle>

British West Africa Bathurst, The Gambia, December, 1901.

<Next scene: Forde sitting on a veranda, his face hidden as he reads a newspaper. A dog lies at his feet. Dog barks and Forde looks up from newspaper. Dr J Everett Dutton, carrying a case, walks onto the veranda>

<Forde>

Hello, Dutton. Welcome to Bathurst. It's very good of you to come so soon after such a long journey.

<Dutton>

I'm glad to be back on dry land again. It's been a pretty tiring journey.

<Forde>

Ah, come and sit down. Make yourself comfortable. Keba! Let's have that tea now!

<Servant, Keba, laying out tea tray>

<Forde>

I can't tell you how obliged I am to you for coming. And, how pleased I am to meet you. You've been making quite a name for yourself these last few years, you know. One day I shall be telling my grandchildren that I've met the great Everett Dutton. Now go away, Roly, *<Shot of dog looking up at tea tray>* there's no tea for you today.

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<Dutton>

Now come on, Roly, there's a good dog.

<Forde>

Oh, no, don't let him be a nuisance, Dutton. He thinks he's invited too. Given half a chance, he'll leave us with nothing to eat.

<Dutton>

It must be nice having a dog here. We used to have one at home. And now I seem to be so busy and away so much, I couldn't possibly give an animal a decent life. I envy you.

<Forde>

<Pouring out tea> Well, this place has its drawbacks too, you know. But, I'm glad to have Roly with me. Sugar?

<Dutton>

No, thank you *<receives teacup.>*

<Forde>

Well now, tell me how things are at home. The usual glorious weather, I suppose. Don't tell me you're having a drought in Liverpool.

<Dutton>

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No, we've had our standard quota of rainfall. Though, it did turn extremely cold just before we sailed, they were talking about snow for Christmas.

<Forde>

A bit different from this place.

<Dutton>

Very. But you seem to be well settled in. Got a nice place here.

<Forde>

Ah, it's not so bad, you know. Pretty standard really.

<Dutton>

And, are you kept busy here?

<Forde>

Oh, yes, there's a pretty steady flow of patients. Mostly straightforward. But, at least one has proved to be unusually interesting.

<Dutton>

That'll be the master of your steamer.

<Forde>

Yes. My friend Kelly's been worrying me a lot. I'm hoping you can shed some of your Liverpool light on the situation and tell me what the devil's the matter with him *<eats snack>*.

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<Dutton>

Exactly what is it that's so unusual about this chap, Kelly.

<Forde>

Well, *<Laughs>* excuse my bad manners *<offers plate of snacks to Dutton>*. Go ahead, Dutton, they're quite tasty today, in your honour. Well now, it all began about six months ago, early May to be exact, when I admitted Kelly to the Victoria, pretty sure that he was suffering from a bout of malaria. He was a bit feverish, feeling rotten and so on, his usual story, he said, when he'd had a go of it. I'd seen him around the town, you understand. Fortyish and tough as nails, I would have said, apart from the malaria. I remember a story so well – he'd been working round the clock the previous weeks and in some pretty bad weather too. The army had had some sort of manoeuvres in the early months of the year and he'd been transporting men and equipment back and forth day after day *<voice fades>*.

00:04:51:10

<Next scene: inside Kelly's room, now untidy. Rain is seen falling against window. Kelly enters, sits down on bed and removes his boots. Lies back on bed, appears feverish>

<Next scene: Kelly lying on hospital bed, appears very feverish with eyes closed. Forde, in a hospital white coat, appears at foot of bed>

<Forde narrates over above scene>

Well now, having examined him, I still thought it was malaria and started him off on quinine. But, after two or three days, Dutton, it was obvious that something odd was going on. His fever was not responding and he felt not a tiny bit better. He began to

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be out of the ordinary tired, puffy around the eyes; naturally, I had a good look at his blood [...]

<Scene of Forde looking down a microscope>

[...] and more than once, but I never saw a single malaria parasite on any of the slides.

<Return to scene in veranda>

<Forde>

But, and now I come to the main reason for getting you here. What Kelly's blood did contain in the fresh preparations was a number of very strange, very active worm-like bodies, dashing around all over the place. I looked again and again and they were still there, quite unlike anything I'd ever seen in anybody's blood before. Well, at the time, I just couldn't believe my eyes. I mean, Dutton, what the devil are they? I'm no expert on blood parasites, but I'll wager that whatever they are, they're the cause of Kelly's fever. First I thought they were filariae; these little devils are really nothing like Manson's parasites. At the time, I just couldn't help thinking that the peculiar course of the disease, resistance to quinine, is somehow due to those little worms, and I still think it.

Anyway, as Kelly was due to go home on leave this summer, I told him, in no uncertain terms, that it was very important that he consulted your colleagues in Liverpool when he got there to find out what they thought and let me know it as soon as possible. Well, I didn't hear a word, either from Kelly or Liverpool, so I couldn't really write to anyone and give them my findings. I didn't even know if anyone had seen him. I can't blame poor old Kelly, but what I don't understand, now that he's back and I know that they did see him, is why nobody found those worms in his blood. Maybe, they didn't take fresh preparations, I don't know. But, anyway, you're here now, and I can show them to you.

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<Dutton>

It's an extraordinary story. I'd like to see this man.

<Forde>

Well, he's back in Bathurst, looking pretty poorly despite his leave, very puffy round the eyes and ankles. Very easily fatigued, short of breath. Oh, you wouldn't know, he had a bout of pneumonia in the boat coming over. Quite atypical according to Maxwell Adams who was looking after him, coughing up a lot of blood in his spit.

<Dutton>

Trouble is, I won't be able to see him right away. I'm booked to go up river tomorrow morning. I'll be away two weeks doing some preliminary work on this malaria study, so I'm afraid it'll have to wait till I get back. So sorry. Perhaps, you could arrange for us to meet him on the eighteenth, in the afternoon, say?

<Forde>

Oh, what a pity, it's so far away. Yes, of course, I'll lay it on for you, yes. But, I was going to suggest that maybe we could just drop into the ward now and say hello to Kelly.

<Dutton>

Oh, what an excellent idea. It'll give me a chance to introduce myself to Kelly and then I can get an early night before setting off tomorrow morning.

<Keba enters veranda and starts clearing away tea>

<Forde, off-screen.>

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I think that would be very wise.

00:10:10:00

<Next scene: Forde and Dutton enter hospital room where Kelly is lying in a bed>

<Forde>

It's just in here. I'm sorry to disturb you, Mr Kelly, but I've brought along Dr Dutton to see you, who's just arrived in the colony to do some important work. I've asked him to take a look at you because I think he may be able to help us. Hello, Mr Kelly. I understand from Dr Forde, you're doing rather better now.

<Kelly>

I'm not too bad, Doctor.

<Dutton>

Good. I'm afraid, I'm going up river for a couple of weeks, so I shan't be able to see you until I'm back. Dr Forde thought it would be a nice idea if I introduced myself before I went away.

<Kelly>

Thank you very much, Doctor.

<Dutton>

Good then, I look forward to seeing you in two weeks time.

<Forde>

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And you make sure you get a good night's rest, Mr Kelly, hmm?

<Next scene: Forde walks onto veranda at night time>

<Forde>

Aaah, Roly. Keba! *<Keba enters with tray>* Has anyone called today?

<Keba>

No, sir.

<Forde>

Good. *<Unfolding a letter and reading it>* Let me know when supper's ready.

<Keba>

Yes, sir. *<Exits>*

<Forde>

Hah, you'll try to tell me you want a drink too, Roly, hmm?

<Forde's voice narrates his thoughts over above scene>

It's strange, what is it Kelly said?

<Next scene: close-up of Kelly's mouth>

<Kelly>

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<Mumbling>...up the river as the ship overloaded with men...hot as hell...*<scene pans out to show whole of Kelly's face, eyes closed>* flies, heat everywhere.
...minutes from the south...I just want something...*<mumbled words>*.

<Next scene: Forde asleep in chair>

<Keba>

Dinner ready, sir.

<Forde>

I'll be there right away.

<Forde rises and exits veranda>

<Next scene: Kelly sitting up in hospital bed. Dutton is examining him with a stethoscope>

<Dutton>

Just once more. *<Kelly breathes out>*

<Forde, entering room>

Aah, Dutton, you beat me to it.

<Dutton>

Forgive me. I had the chance to get started a little early and Sister Watson seemed to think that your patient would be perfectly safe in my hands, so I took the chance to get ahead. I've almost finished.



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<Forde>

Alright now, Mr Kelly.

<Dutton>

Yes, that's fine. The only thing that remains is to take a little of Mr Kelly's blood.

<Forde>

Good. You'll find it all ready for you over there on the table. *<To Kelly>* Well now, Mr Kelly, you're certainly getting the royal treatment today. I hope it's not tiring you too much.

<Kelly>

I'm alright, Doctor. Don't you be worrying. I know I'm in good hands.

<Forde>

Now, we're just going to be taking a little blood from your finger as I've done many times.

<Kelly>

It's alright, Doctor. That's fine, Doctor.

<Forde>

You know, Mr Kelly, your finger is getting to be rather like a pin cushion. Now, just one more squeeze. And that's it. There, that wasn't so bad was it?

<Sister Watson, entering room>



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Dr Forde, sorry to interrupt you, but Mr McKenzie has just arrived.

<Forde>

Oh, bother, I'd forgotten about him. Well, I'd better see him after he's come all this way. I'll be as quick as I can. I hope it won't take long *<Forde exits>*.

<Watson>

Let me try and make you a bit more comfortable, Mr Kelly. There now, that's more like it. Have to see my favourite patient gets the best attention.

<Kelly>

Oh no, sister. With a name like Kelly I know all about the blarney.

<Watson >

So do nursing sisters, Mr Kelly. You behave yourself now and have a good rest. I'm in the office if you need me. *<Exits>*

00:15:07:19

<Shot of Kelly looking worried as he turns his head towards Dutton. Dutton is seen from the back seated in a chair at a table by the window. Next shot shows him looking down a microscope. He stands up appearing surprised and then returns to look down microscope again. Lifts up head again with a look of realisation, whispers to himself>

<Forde's voice off-screen>

Good day to you.

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<Forde, entering room>

I'm sorry, you must forgive me for keeping me away *<film jumps>*.

<Dutton, rising from chair>

You know what your wriggly worms are, don't you, Forde? Without a shadow of a doubt, they're trypanosomes. I've got three in the field now. Have a look for yourself.

<Forde looks down microscope>

<Forde>

Trypanosomes. *<View of trypanosomes through microscope>* I knew all along there was something quite out of the ordinary. And you think they're also responsible for Kelly's fever?

<Dutton >

It's very much on the cards. They're almost indistinguishable from the ones David Bruce found in diseased cattle a few years ago. Tryps get carried to the animals by the tsetse fly. I wonder if the small tsetses here on the river could be the carrier of the parasite that's got into Kelly's blood. Bruce, himself, you know, had never seen tryps before, and like you his first thought was that they were filaria. So, you're in good company.

<Forde rises from chair appearing shocked>

<Dutton>

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Forde, let me tell you, nobody has found tryps in the blood of a white man before now. I congratulate you on your most important discovery. You must let them know at home as soon as possible.

<Forde >

<Nods to Dutton> Hmm. *<Walking to Kelly's bedside>* Well, Mr Kelly, you certainly picked yourself an original disease. Let us hope that we'll now be able to see you well on the road to recovery.

<Kelly>

Thank God, that's all that matters. But, can you tell me where I picked it up?

<Forde >

Ach, you got bitten by a little fly, that's what happened to you.

<Kelly>

That poisoned me?

<Forde >

Well, yes, in a manner of speaking.

<Kelly>

How long before I go back to work, Doctor?

<Forde >

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Well, you'll need to take some medicines and stay in bed for a while, but don't worry, you'll be well looked after. Anyway, you've had quite enough excitement for one day. We'll leave you in peace.

<Dutton>

I'll be seeing you again with Dr Forde over the next few days. You'll be getting sick at the sight of me.

<Kelly>

I bless you *<indecipherable word>*. I'm a lucky man.

<Dutton>

Good luck, Mr Kelly. Get some rest.

<Forde >

I'll see you later on, Mr Kelly. And the sister's in her office if you need her.

<Dutton and Ford go to walk towards the exit of the room>

<Dutton>

This has been a most exciting day, Forde.

<Forde >

Oh indeed, not so good for poor old Kelly though, I fancy. What rotten luck for him. Ah, well.

<Forde and Dutton exit room. Shot of Kelly lying in bed>

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<Forde narrates over next scene: *Kelly is seen standing in his own room, appearing well. He sits down at his desk*>

Kelly's treatment was continued with gradually increasing doses of arsenic and 5 grains of quinine daily. Although he still had some symptoms of his fever, it was thought that it was probably best to let him return to duty in the New Year.

<Forde narrates over still photograph of Kelly>

A year later, poor soul, he died from his disease.

<Forde narrates over next scene: *Dutton shaking hands with Forde and then sitting down in veranda where servant serves tea*>

Dutton continued his work in West Africa and found trypanosomes in other cases of fever in the Gambia and Congo. At the end of 1903, he set out on what was to be his last journey. In a letter written on February the 9th, 1905, he outlined in great detail work he was doing on tick fever. *<Still photograph>* Three weeks later, he was dead from the disease he was investigating. And he was only twenty-nine years old. I believe more than a thousand Africans attended his funeral in Kosongo. His obituary notices in both *The Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal* were certainly more than a page long. Although, I shall always be grateful to him for his help, I have to admit that at the time there was some confusion as to whose discovery it was.

<Next scene: *Forde sitting on his veranda, having a drink*>

<Forde continues>

Ah, well, it's all in the past now. I stayed on in West Africa for a long spell and was fortunate to still have a few years left when I returned home. *<Narration continues over still photograph of Forde, camera pans out to reveal that this is a group*



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photograph that includes Kelly and Dutton> As for my discovery, well, if only I'd realised how near I was to finding the cause of sleeping sickness.

<End credits>

<In addition to those listed at beginning of transcription>

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