

dog's eye view

Tell you what I notice, Mac. More and more girls with these converging fashion marks on their stockings. Yes, Aussie, and the taper heel as well. When you see them both together you know it must be

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THE CAN-OPENER

(continued from previous page)

time. For six months he had vanished into a Tokyo civilian gaol, where he made envelopes and lived on seaweed and picked up an amazing amount of Japanese thieves' slang. But whenever he came back to Omori, he was always in trouble.

He never stole from his comrades, as I had reason to know, for I slept beside him for several months. But he stole from the Yanks or from the Dutchmen, just to keep his hand in; and of course at all times, and as much from a sense of duty as from inner compulsion, he stole from the Japanese. Very rarely he appeared out on working parties; and I shall not soon forget the scene at Shiodome when Wilfie was spotted by a yard-detective behind a pile of sleepers, casually humping a sack which on examination proved to contain forty tins of salmon and half-a-dozen bottles of sake.

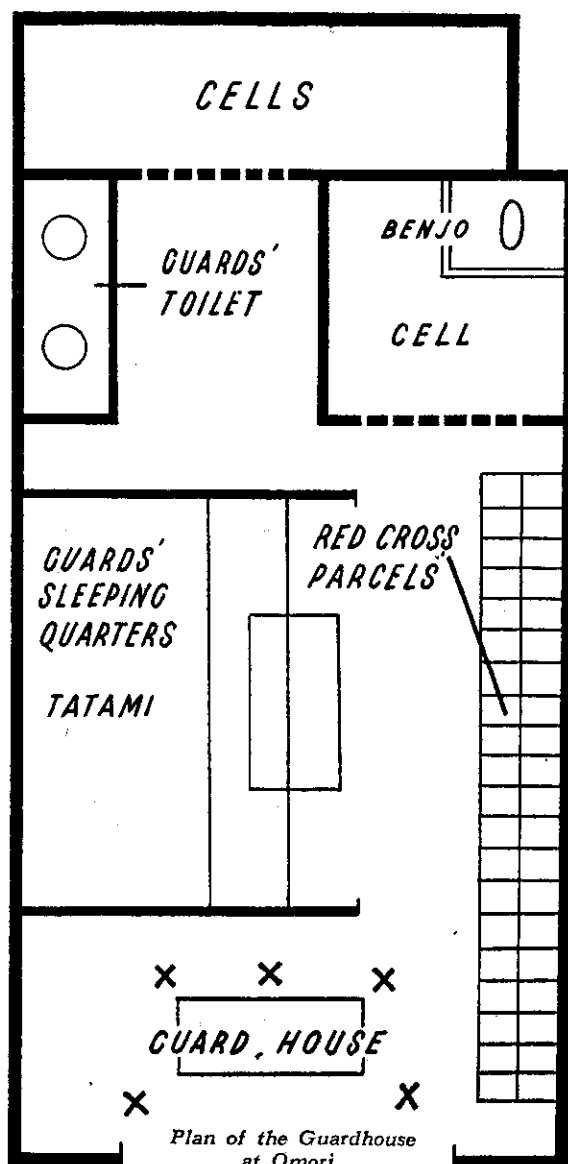
"Forty tins!" screamed the fu. "What can you want with forty tins?" Wilfie palmed his glasses and said nothing; he never said anything when he was caught by the Japanese.

He took one of the worst beatings we had ever seen at Shiodome for that little lot; and though he went down four or five times, once with a broken eardrum that would never hear again, he always got up slowly and jerked his unshaven chin at the raving guards. "Die hard!" is the unofficial motto of The Londoners. Wilfie, with all his borrowing ways, was a Londoner still.

The climax, however, came with the Red Cross parcels.

* * *

FOR months, everyone knew, there had been American Red Cross parcels in the camp. It was an amiable habit of our captors, whenever a Red Cross shipment arrived, to store the stuff in bulk as long as possible—so that everyone on the Japanese staff could get a good cut at it—and then, after the main bulk of it had dwindled to reasonable proportions, to make a reluctant issue to the prisoners. Most of us, who had learnt our philosophy the hard way, just tried to forget there was such a thing as good American canned food left in the world; and that by some ancient tabu known as international law, this food belonged to us. To the morally frail or venturesome, however (you may choose your terms), the presence of these parcels—even under a quick-triggered Japanese guard—was a perpetual challenge.



Plan of the Guardhouse at Omori

And Wilfie, as a "natural," was the first to succumb. After taking risks that might have qualified him for several more conventional awards for gallantry, he got away with the only award he wanted: a dozen Red Cross parcels. "Ain't we s'posed to get one a month?" he demanded. "Fair enough! I ain't had a parcel since the last shipment in Hong Kong." Unfortunately not long afterwards he was caught by a guard fishing tins of Spam out of a water-barrel during an air-raid, and there was only one answer to that.

For reasons best known to themselves, the Omori Camp staff did not seem to want an official inquiry into the matter of Red Cross parcels; so Wilfie was lucky. Instead of being sent back to his envelopes and seaweed, his punishment was to be an indefinite confinement, on one-third usual camp rations, in the guardhouse cell. With hands lashed together in front of him, and other public marks of obloquy, Wilfie was marched off the square under escort, and disappeared from view.

It was pure coincidence, of course, that a fresh consignment of the American parcels arrived next day. And since the Japanese canteen was already full to overflowing, this latest batch was stacked for extra safety within the guardhouse itself, where it formed a double tier of

(continued on next page)