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At the mess room election my fellow bankers were good enough to elect me head of the room we all occupy. We then divided the rest into sections under section leaders elected by their own sections. Things are beginning to take some shape but I can see that it will be some time before our camp is running anything like properly.

Sunday, 1st March, 1942.

McI, Brown and three other bankers came in to camp today. We are all in now. Brown has brought with him a large mosquito net and as he is dosing down on the floor beside me we have agreed to share it. This will be a godsend

These last few days have been rather confused as the Convent Camp, of which Bank House is a part, has been struggling to establish some sort of law and order out of chaos. Over 600 men have all moved into this small space in a few days and been left to their own initiative to establish some sort of organisation. No arrangements of any kind were made in advance to receive us. The effort of the L. D. C. and Bankers has certainly been the most successful to date and is the envy of the rest of the camp, but other groups are beginning to form and, with the addition of another house which the Japanese have allotted to us to relieve congestion, things are shaping well. The stumbling block now is the central Convent building which is housing over 400; even the corridors are jammed at nights with sleeping bodies. This unit is largely composed of Civil Servants, Government Railway officials, some European police and other Government men.

The original self-appointed committee is still functioning as the time is not yet ripe for change, but I understand that another election will be held soon to elect a Convent Camp Commandant and a new committee. There is a very strong anti-Government Official feeling rife at the moment amongst non-Government men as the former are given the blame, quite wrongly in my opinion, for the hopeless disorganization in Malaya during this local war. Government officials in here are regarded somewhat with suspicion and their efforts to rule the roost are not accepted kindly.

I myself have been put on to the finance committee of the Convent Camp but what we are going to do about finance when we don't even know if there is any money in camp I don't know. And we don't even know if the Japs will let us make outside purchases if there is any money.

There have been two unfortunate incidents since the camps were formed. When the Japanese took Singapore a group of four Europeans got stranded in a house adjacent to the camp. They lay low there for several days after we had all been interned and were one day discovered by the sentries. The Japs apparently thought that they had slipped out of camp to better quarters and gave them all a terrible beating. On another occasion inside the camp (I was not present but was told about it afterwards) the Japanese Camp Commandant called the Karikal internees together and gave them a lecture, pointing out that internees had to behave, that they had to bow to Japanese officers and sentries on duty, that they must not try to escape or punishment would fall upon all, and several other things. In the course of this talk one man left the assembled crowd and very conspicuously walked up and down the garden in full view of the officer. He was called back and asked why he had left the parade, because after all it really was a parade, and his reply was that he had heard it all before! This was too much for the officer who flew into a rage and struck the offender three hard blows across the face. He was also made to apologise.



I might mention that our camp is very happily situated on the sea front and we are allowed to bathe. It reminds me of Port Dickson where I spent such a pleasant holiday last year with my wife.

Thursday, 5th March, 1942.

The camp is settling down and most people appear to be busy, at least all morning.

There are no very cramping rules, although we ourselves have drawn up a certain code of law. No one has yet been punished but I have no doubt that someone will break out some day and punishment will in due course be forthcoming. There are no rules about getting up in the mornings and one washes and shaves, or not, whenever one wishes. First roll call is at 8.45 a.m. with breakfast immediately after; lunch is at 1 p.m. and the evening meal at 7 p.m. There are no meals of any description in between and no one is allowed to harbour private supplies of food such as might have been brought in with them when they came into camp. On arrival here all food supplies were commandeered for the community reserve.

The usual meals are: breakfast, porridge and tea (unsweetened) with now and again a small biscuit and a scraping of butter; lunch, rice with maybe tinned pineapple or, on rare occasions, a small quantity of stew or a couple of sardines, and more tea; evening meal, more rice with perhaps a dash of pork and beans or the like, or stew, or merely tinned fruit of some kind. Now and again we may even have two courses, herrings in tomato sauce or something similar and tinned fruit or rice pudding. The foundation of our diet is always rice and the quantities of the supplementary items are always very small so that one never finishes a meal satisfied. We all have a craving for chocolates and sweets.

The Japanese have now begun to supply us with rations of a kind and so far they have given us rice in goodly quantities and a little sugar and salt; no meat, fish or vegetables to date. Had we not been permitted to "scrounge" in the lorries placed at our disposal by the Japanese we should certainly be in a sorry plight. So long as we can go on doing this we should be able to keep body and soul together, but when this source of supply dries up, as it must one day, I can't think what will happen to us. Do the Japanese expect us to exist on rice, sugar and salt?

Our Finance Committee have submitted a memorandum to the Japanese asking that a payment of \$1 - per diem be made to each internee through the International Red Cross or in some other way through a neutral country, either from the British Government or the Malayan Government representatives at home. The intention is to use this money to supplement our rations by purchasing foodstuffs in the town if the Japanese will permit this. The Convent Camp have been able to raise \$3,000 so far by borrowing from interness, a small part of which has been spent on the purchase of chocolates and the major portion on medical supplies of which we had none whatsoever. The problem of the distribution of the chocolates is now proving very difficult to the stores officer as I hear he has only 40 lbs to be fairly shared amongst about 650! Maybe a Divine Creature will fall amongst us and perform a miracle!

The Convent is now divided into four houses for messing and discipline, each with its own house leader. Bloxham is in charge of our crowd and John Weekly (late of Ipoh) is head of one of the others. Our house roll is



approximately 150.

At 5.30 p.m. today we were all paraded very suddenly and told by our camp commandant, Collinge, that an order had come from the Japanese to the effect that we must all, and by all I mean the whole four camps, move to Changi Gaol tomorrow, and that we must parade at 10.30 a.m. ready to move off on foot carrying with us what small items we consider necessary to keep us going for two or three days until our mattresses, suitcases, food supplies etc. have had time to be conveyed to us by motor transport. The distance by road is something in the region of 7 miles only but it will have to be covered in the mid-day tropical sun unless it rains which is most unlikely. The camp was immediately all bustle as kitchen equipment, stores, bedding, suitcases etc. had to be hurriedly assembled ready for transport the following day.

So our relatively happy stay at the seaside is to end. Whether the Japanese consider that we are settling down too comfortably or whether they want our present accommodation for other purposes I do not know. What I do know is that over 2,500 internees (men and women) will have to find living space in a building which was constructed to house 600 only, and 600 criminals at that! I have not disliked our quarters here but I am sure I am going to hate our new ones. The idea of being incarcerated behind prison walls is one which terrifies me and I am anticipating the worst, but I suppose one can become accustomed to anything. I sincerely hope so.

Wednesday, 11th March, 1942.

We moved off from the Convent Camp at 11 a.m. on the 6th and did not enter the gaol until 4.15 p.m. The Governor led the procession, refusing the offer of transport by car, and we bankers brought up the rear. The long line of internees stretched for what looked like miles ahead of us, from what we could see every time the column dipped into a hollow and mounted the far rise. It was intensely hot in the blazing tropical sun, and the pack which each man carried added to his troubles to a greater or lesser extent according to its size. All went well for about three miles and then the weaker brethren began to drop out of the line of march. It should be borne in mind that there was a large number of men over 60 years of age amongst us. I was one of the young fellows of only 50! Most of the youth of Singapore were in the Volunteer Corps, and those who survived went into the Military Prison.

The long time between our start and our arrival at the prison was due to a series of halts of varying duration en route, the worst spell coming just as we were nearing the prison itself when we were subjected to stoppages every 100 yards or thereabouts. This was due to the congestion brought about by the arrival of so many into such a small space. The last mile broke up a good many who had up to that point stood the strain very well. I thought my good friend Stringfellow was going to pass out completely as he has a bad heart and it was ticking over very slowly and weakly at the end. He was on the verge of collapse when he got inside so we laid him down flat on the floor, poured some water over his face and neck, and sent someone off to get a doctor.

I was wise and carried with me the minimum of stuff, but some optimists overestimated their strength and they suffered badly in consequence. I wrapped up my shaving kit, a tin of bully beef, a tin of condensed milk, a tin of herrings (handed out as emergency rations for the next two



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or three days), a spare pair of shorts, two singlets, a pair of jockey pants, my plate, knife, fork, spoon and mug, a pair of light rubber canvas shoes and a couple of small cushions, all into my light tropical blanket which I then tied into a sort of bandolier, and this I slung over one shoulder. Over and above this I carried my army type water bottle (scrounged somewhere!) full of water and in my hand a tin box containing a few sandwiches made out of the remains of some biscuits from the previous day and some bully beef, no butter. This emergency meal kept me going on the march.

I have heard of no deaths as a result of this walk but it would not surprise me to hear that one or two had succumbed. Some of the bodies which had collapsed at the roadside looked to me near death.

On our arrival inside the prison our little group of L.D.C. and Bankers who had messed together so successfully (comparatively speaking) in the Convent Camp, were herded into a large dining hall for half an hour until accommodation had been found for them. Eventually this was decided upon and off we went to one of the cell corridors on the first floor - D2.

There were 38 cells in all on this particular floor, each about 18' x 8' by about 12' high; down from one end ran a solid concrete bed raised about a foot and a half above the concrete floor; and in a corner of the cell was a squat flush closet! Three men were allotted to each cell and the balance of our crowd, about 40, were distributed down the central corridor, about 12' wide, which divided the 38 cells into two parallel lines. The whole block was long and narrow.

For some reason which I am unable to explain Stringfellow and I shared a cell with no other occupant. I suppose the distribution worked one man short and we were lucky enough to be the two left over to occupy the last cell available.

Two cells have been left empty and are to be used as emergency night lavatories. By day we all use outside latrines which have been dug in the various yards. We do not use the closets in our cells except for pouring away water after washing ourselves or our dirty dishes. Our organisation is the same as it was in the old Convent Camp; we are split up into sections of about 10 men in each under a section leader elected by the section itself. Lymbery is now our floor superintendent.

It is going to be hard to fill in time here; we must work or go mad, but I don't think they will have much difficulty in finding work as the whole place will have to be readjusted to meet the requirements of such a large number.

The building and the yards cover about 14 acres I should say, and the building itself is one long narrow structure with minor wings thrown out from it. The main part of this, or the long narrow structure referred to above, is divided into four blocks, A, B, C. and D. and these comprise the living quarters for internees. The women are accommodated in A Block and the men in the other three, and no ordinary communication is permitted between the male and female quarters. The wings are the kitchen, the laundry and the hospital and administration offices. This group remains unchanged from pre-war days; the blocks are used for the same purposes as before except that the laundry, instead of being a laundry, is now a communal bath house besides being at the disposal of individual internees for



the washing of their clothes. The administration offices now house the Japanese guard, provide office accommodation for the commander of the guard and for our own camp commandant, and offices for the camp committee.

The Camp Commandant is one General McRae, a retired member of the Indian Medical Service who was in Singapore as representative of the British Red Cross. He is supported by four block commandants who are elected by their blocks; the womens' representative is permitted by the Japanese to meet her fellow committee members for business purposes. Each block is a separate unit under its block commandant who in turn delegates control to floor superintendents who represent floors or groups accommodated in dining rooms, workshops, and the like. Messing is by floors or groups otherwise housed and food is drawn from the kitchen by orderlies who carry it in bins and pails to their floors where it is dealt out man by man in an orderly manner.

In each block there are several large rooms on the ground floor which were the dining rooms, workshops etc. in the old days. Now these are packed to the doors with internees who sleep all over the floor. Upstairs there are three flights of cell corridors with three men to a cell and men packed into the floor of the first flight corridor; the second and third flight corridors have no floors dividing the cells but only a narrow gangway which runs past each cell door and leaves the central portion of the corridor open except for strong expanded metal which stretches from one gangway to the other on the opposite side. Men can so look down from the gangways on the second and third floors on to the internees who are housed on the corridor floor. Lots of trouble has been caused by the men above dropping water and cigarette ends on to our fellows living in the first floor corridor!

Each large room on the ground floor and each floor above has its floor representative and its quartermaster who looks after discipline and food supplies respectively.

In the central organisation there is a fatigue officer who calls on blocks in rotation for men for general camp fatigues. There is a store room where shovels, picks, brooms, axes and the like are kept under the supervision of a stores officer who hands them out to camp fatigues when required. There is also a central carpenter shop in its infancy where permanent men will work on making things necessary for the camp. And we are trying to start up a cobblers shop.

We have one motor ambulance which is driven by one of the internees and in this the sick who cannot be adequately treated in the camp hospital are transported to one of the hospitals in town.

The numbers in each block are now respectively 500, 650, 650 and 780, the large number in D block being accounted for by the fact that D has additional accommodation in the shape of the old punishment cells which house about 150. The kitchen staff and a small group of Government men (Sir Shenton Thomas, Hugh Fraser, the Governor's A.D.C., his private secretary and some others) live above the kitchen, and the hospital staff above the hospital.

The kitchen is modern and quite well equipped, and the kitchen staff, now very largely made up of the kitchen staff of the old prison, do quite well with the provisions at their disposal and no one has much complaint about the cooking although there is plenty of room for complaint about the quantity and the quality of the food.



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Camp laws have been drawn up and published and we have a police force to see that they are maintained. There is of course no police uniform so the members wear arm badges to indicate their office. These gentlemen are posted all over the place; in the laundry to see that men do not wash their clothes in the clean water tanks out of which we draw water to throw over our bodies, but that they draw water and take it to side tables for washing clothes; in the kitchen to keep out the unauthorised; in the main yard to see that the rougher element do not perform their natural functions in places not intended for the purpose; in the main corridors to stop smoking there (a Japanese order); and generally to see that there is no brawling. We have a very mixed bag in here and some of them are, I am sure, no better than they look - professional beach-combers and thugs. There is danger in hanging out clothing to dry as it is always liable to be pinched. Stringfellow lost a good sarong in this way the other day.

And so much for the internal organisation of the camp.

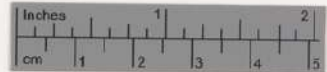
The prison is full of rumours, all cheerful ones. We greet one and other with: "What is the latest latrine news?" and then proceed to exchange what last we have heard. At the moment the Russians are outside Warsaw and have demanded that the German Army be demobilised within 21 days, and Turkey has declared war - upon whom we don't know! We all speculate upon the length of our internment and discuss the subject at length. My great hope is that there will be an exchange of civilian prisoners, otherwise I foresee a very long term. The Japanese have got a stranglehold on the Far East now and it will take a very great effort on our part to recover what we have lost, much less beat them. I am told that there are about 2,000 Malayan Japanese interned in India and I should think it would suit the Japanese to have them back here to help in the reconstruction of this country, which seems to be what they have in mind.

I wonder how much of this I shall stand before my health begins to suffer.

When I am not detailed for some fatigue or other I generally spend my time either reading, writing my diary or washing my clothes or my body. The washing of my clothes is never particularly strenuous as I live during the day in a pair of very abbreviated running shorts and canvas shoes, and at night I sleep in a singlet and jockey shorts. Our heavy baggage came in yesterday, that is, our mattresses, suitcases, typewriters etc., so we are in comparative comfort again. The few nights before the arrival of our kit I have lain on a small towel with my shoes and cushions as pillow and my light blanket over me, and the concrete was so very very hard!

There are several husbands and wives here and every time I think of them I thank God my wife is not here. I know that she must be very anxious about me - she cannot know that I am alive at this moment - and I would that I could convey to her some reassurance that all is reasonably well here.

Most of the body and clothes washing is done in the laundry, which is a large barn-like room and seethes with humanity at all hours. My first day's washing in here was done alongside Sir Shenton Thomas, the Governor, and we exchanged some conversation while we were struggling with our clothes. There are several long tables in the laundry on which we pound and scrub our towels, trousers, underclothes, handkerchiefs and what not, soaping them and rinsing them in cold water which is all that is available so far. For bathing we draw some water into any convenient receptacle and move off to some vacant piece of floor and get on with it.



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If one takes all this in the proper spirit it's amusing and I find my daily bath one of the few, if not the only, bright spot in this strange life.

Someone told me the other day that the Resident Councillor of Malacca had been seen drawing water into an enamel commode!

There is a short evening service each evening and I have joined it once so far. It is held in the open D Block exercise yard. The night I attended Colonel Lord of the Salvation Army took the service and was very good. We have Archdeacon Graham-White amongst us. I don't think I am becoming religious but the idea of sitting out in the open, quite informally, and listening to comforting words may perhaps help to cultivate in me a little patience, a quality hitherto sadly lacking in me.

Friday, 13th March, 1942.

Life is exceedingly humdrum and the food is deplorable with never enough to eat. The flies are beginning to multiply and will become a very real danger if not controlled in some way soon. With pit latrines, uncovered, and 2,000 internees making use of them, the flies are having the time of their lives! And we have a very inadequate supply of disinfectant.

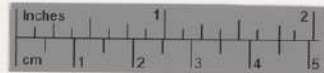
Here is an example of the food we get: yesterday for breakfast we got a pint mugful of thin oatmeal porridge, a spoonful of thick bitter molasses poured over it and a mug of stewed tea: for tiffin, a mugful of dry cooked rice and a third of a tin of herrings in tomato sauce per man: and for our evening meal, a small scone, a scrape of butter, a tea-spoonful of jam and more stewed tea. The kitchen does not appear to have mastered the making of good tea.

I had occasion this morning to tick-off one of my bank men for running down R.A. Stuart in the presence of several Chartered Bank men. He was criticising Stuart for having left us just prior to the capitulation of Singapore and also for his severe attitude towards his staff towards the end of the war in Malaya. I told him he knew nothing whatsoever about the circumstances of Stuart's departure, and I pointed out that the management had encountered many difficulties not affecting the average departmental head. Stuart was responsible for the running of the whole of Malaya, not merely for the care of a particular department, and this responsibility at such a time, when we literally had a run on the bank, was very great. I then explained the circumstances of Stuart's departure.

Monday, 16th March, 1942.

Conditions are not improving. We have had two days of rain which keeps people indoors and holds up the drying of the washing. I washed my thin cotton blanket yesterday and goodness knows when it will get a chance of drying. In good weather we hang our washing up in the sun and it dries very quickly.

Another depressing factor about wet weather is that the lighting in the cells is very poor and in wet weather we need artificial light, so reading indoors is impossible. The electric bulbs are all 15 candle power only.



Friday, 20th March, 1942.

Despondency is a thing one must fight against. The rain continues and our miserable existence has been accentuated in consequence.

The only printed news we ever see is that contained in an English language local publication called the Syonan Times which is published daily and finds its way into the camp, generally a day or two late. Syonan is the new name for Singapore - a la Japanese. This paper contains only news of Axis successes and naturally none of ours - if there is any! In spite of optimistic rumours which swamp the camp and which are mostly fantastic, we all get a bit down when we read of the lightening progress of the "Great Nipponese Army". We have read, for instance, that Java and Sumatra are both completely occupied and that fighting is now taking place in New Guinea. If this is all true the threat to Australia would therefore appear to be very real, and this adds to my anxieties as my wife is in Perth so far as I know.

The camp routine is very monotonous. Lights go on at 7.30 a.m. and there is a general movement towards shaving and washing. I personally get up just before 8, brush my teeth, then run downstairs and out into the yard to "ease springs". On my return from this very necessary and generally very pressing need I shave and wash my face in a basin in my cell. Between the time I have finished my ablutions and the arrival of breakfast on our floor, I go outside and walk up and down the yard. Breakfast comes along about 9 a.m. and we form up in a queue of about 150 and file past four men deputed to serve it, to receive our miserable portions. This queuing takes place at every meal. Between meals there are fatigues to be done and these fall to my section in rotation but we are never overworked and have lots of leisure. Leisure hours are filled in either attending classes of some kind, loitering around chatting to fellow internees, or simply reading. Classes have been formed on all sorts of subjects but principally for instruction in different languages. Concerts are held now and again and some of these aren't too bad - I expect they will improve as time goes on and talent, of which there must be plenty in the camp, is discovered. Lights out is at 10 p.m. and silence is enforced indoors from 10.30 p.m.

There are several fatigues, the one that comes along most frequently being ration fatigue, when two sections from our floor go to the kitchen and carry up our food to the floor for serving. Latrine digging in the yard is another fatigue and a strenuous one at that - none of us have been accustomed to digging. Then holes to bury kitchen rubbish and swill have to be dug and various cleaning up jobs such as washing down corridors and the main yard with water. One day 16 of us were escorted outside the prison gates by a Japanese sentry and, under the supervision and direction of one of the many public health doctors interned, put on to cleaning out the septic tank which serves the whole prison. Due to the sudden excessive demand on this it had become choked. Fortunately I missed this filthy job and was put on to cleaning an ordinary rain water drain which was also choked, for lack of regular sweeping, and was a mosquito breeding paradise. The septic tank work which was going on almost alongside me stank to high heaven and I thanked my lucky stars I had missed it. James Wilson and Ambler of Fraser & Co. both got it! We also had to fill in a dump full of empty tins which had been left open by the British troops and was alive with flies. While we were doing all this menial work we were being overlooked by Indian civilians of the coolie class who had apparently returned to their pre-war quarters at the end of the war. They watched us in silence.



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Monday, 23rd March, 1942.

I was interested and amused to see in a recent edition of the Syonan Times an advertisement to the effect that the Yokohama Specie Bank would open up for "deposit business only" in the "former premises of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank". The Bank of Taiwan is also to open in the Netherlands Trading Society building. I wonder what the response of the native population will be. No doubt they will get some business as shops will have to open if people do not wish to starve, but the Japanese, after the war, will have to hold what they have taken if they wish to see conditions return to anything like normal. Trade during the war years will be dead.

Prison life is hard to take for the majority of us who have been used to a very free and easy open air existence. D Block exercise yard is only about one acre and is bounded on two sides by prison walls roughly 18' high and on the other two sides by tall concrete buildings. Each block, i.e. A, B, C and D, has its own exercise yard of an acre, with the 18' walls on the outer fringes and the prison buildings on the inner sides. Except for the women's block each block houses over 600 internees so that space for our recreation is not only limited, it is cramped. Beyond this 18' wall is another, or outer wall, even higher, I should say it was 22' at least, which runs parallel with, and about 20' beyond, the 18' inner wall, and both walls can be seen from the exercise yards and make one fully realise that one is a prisoner. I look at these walls sometimes and get a feeling of suffocation. I now and again mount to the top floor where, by standing on my tiptoes, I can see out of the barred window at the end of the corridor, over the top of the outer wall to the world outside, and away to the landscape in the far distance over thousands of rubber trees. From another similar window in C Block, where I sometimes go, I can have an uninterrupted view to the sea.

I attend evening service regularly and am sorry to say that it does not bring me any comfort. I have never been what one would call a religious man although I have striven to be a good Christian, but in this I have fallen far short on very very many occasions. The speakers at these evening services have none of them been very inspiring and I have never been impressed. My own meditations have sometimes helped me more. Once when I was very young, probably about 16, I read a published sermon of one Professor Henry Drummond of Edinburgh University, entitled "The Greatest Thing in the World", and the theme was love. It did not ask one to believe, it asked one to practice love for one's fellow creatures, and it was beautifully written. It left an impression upon me which I think has perhaps influenced my life in some small way; I have always felt that the highest form of religion is a great, pure and unselfish love, and if that can be carried to the extent of truly loving one's fellow men then the Light of Christ must surely be shining from within.

Monday, 30th March, 1942.

The Japanese could, I suppose, make life very much more unpleasant for us if they chose. Life is full of surprises these days, most of them unpleasant ones, so I suppose we should be content to remain undisturbed where we now are, little as we like it. At least we are alive, and I suppose as well as can be expected. It was officially announced in camp yesterday that a woman internee had been confined to her cell and put on bread and water for three days for not standing up when a Japanese staff officer came into



her cell. If such punishment is meted out to a woman we can assume that a man would get much harsher treatment. The latest orders from the Japanese are that no one may smoke in the public corridors of the building and that all must stand to attention when a Japanese officer passes; also, if the officer passes close to one, one must bow to him.

My duties on the Finance Committee have kept me pretty busy these last few days. Out of our purchases to date we have been able to make two distributions of cigarettes, one issue of five per man and the other of ten per man. We have also made an issue of seven sweets per man! All this sounds very paltry and hardly worth the trouble involved in making the distribution, but when this is the only ration of this nature since we came into Changi Prison nearly a month ago, it is evident that the pleasure it brings to all makes the effort a very worthy one. When one considers that there are 2,500 people to be catered for it can readily be understood that the handing out of a few cigarettes and a few sweets per man is no easy task, but we are literally starved of such comforts.

Frank Thomson of Firestone Rubber and his wife are both in here. I ran across him last night for the first time. James Luetchford of the B.A.T. is another internee and is parked on my floor; he was a member of the Singapore L.D.C. and came in with them. Olive Luetchford left Singapore very near the end in the "Golden State" and rumour has it that her ship was bombed and sunk in Java waters somewhere, and as James, poor fellow, must have heard this rumour he will be in a pretty miserable state.

Easter Sunday, 4th April, 1942.

When I first came in here I wondered how long I was going to survive prison life. I was desperately miserable and unhappy; the sight of the ugly walls depressed me almost beyond reason. I cannot say I am happy now but there is little doubt that I am becoming more adjusted to conditions and that my despondency has lifted considerably. It is strange how one can accustom oneself to altered circumstances.

Optimistic rumours circulate freely and small groups of men foregather to discuss what should be done if we suddenly found ourselves in a position to return to Singapore from here. In a talk I had with His Excellency this morning he asked me, apropos of a return to Singapore, what we should use for money as all notes in the Government Treasury had been destroyed at the time of our surrender and it would take some time to have new ones reach us from India. I pointed out that over \$200 million was actually in circulation at that time and that I assumed a lot of this probably hidden treasure would find its way back to banks when confidence had once again been restored, but until then we should have to make cheques take the place of money. I don't see any real difficulty. Shops will resume credit to Europeans as they did in pre-war days. There is a considerable quantity of Malayan Currency notes with the Government of India, which were sent there shortly before the capitulation, and these should be available almost immediately. If I find my bank records intact my first concern on reopening will be to lay my hands on physical cash, and that does not worry me unduly.

There is another strong rumour extant to the effect that the "Bissiker" ship, which is the popular name for the ship which carried away from Singapore the "Tuan Esars" on Friday the 13th February, has been sunk with heavy loss of



life. A man was brought in here a few days ago who left Singapore on that particular Friday on a 2,000 ton ship with several business men on board. This ship was bombed and sunk. The women and children left the foundering ship in the boats but all the men, including himself, clung to the rafts. He states that the raft to which he clung supported about 70 and was undiscovered for three days, during which time most of them dropped off from exposure or weakness and were drowned. On the third day the few remaining survivors were picked up by a Japanese destroyer and conveyed to Saigon from which port they were shipped back to Singapore. If this was the ship Stuart was on then there is little hope for him.

In the interval between lights-out and silence, i. e. between 10 and 10.30 p.m., Stringfellow and I generally have long discourses in the dark while lying in bed. Like the Walrus in "Alice in Wonderland" we feel that "time has come" "to talk of many things; of shoes and ships and sealing wax, of cabbages and kings". We have both agreed that our digestions are better than before the war. I say because we have our evening meal at a reasonable hour and no alcohol of any description but he thinks it is because we get so little to eat. He says he proposes to eat much less after this is over, but he doesn't think that remaining on the water waggon is such a good idea! We talk of different good restaurants we have fed in and recall choice dishes. It's funny how, under these circumstances, the conversation so often turns to food.

Some people in here are counting on a sudden withdrawal of the Japanese from the East Indies and Malaya, but this is not my view. I fear that the liquidation of the Far East will take a long time but I am confident of its achievement in due course. My own opinion is that we shall concentrate on the defeat of Germany before we turn seriously to Japan. Then the concentration of power by the Allied Nations will be so colossal that Japan will be well advised to capitulate before meeting it in combat. The massing of this power in convenient bases will take time, however, and that is my reason for thinking that the recovery of the lost ground will take a long time. And Hitler isn't anything like beaten yet. Hence my reason for hoping that an exchange of civil prisoners will be effected before too long.

Wednesday 8th April, 1942.

I have just been told that Ivor Salmon of MacLaine Watson & Co. was brought in here last evening and has first hand news of the "Bissiker" ship, on which he himself was a passenger. I hope to contact him soon and get some news of Stuart and others. Apparently it is quite true that the ship was bombed and sunk and advance rumour has it that Stuart is safe. I hope the rumour is true.

The ventilation of the cell is not all that might be desired. At one end of it there is a massive wooden door through which the warders in normal times could spy on the prisoner inside by peeping through small glass windows, one about 5' and the other about 3' above ground level. These peepholes are covered by sliding iron flap shutters on the outside. This door is never closed, thank God. About a foot above the door there is a small barred and wired ventilation opening about $3\frac{1}{2}'$ x $1\frac{1}{2}'$, and at the opposite end of the cell another ventilation opening similarly barred and wired about $5'$ x $1\frac{1}{2}'$. This latter ventilator is so high up in the wall, about 10' from the floor to its bottom level, that it is quite impossible to see out of it even by standing on the concrete bed which runs down the middle of the cell just below. If they should ever decide to lock us in at



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nights I think that I should surely lose my reason; I cannot now sleep between the concrete bed and the wall as I am overcome with a feeling of suffocation. Instead I fix my mattress across the door, between the end of the concrete bed and the squat W.C.

Saturday 11th April, 1942.

I haven't yet run across Salmon but have second-hand news of his adventures. He left Singapore on Friday the 13th February in the "Kuala" of the Straits S.S. Co. The ship was crammed full and quite a large percentage of the passengers were women.

The intention apparently was to sail by night and lie up hidden by day. The second day out a Jap plane spotted them in the Rhio Archipeligo somewhere and bombed and sank the ship. There were many casualties as a result of the bombing, and soon all the survivors were in the sea struggling as best they could towards a nearby island. During the next day or two those who had succeeded in reaching land foregathered at one spot and from there succeeded in assembling small native fishing craft which transported them in groups to the Sumatra mainland near the Indragiri river, and from there they set off in two large parties to cross the island from East to West on foot or by any conveyance that could be picked up on the way. The trek was long and very strenuous and as several of the refugees had been hurt there were many stragglers so that the two main parties were broken up into smaller groups.

Padang was apparently the assembly point or rendezvous and I understand that about 3,000 military and civilians were evacuated from there and about 1,000 left behind, the total being made up of all and sundry who had succeeded in escaping from Singapore in different kinds of craft. The evacuation from Padang was effected by British warships but when these ceased to arrive 1,000 were left behind - the British ships stopped coming about the time that Medan in Sumatra fell to the Japanese.

Stuart of the Bank was taken off in H.M.S. "Glasgow" I am told and should now be in safety, but one or two of the leading business men of Singapore are presumed to be dead; de Piro of McAlisters, Dawson of Guthries, Woollerton of the A.P.C., McKerrow of Paterson Simons and Tongue who was latterly Collector of Taxes S.S. The first were supposedly seen to be drowned, and Tongue had his head blown off. I hear that Miller, the manager of the Chartered Bank, got away, but that Ross of the Mercantile Bank was one of the 1,000 left behind.

I wonder if Wolfe-Murray, Stabb, Clarke and company are part of this 4,000?

H.E. is making enquiries into Bissiker's activities in connection with the issuing of passes to the so-called key business men of Singapore, as he repudiates any claim that Government were in any way concerned with them. He has called for written statements from men who were offered passes by Bissiker but who refused them - Charlwood, F.S. Gibson of Mansfields, and my friend Williamson the lawyer, are three - and from others who have any first hand information on the subject. As I am in the latter group I am to submit to him what I know in writing. I am told that Bissiker, in acting as he did, abused certain powers which were vested in him by the authorities, and that it is proposed to institute an enquiry into his actions after the war. The written statements will be brought in as evidence.

Tuesday, 14th April, 1942.

A pleasant duty fell to my lot yesterday; I was



detailed to go out with another internee and buy vegetables for the camp.

At 8 a.m. we left the camp escorted by a Japanese sentry and joined up outside with two other Japanese soldiers. The five of us then packed into a baby Ford car (10 h.p.) and drove about 5 miles to Somapah village where we made our purchases in the local market. The Japanese at the same time did their buying for the guard. Long, the other internee, and I bought every vegetable we could lay our hands on, and on the side were able to procure for our own private account a few tins of jam and condensed milk and some bananas and papayas.

Our return journey was a bit of a joke; over and above the five passengers we had to carry about 250 lbs of vegetables. I sat up on the hood - it was an open car - with my feet on the back seat and hung on to bundles of vegetables which were hanging dangerously over the luggage carrier. We all took everything in very good spirit and we found the sentries extremely pleasant although we couldn't converse with one and other as we knew neither's language. One of the sentries handed Long and me each two or three bananas from a bundle which he himself had purchased.

On our present diet there is little fear of us ever becoming supermen. A diet which mainly consists of rice does not build up muscle and we all become very easily fatigued. I have had several duties to carry out which have seemed to me unduly strenuous, fatigues such as latrine digging and carrying heavy logs of wood to the kitchen, but of course one must remember that during these last few years most of us have been leading sedentary lives. We are not normally accustomed to physical labour. As was to be expected we have all lost weight; some men have dropped as much as 60 lbs. but I have only lost about 11 lbs. since the war started, which is not so bad considering all that has happened in the interim.

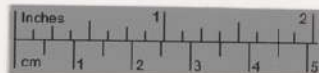
The rice we have had issued to us at meals these last two days has literally stunk but we are told that this is merely because it has been parboiled. Why it should be parboiled I don't know, but no doubt there is some good reason. I really couldn't face it at midday yesterday and, hungry as I was, I had to go without.

Recently our diet has been augmented by one hard boiled egg a week and as the Japanese have given us some flour we get a three ounce loaf every second day.

Saturday, 18th April, 1942.

Ivor Salmon came up to see me yesterday morning and I got from him an account of his adventures.

What I have written earlier in this diary is substantially correct. The evacuees were first very badly bombed on the docks in Singapore before embarking and suffered some casualties, but Salmon does not know of any in particular. Three evacuee ships were in the group which were bombed in the Rhio Archipeligo, two of which sank rapidly and the third was left in flames. Survivors of the bombing got to the shore as best they could. Salmon himself shared a float of some description with Mrs. J.B. Ross, wife of the Manager of the Mercantile Bank, and between them they struggled somehow to dry land. Mrs. Ross spent several anxious days on the island on which they had landed without any news of her husband until he, with a party of others, turned up from elsewhere and joined the Salmon group which



seemed to be the main assembly point.

There were many harrowing incidents; wreckage with people clinging to it would float rapidly past the shore carried by the current which was so powerful that the people on shore were unable to do anything to prevent it being carried out to sea; one man was picked up after some days on an improvised raft which had left one of the sinking ships with 30 hanging on to it, and he was the only survivor, the others had either died, or lost their reason, or slipped off the raft from exhaustion and exposure. Many women who had been wounded but had reached the shore died of wounds after terrible suffering as they had no medical supplies with which to relieve suffering; some women had lost their children while other children could not find their mothers.

Salmon confirms that Stuart and Miller left Padang, he thinks in the "Glasgow", he himself stayed behind when the last ship left as he was acting as interpreter and liaison officer between the Dutch and the British. They had no idea that the general situation was so bad as it actually was until the radios at Medan and Java suddenly ceased to broadcast. When this happened the British Consul destroyed his private cyphers so that a message which later arrived from the authorities in India could not be decoded and no one knew whether help was coming or not. Salmon therefore decided that he would join some British Army officers who had decided to leave in a 50' native sailing craft in an attempt to reach India, and in due course they all left.

Bad luck dogged them from the beginning. They ran into bad weather almost immediately which caused considerable damage to their sails. Some days were wasted on the Northern shores of the island mending the damaged sails, and I understand they all worked 24 hours a day at this work and as they were none of them expert at it their fingers and hands got terribly torn. During these few days they lay hidden in mosquito infested mangrove swamps. As Salmon puts it: "we sewed ourselves silly by day and by night". At last they got started out into the Bay of Bengal and were making good progress when, on the thirteenth day, they were spotted and chased by a Japanese tanker which fired a shot at them which, as Salmon describes it, "nearly took the hat off my head". At this point he was steering the boat disguised as a Malay in sarong and baju and a Malay fisherman's hat, while the military officers lay doggo below. They had to heave to and were taken prisoner and, as he says, their disappointment was indescribable.

The captain of the tanker was a Japanese naval officer and treated them well. He spoke English and had had some naval training in England. They asked him why he had changed course and chased them, an innocent looking Malay fishing boat, and he told them that he could not understand what a Malay fishing boat could be doing so far out to sea, and his suspicions were aroused. When he saw them putting on all sail to speed before the wind he knew that something was amiss and let them have the shot as soon as he got within range; Salmon's disguise had not deceived him.

They then got all the news of our bad defeats in Burmah which depressed them very much; they couldn't understand what a Japanese ship could be doing in "British" waters. And so Salmon was brought back to Singapore and cast into prison with the rest of us. The tragedy of it all was that if they had not struck the fine following wind which had been speeding them on their course for the last two days, they would not have encountered the tanker and the chances were that they would have succeeded in escaping.



We are now permitted by the Japanese to make outside purchases, not individual purchases but camp purchases, so we have established a shop and the goods come to the shop and are either handed over to the kitchen for the general good or distributed to floors as equitably as possible, and drawn for. There is never enough to go round to everybody. The goods come in from Gian Singh & Co., an Indian firm which functioned before the war. We are being stuck badly in the prices of things. Many internees who were sadly in need of certain articles of clothing etc. are now in a position to purchase them if they wish. I have been able to replenish my stock of razor blades and toilet paper, both very essential articles of toilet.

Willan and Partridge, of the bank staff, have both grown beards. The former looks like the pictures one sees of Jesus Christ, and the latter would pass for a beachcomber without any further disguise.

We now get our vegetables delivered to camp by a Chinese contractor and I am to be allowed to go into Miyako Hospital in the camp ambulance once a week to pay him - this in virtue of my being a member of the Finance Committee. This will be a break in an otherwise monotonous life.

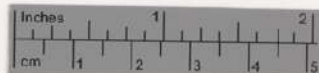
I sometimes wander round to the punishment cells (no longer used for this purpose) in the evenings and sit and chat with Leslie Shields and some of his doctor pals who foregather there. We discuss many subjects, the probable course of the war and the problems to overcome after it. What I should like to see would be a strong union of the English speaking nations, the U.S.A. and the British Empire, with suitable trade agreements among all nations of the world, settlements and adjustments of which could be made through some central clearing house periodically. It is ridiculous for one country to wish to be a seller only but not a buyer. This, of course, is all very well in theory but if and when it comes to practice there will be many difficulties to be overcome; one of the worst will be the disparity in the different standards of living.

"D" Block doctor took a run over my chest this morning and the result was satisfactory. He does not approve of my doing fatigues and has given me a chit to the fatigue officer excusing me from all fatigues in future. He has also given me an order on the kitchen for a pint of milk a day, which is all to the good.

As the Japanese won't loan us any money or let us contact the International Red Cross, we have decided to raise a loan from internees themselves by making an appeal to them to let the camp have their surplus funds. The S. S. Govt. will guarantee the repayment of money loaned to the camp in this way so we should get quite a good response to our appeal I think. Our object is to obtain as large a sum as possible so as to be able to lay in stocks for future requirements while these are available in Singapore.

We are to have a small loaf daily in future. The cooks have found that they can bake with 75% flour and 25% rice flour so we shall benefit to some extent.

Stringfellow and I eat out of enamel dishes and we wash them in the cell after meals. Our discloths would not be a pride and joy to the model housewife as we have no hot water to wash them in, but they're not so bad. Our rule is that we lick our knives before washing them as this removes the butter or margarine or jam or what-have-you. So far we haven't removed any tongue! I think we keep our cell very tidy; and, what is perhaps more important, we get along well



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together and haven't allowed our tempers to become frayed by prison conditions.

I have wangled a 60 c.p. bulb for our cell which is a godsend after the 15 c.p. one we have suffered to date. It is a very wet night outside and we are both "at home", String-fellow sitting on his rolled-up mattress with his back against the wall in a corner of the cell, reading, and me, on a stool I got a carpenter pal to make for me out of an old latrine seat, typing this diary. It is nearing lights-out and we shall soon have to make down our beds. From 10 p.m. to 10.30 p.m., between lights-out and silence, this place is like the monkey house at the zoo! Complete darkness and possibly the strangeness of our surroundings seem to encourage conversation; and I suppose too that we all feel that another day has passed and brought us so much nearer relief.

Wednesday, 29th April, 1942.

Today is the Japanese Emperor's birthday and the camp has been presented with several cases of pineapple by the Japanese authorities for distribution among the internees, so tonight we shall have one tin between three instead of only four miserable cubes per man.

We mustn't complain. Conditions could be very much worse. After all we have been granted one or two quite important concessions; for example we are allowed to buy vegetables and eggs and other foodstuffs such as cheese, milk, margarine and raisins which could very well have been withheld from us. No doubt as time goes on and we get settled down conditions will further improve. Admitted we are paying for the extras with our own money, but had the Japanese really wished to be vindictive they could very well have withheld these privileges.

A few nights ago a Japanese sentry came into B Block to sell cigarettes while a second sentry brought in some whisky. While negotiations were going on a small crowd gathered round and some misguided idiot tried to sneak away with a carton of cigarettes while the sentry's back was turned. A general commotion ensued when the sentry discovered his loss, and in the chaos which resulted an innocent and frightened bystander ran away hotly pursued by the sentry who ultimately caught him. The internee was beaten up and finally struck with the flat of the sentry's drawn bayonet before the commotion died down, and it was only then discovered that an innocent man had been assaulted, a man who thought it best to beat a hasty retreat when the trouble started.

The whole affair was reported to the Central Committee and by them to the commander of the Japanese guard as it was considered that the trade in whisky was much too dangerous to be permitted to continue. An inquiry was instituted by the Japanese commandant and the outcome was that the Japanese guard as a whole were fined \$140, which funds were handed over to the camp Central Committee for use by them as they might think fit. The Central Committee thought that it would be a diplomatic move to hand the money back with a suggestion that it be used by the guard in some way to celebrate their Emperor's birthday, but this offer was turned down by the commander of the guard with the remark that our need was greater than theirs!

We are supposed to have a roll-call each morning on our floor, and I was detailed to answer for the bankers. This formality had been neglected for some weeks up to yesterday when the orderly officer on the floor came to me and said that it would have to be resumed. I asked him why, had



someone escaped, and he replied "No, but some bloke died in the night a few days ago and his death was never reported to the kitchen who have been issuing his rations ever since. They didn't mind his dying but there's hell to pay for their not being advised immediately."

I got out again last Sunday. Went out in the ambulance to Miyako Hospital, where our bad sick cases are sent, to meet and pay our vegetable contractor. I did not waste my time; I brought back some butter, cheese, sugar, jam, bovril, milk, bananas and bread to augment our issued rations. I sold a good lot of my "spoil" to my colleagues in the bank who are less fortunate than I am in having no opportunity of buying any extras.

Tuesday 5th May, 1942.

The lot of the married couples interned here is a pretty poor one. They are not allowed to meet, and I see men peering through the bars in our blocks, towards a covered way some 50 yards off which runs to the women's hospital, in the hope of getting a fleeting glance of their wives. I appreciate how fortunate I am in having got Helen safely away; I could not bear to think of her pigging it in this camp. Now and again our own camp police when on duty in the main yard encounter their wives, and when they do they exchange remarks through the corners of their mouths without interrupting the course of their walk or showing any sign of recognition for fear of being spotted by the Japanese sentries and getting their womenfolk into trouble.

The Japanese now say that they themselves will either pay for vegetables purchased by the camp or provide vegetables themselves. This looks like bringing to an end my pleasant little trips to Miyako Hospital as I understand the idea is that the contractor should come to camp to be paid.

I came across a passage in Lin Yutang's "The Importance of Living" which ran - "the human brain is as much an organ for seeking food as the pig's snout", and it struck me as being peculiarly applicable to the inmates of this prison. The human brain in here spends the greater part of its conscious time thinking out ways and means of acquiring food to supplement the ordinary rations.

I mentioned the other day that the Finance Committee had appealed to internees to lend their funds to the camp to enable them to budget as far ahead as possible as regards supplementary food supplies. The response to this appeal has been quite good but not good enough. Questions are being asked as to how long it will take Government to implement their guarantee to repay, as it is visualized that we shall go from here direct to Singapore, at least that is the opinion of some! Government has a reputation for procrastination and the average internee feels that his need of money will be immediate if we return to Singapore suddenly on a Japanese withdrawal.

We have pulled in \$70,000 so far and as an inducement to others to come forward with their money I have persuaded my competitors, the Chartered and Mercantile Banks, to join me in a joint declaration to the effect that we shall accept receipts for the credit of accounts immediately on the resumption of normal banking business in Singapore. In this way individuals will be able to utilize their funds right away and banks will do the waiting for the Government repayment, which, if long delayed, will carry interest payable to the banks.



The attitude of the Japanese has changed very considerably for the better these last few days. We are all rather suspicious! They have taken over the responsibility for the supply of vegetables, as I have already mentioned, and now they have, for the first time, issued us with some fresh meat. The fatigue party which went out yesterday to collect our rations for the next ten days brought back 2,400 lbs. of fresh meat over and above the usual supply of rice, sugar, salt etc.

On one occasion previously we were told we should collect fresh meat, but the ration party which went out to fetch it were taken to a military refrigeration plant, which the British had put out of action at the time of the fighting and where the meat had naturally gone bad, and were offered this which they very rightly refused. Some people thought that this was an attempt at humour on the part of the Japanese who have pointed out on more than one occasion that if we have to go without necessary foodstuffs, and our diet is not all that it should be, it is because our troops destroyed so much on their retreat.

This issue of fresh meat works out at something under 1.6 of an ounce per head per day, as it will have to carry us over ten days!

Yesterday 150 men from B Block went out under escort to bathe in the sea about half a mile away. Today a somewhat larger number went out from C Block, and tomorrow D Block have their turn. As the numbers are limited I do not think I shall apply to go as I am not keen on bathing in sea mud, which is just about what it is. Whether these bathing parties will be regular concessions nobody knows. I think it is more likely to be an isolated incident.

It is all very mysterious, this sudden change of attitude. Speculation is rife; some say we are to be exchanged and the Japs wish to fatten us up for export, others that the International Red Cross may be on the point of paying us a visit, while it is also rumoured that the authorities at home are paying for better food. No one seems to consider that it could possibly be a humane move on the part of the Japanese!

Friday, 8th May, 1942.

Yesterday I was detailed to go out with one Ferguson, a fish salesman of the Singapore Cold Storage Co., and a Japanese sentry to explore the possibilities of buying fish from the local fishermen to supply the camp. Ferguson was the fish expert and I the finance representative, as the camp themselves had to pay.

We had a grand walk, down to the sea front about half a mile distant, along the shore for two or three miles, and then back to camp; in all I should think we walked the best part of seven or eight miles, as we came back by an extended inland route to see if there were any pigs about which we could recommend the camp to buy! We left about 10 a.m. and got back just on 1 p.m. in time for tiffin.

Our search was fruitless. We encountered several Malay fishermen and ascertained from them that their individual catches seldom exceeded a pound or two a day, and we also saw from what they were carrying in from the sea that their bag was a very mixed one which, if delivered in bulk (if it were a practical proposition, which it was not), would be quite unsuitable for European consumption. They had crab, mud fish, shrimps, small ekan merah, and a lot of other strange looking creatures.



creatures.

From these Malays we ascertained that the biggest fish collecting centre near the camp was Bedok, a village about six miles from camp, and on our return to camp we reported to the Japanese commandant that we should be unlikely to achieve anything nearer home. He said he would give the matter his consideration and so it rests for the time being.

Our accompanying Japanese sentry was quite a human bloke who spoke a very few words of English. He carried a small Jap/English Dictionary with him and we would stop every now and again to allow him to refer to it when stuck in conversation. We found out that he had fought at Johore and that he was a married man with a wife, small son and small daughter in Osaka. Conversation was not exactly free; we ventured the odd question about every hundred yards or so and the answer would be worked out in the next hundred yards, while the third hundred yards would be taken up in thinking out the next question. However, the outing was Heaven-sent; we ambled along the beach, through rubber estates, across fields, and on to roads, and it was a perfect day. It did me a lot of good to breathe the good air of freedom, relatively speaking, and I returned to camp quite refreshed.

I have just heard the Governor of Sumatra is detained in solitary confinement in here. How he got here, and why he is here, is a mystery.

Some small stir was created in camp yesterday when our Governor (Sir Shenton Thomas) was sent for by the Japanese commandant and did not return. The Central Committee then instituted enquiries and were told that he had been transferred to solitary confinement in the tower of the prison, but no reason for this was given nor were they told how long he should have to remain there. The meagre information released to our committee members was that this action had been taken on instruction from the Japanese High Command, so the Central Committee then asked to be allowed to contact the High Command. This request met with a blunt refusal so the Central Committee got up and left the room, refusing to discuss the other camp matters which were scheduled to be dealt with that day.

What H. E. has done no one can imagine, unless a story I have heard is true, that he handed over the city to the Japanese attired in shirt and shorts only, and repercussions are now reaching us from Japan.

The other day I was called to the Japanese Camp Commandant's house, the Conference House as it is known, to meet our vegetable contractor and discuss the payment for vegetables. The Japanese were going to settle on this occasion. I duly turned up at the appointed time but found no contractor; his coolies, who had Jap passes, were there, but not the contractor himself. My knowledge of Malay is very elementary and when I asked one of the coolies what had happened to the contractor, they told me, as I thought, that he had been held up at a sentry post eleven miles away as he had no pass. So the meeting was postponed and I was told by the Japs that I could go in to Miyako Hospital and make one more payment.

When I told my friend Long about this he asked what the coolie had said in Malay and I told him - I said that I had asked "brapah bhatu?" (how many stones, i. e. milestones) and he had replied "bhatu sa'blas", which I had taken to mean eleven miles away. Long laughed and said "You fathead, 'bhatu sa'blas' means at the eleventh milestone and not



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eleven miles away. Had the coolie wanted to tell you that the contractor was eleven miles away he would have said 'sa'blas bhatu'. The eleventh milestone was only a matter of a few hundred yards from the camp!

While hanging around the Conference House I ran into one or two British military officers, come there on the same errand as myself I think, to settle for vegetables under the new scheme. We had an opportunity to exchange a few surreptitious words and I was able to find out that R.W. Lee (of the Bank) who had been wounded with the volunteers near the end was quite all right and that his wound had been a slight flesh one through the chest. I was also told that Henry Mills of our Ipoh staff, and also a volunteer, was at Chengi still. Mills had been badly wounded up country and I thought he had been transferred to India before the end. He is well, although perhaps not fully recovered from the effects of his wound.

One of the officers said that Brigadier Moir would like the following message conveyed to his wife if I got an opportunity of passing it on: "I am as fit as a fiddle and send you a kick in the pants"! British humour! I managed to get it through.

We have a real tough guy in charge of the prison incinerator, a pre-war warder I think he is. The other day I was on fatigue at the incinerator when some men annoyed this bloke. As they were walking away from him he let fly a volume of oaths which were ignored by the men at whom they were launched, who went nonchalantly on their way. Exasperated, the warder turned to us and said "There's no use saying 'please' and 'thank you' to them bastards, they wouldn't understand. They're gentlemen."

I see from the Sayonan Times that the Yokohama Specie Bank are now occupying the Hongkong Bank premises at Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Malacca, Ipoh and Johore, and the Chartered Bank at Penang, Seremban and some of the smaller towns. Our premises seem to be preferred!

Wednesday, 13th May, 1942.

These last few days have been very irksome for some reason which I cannot explain. I long to be out and about again, free. It has become very hot, both by day and by night, and this doesn't help. The cells are stuffy by night and one never wakes in the morning refreshed. Then Spring is here, or is it?

The Governor remains in the tower and we still do not know what it is all about. The Japanese, however, have not in any way altered their attitude towards internees, so the action of the Central Committee in walking out on them at the meeting the other day has so far brought nothing down upon our heads. I happened to be in the office in the camp of the Japanese commandant the other day and I noticed the following written in large block letters on a blackboard facing the door, "There will be NO MEETINGS with the Committee in this room until further notice, by order of Lieut. Okasaki", which seems to indicate that they are still not playing with one and other! I understand the fish buying scheme is hanging fire because of this lack of contact.

Three months ago Singapore surrendered. The time passes somehow but God alone knows how; we are just killing it in here, although one always walks about pretending that one has an aim in view, but it's all pretence. It would certainly be demoralising if one hung about doing nothing and