

SHORT STORY

(continued from previous page)

And thinking all the time of the outside. The outside would be there to keep you restless — it would change, things would happen on the outside you wouldn't know about. Thousands of things would happen on the outside you wouldn't know about. Shut away from the outside for twenty-five years, from the taunting changing outside. That's the worst. If only in here would change too—if only inside would change, that would be different, that would be like living. That'd be like the outside. But maybe it does change? Yeah, maybe it does at that. Jesus, I'd hope so—if I was a lifer I'd hope like hell it would.

"You think they all look alike, eh?" said Tony. "Well, you'll learn, boy. Some are good jokers, see—and some deserve to be here. But you steer clear for a while—just nose around so they get to know you. And you'll learn 'em all. Yep, you'll find out who's a bastard and who isn't soon enough."

TONY was busy with the gang under the loudspeaker. The pattern of the morning's activities was becoming more evident. Groups developed. Groups for talking mostly. Some sat and talked about their crimes, their future crimes. Some about their plans after they got out. Some talked about others. But

mostly they were in groups. A new man doesn't have a group. So he walked around, getting used to the shape of the yard, noticing little things like the shape of the iron fittings on the seats, the cracks in the asphalt paths, the way the strong brown volcanic earth showed through where the grass had been worn down by sitting and walking. He discovered that by standing back against the East Wing steps you could see over the North wall the roofs of near-by houses and the moving tops of trams on the hill not far away. This was good. You could see the outside and the movement. There were people in those trams going home to lunch, or maybe to the movies, or to football or to the races, or to see their girl-friends. It was good to know there were people there doing the things he had done. He had been one of those people, just like them until—well, until—God damn it! What's the use! He wasn't out there now—no longer a people out there—no, you dope, you're here, in the big yard, with these others. You're doing time, like everyone else in here. You're going to stay here for a while. This will be your home, your football ground, your race-track, your movie-theatre and your wife's bedroom all in one. So walk, and get used to it.

HE wandered again aimlessly around the yard among the groups until he wanted to sit down, or lie down on the

grass and just let the sun warm through his back. Being alone and knowing he must find his own small zone of privacy to sprawl in, he walked over to the outer corner, under the dull shining rifle in the guard cage. No groups here. It was sunny. It was clear. The grass was good, not worn like the other corners. So relax, you dope—this is just jail and worrying isn't going to get you out of it.

He took off his coat. The sun warmed through the shirt. Shaking the folds out of his coat, he threw it on the grass to lie on it. As he stooped he saw that one of the sleeves had fallen across a piece of grey stone. Pulling away the coarse cloth he saw that the stone was set in the ground and was partly covered by brown volcanic dust and grass-roots. Beside it was another, then another and another—all square grey stones about eighteen inches square set in the grass in a line, in a neat stone path, leading from where he knelt, across the grass, under the barbed wire and on right up to the outer wall. He stood up and looked. What a crazy idea—a path leading back into that thick wall. One, two, three—there were ten stones leading to that big grey wall. Ten grey stones in that crazy path. What a crazy idea—and in a jail too, what a hell of a crazy idea! But what —

Jesus! They were headstones! Ten grey headstones, each with a single capital letter carved into their ugly faces.

He was looking down a path that had been built up by the years. The hideous precision of the stones had started from the big wall and stretched out to plunge into his sickened guts. Sweeping the coat from the grass he hurried blindly back to the group under the loudspeaker, trembling and cursing out the fear and pity of those square grey stones.

Tony said, "Still want to win that fig?" He said it again. Then he added, "You got the gripes? Didn't I tell you that porridge last night was doped with the salts? Didn't I? Sure?"

Honouring the Arts

NAMES of musicians and entertainers, well known to New Zealand radio listeners, were in the British Birthday Honours List last June, including Solomon, the pianist now in New Zealand, "Gert and Daisy" (Elsie and Doris Waters), and George Formby. The *Manchester Guardian Weekly's* "London Letter" remarked that the arts did better in the Birthday Honours than they did in the New Year list, and reported that the C.B.E. had been conferred on "Fougasse" (Cyril Kenneth Bird) who made England laugh at the discomforts of war travel; on "James Bridie" (Dr. Osborne Henry Mayor), Jelly d'Aranyi (the violinist), Solomon and Edward Bawden, war artist. George Formby, Joyce Grenfell and Elsie and Doris Waters became O.B.E.'s.



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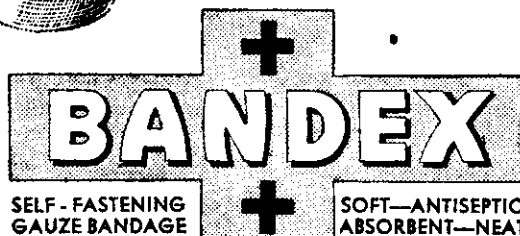
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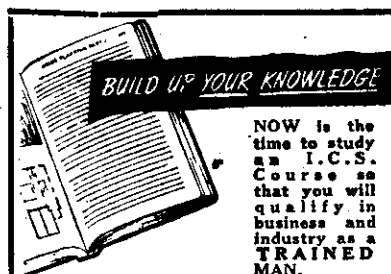


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