

## MIDNIGHT GREETING

# Liberated Britons Get Rousing Welcome

For an hour Tuesday night the rotunda of the C.P.R. station was a strange sight. Forty-five officers and 244 other ranks of the Imperial Army, Britishers all, mingled with residents of Winnipeg whom they had never laid eyes on before—and had a whale of a time. The servicemen were liberated prisoners of war, who had fought in such places as Burma, Java, Sumatra and Japan and who were prisoners of the Japs for over three years.

This was between the hour of 11 p.m. and midnight. The liberated ones and the Winnipeggers mixed together like magic.

The British troops, met by Paratroops, Grenadiers and other Canadian soldiers, were greeted by a roaring "three cheers" the minute they came in sight of the crowds. A little puzzled and surprised at first, the Tommies soon began to wave their khaki berets to their welcomers and their faces wreathed in smiles.

Over to their left a great, long table covered with hundreds of cups of coffee, chocolate cakes and cookies—soon caught their eyes. But Chief Petty Officer Bert Webber of the Royal Navy thought the Winnipeg girls were "more thrilling than the food." Bert liked everything, though. He "thrilled" again when the orchestra played "Bell Bottom Trousers." The Japs, he thought, were just fair sailors.

CPO Webber could not get his mind off the girls who were chatting informally with him about this and that. "I'd like to stay over for two-three hours with these gals," said the sailor. "Think I'll have a talk with the Canadian Pacific Railway. Get an extended stop-over, sort of."

One of the first men off the train was L/Cpl. Patrick O'Hara, of Glasgow, an Irishman from Scotland, with a Scot's accent. Member of the Royal Artillery, O'Hara fought alongside Canadian troops and described them as being "very good soldiers and very nice chaps." He added that the Canadians were a little hazy about the terrain around Hong Kong but that they "had only been in the

country about three weeks before things began to get hot." Quite a joker, O'Hara declared that he was not married but that he might have got "that look about me" from being too long in a Jap prison camp.

Gunner John Williams, a colored man with the Royal Artillery, had joined up in 1941. He'd been born in Africa but lived most of his life in Liverpool, England.

Grey-thatched Donald McLennan, of Govan, Scotland, had been with the Merchant Navy when a German raider caught up with his ship in the South Atlantic. Ironically, the capture took place on April Fool's Day. Oddly, too, McLennan spent five months of his internment aboard ship.

The British chaps were lavish in their praise of Canadians they had met passing through the Dominion. Of the local reception they spoke with adjective after adjective. The favorite seemed to be "overwhelming." Other adjectives used to describe the reception were smashing, really wonderful, grand, splendid, and topping. The English pukka colonel (pukka meaning full colonel and not lieutenant-colonel) H. J. Kilpatrick went to the microphone after His Honor Lieutenant-Governor R. F. McWilliams had welcomed the liberated prisoners, and said:

"When you've been used to starving and ill treatment, you can't imagine what all this feels like."

Commodore H. D. U. P. Richards of the Royal Navy, second in command of the Exeter, was there. His ship was one of those which cornered the Graf Spee. The chocolate cake, he said, was "absolutely delightful."

An English chaplain said he was interrupted while preaching to his men by a Japanese general who told him brusquely that he had five minutes to go. At one time, the chaplain was with a ward of 100 malaria patients. "They wanted me so much when they were dying," he murmured.

Gunner Albert John Murphy was

an Irishman who came from England. He'd been beaten many times. "Fists, hand slaps, boots—they didn't care what they did to us," he recalled Sgt. Bert Perrins, who'd been to France in '39 and '40 and went to the East as a seasoned trooper, said the Singapore show was "pretty gory. I was in the Royal Army Medical Corps and I haven't had a day's rest since we began fighting at Singapore. Many of the cases us medicos received were people who'd been beaten," he said. The reception at the Winnipeg station? "Tremendous—it is, honestly," said the medical sergeant.