

# OUR BOYS AT THE FRONT

## Ideas from Tommy and His Mother

### What Tommy Says

"WHATEVER you do, don't send bully beef," was the contribution of a happy-go-lucky Irishman who will never walk on two legs again. "Boxes come from Canada with as many as six tins of bully beef, as though there isn't enough of that over there! Sardines, now, they're all right. Caké doesn't often reach the Front in very good condition from Canada because it is not well packed and because it isn't the right kind. Cake that dries up isn't any good. You see, sometimes it takes six weeks to reach the boys. Plum puddings, if they're properly made, and fruit cake that will keep, are all right if they're properly packed."

"If some one," said a many months' trench philosopher, "would stop inventing some new kind of gun and get busy and invent a really good soup, the fellows in the trenches would thank him a great deal more. Good, hot, thick broth, mind you, not beef tea. Beef tea is all right, but you get tired of so much of it. Pea soup in cans is the nearest approach so far, and on a cold day in winter, it's fine! The thing we used to miss most was bread. You don't know what it is to want bread until you can't get it. However, as everything is being so wonderfully organized over there now, the boys are getting bread pretty regularly."

### Real Life-Savers

"I'll tell you another good thing," the crippled Irishman broke in, "and that's maple sugar. Fine stuff to keep in your pocket and nibble occasionally. Chocolate, too, the kind you can crush up and make into a good, hot drink. Then there's another little thing, you know, matches are forbidden to be sent in parcels."

"I mind once," interrupted a man who has had numerous wounds in the chest, "there were six of us with one cigarette between us and no matches. I walked a hundred and fifty yards from one trench to another, with shot falling all round, to try to get one and found a fellow who had two. He gave me one; and I stumbled back with that precious match, and if I didn't drop it and that one cigarette in a pool of water—after me risking my neck to get that match!"

"Well, as I was going to say," remarked the interrupted one, "a small magnifying glass wouldn't be a bad thing to send, and then fellows like you wouldn't have to walk a mile for a match."

### Those Warm Woolly Things

"If you ask me," said a keen-eyed young sergeant who had gone through eight months of horror in the trenches, "I'd tell every mother to get a really good sweater coat—the cheap ones aren't any good—and send it the very first thing this fall; and a good muffler, a woolen helmet, and a pair of really good, warm mitts. And socks; the men have to change their socks every twenty-four hours, as frequent changes are the best preventive for frozen feet. So, no matter how many socks you have sent, just keep on knitting."

"And don't rib them," broke in a mere boy, as he settled his footless leg into a more comfortable position. "Some of the socks are ribbed all over except just the sole and the heel, and believe me, those ribs make a fellow go lame, on a long march. And make 'em right! Lumps of sock in the toe or heel of your boots don't make a ten-mile march any pleasure jaunt; and don't knot the wool. Ugh! I feel them yet—those knots! Get the right pattern from the Red Cross and stick to it. Three inches of ribbing at the top of the leg is enough. Funny, how some women will rib the whole thing, when it takes just about twice the time! These woolen things will make all the difference in the world this winter to the boys."

### And Tobacco

"AND tobacco, get good stuff and not the rubbish that is sold as soldier's special stuff; and cigarettes, there are never enough of them. Then a five dollar bill, even a two or a one means a lot to a man's comfort—he can get little things that the folk back home never think of sending. And so often the boxes are in bad condition when they reach the boys, and usually they're too good-hearted to let the home folk know, but just picture to yourself the disappointment of getting a box crushed to a jelly and absolutely no good at all! Money can always be changed right at the Front by the Y.M.C.A."

"Then the letters—the whole world changes to the men, when the home letters

## The Letters You Send

OH, for a letter from home! How we welcome a letter! How we eagerly open it! How much joy, and strength, and satisfaction some letters bring us! How the boys at the front yearn for letters, how they welcome them—those heartening messages from home!

And then there are the other kind—

Any one can at least send a letter to some man at the front, but let it be a letter that will satisfy his longing—one that will brighten a dark day or cheer a weary night—make him strong for the conflict or bring a sense of joy and peace to gladden his hard-earned rest.

### Avoid Sending This Kind

An army officer recently furnished Bruce Barton, Editor of "Every Week," with these extracts from letters written to soldiers:

"Your room is just as you left it, Hubert, and your mother cries as if her heart would break every time she goes in to dust the dresser."

"There is a vacant chair at the table, dear. We're lonely for you."

"Bessie went to work yesterday. She will do her best, but she can never do for us what you did. How we miss your strong, manly shoulders!"

"Oh, my lover, my heart is bleeding for you."

It is a temptation, when those whom we love are away, to pour our longing into our letters. We can help by resisting that temptation.

### The Kind They Welcome

The man at the Front is sure to appreciate more the people at home who are carrying their burden through the war as he, the man at the front, is carrying his—with a high courage and a hand ever ready to help a pal.

"Make your letter to him so full of cheerful gossip, so fragrant with trust and love, that its arrival will be the great event of his week or month."

come along. I don't think the home folk realize that yet. A cheerful, encouraging letter gets a man on his feet and gives him back bone again. But, if you love him, don't fill your letters with complaints and grumblings—he's got about all he can stand. I've known men, sick at heart, expose themselves purposely so that death might take them out of their misery, and then along come letters from home and these same men creep back to refuge and begin to sing. That's a fact. Ask any of the boys.

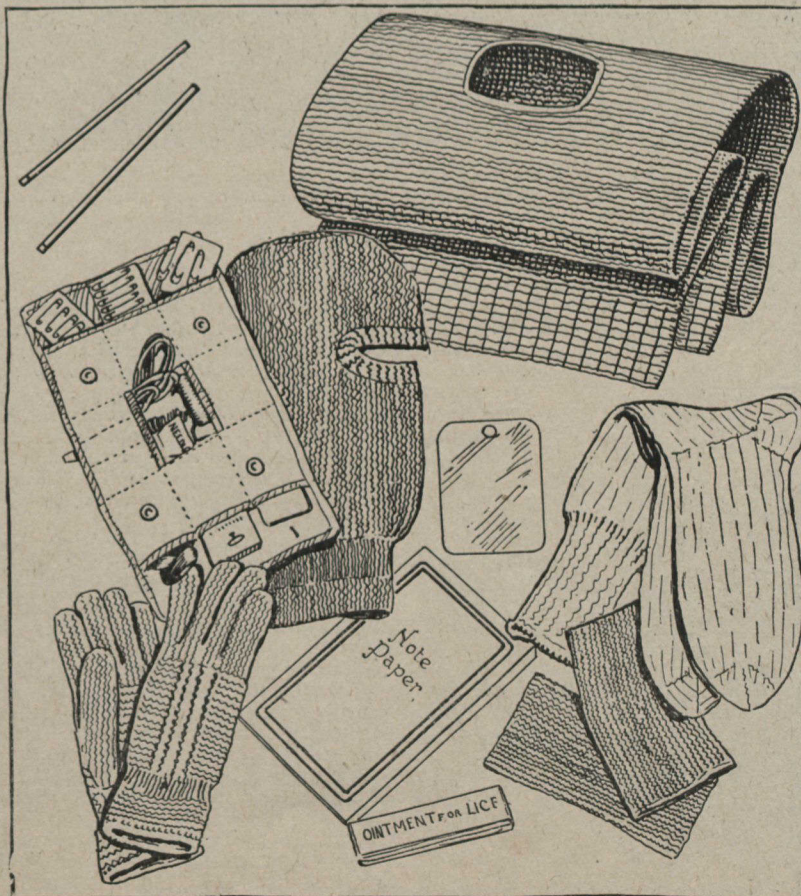
### Wash Time Luxury

"ONE of the best things about the box that reached me every week was the inside wrapping my mother used," confided a shy lad who had not had much to say. "When her box was packed and corded, she always sewed it up in a towel—just a cheap towel, but one that had been washed often, and was soft and absorbent. I

don't know anything that made me feel nearer the folks than the touch of that fresh, homey towel."

"Speaking of washing—a friend at home made a practice of sending me a little tin box ever so often. I thought the first one was 'baccy,' but it turned out to be a kind of soap that lathers up without using water. It was fine stuff. I liked shaving cream, too—just to wash with when I couldn't shave; the tube was always handy to stick in my pocket."

"Good idea," said the shy chap, with a grin. "I remember one of my boxes that had a fine mixture in it. It had been stacked up against a steam pipe somewhere, I guess, because about two pounds of taffy (that should have been in a tin box) had melted and run all over a cake of soap that had only a paper wrapper. We tried to eat the taffy, but it was no go—the soap flavor had beaten us to it!"



These "Woollies" will mean infinite comfort to the lad in the trenches this winter. One of the new sleeveless sweaters that fit so well under the tunic, a knitted helmet, a newly filled housewife, a steel mirror, socks—always socks—gloves, wristlets and his little toilet comforts—these things are wonder-workers "over there."

### What Mother Does

"WHAT do the boys like best?" repeated one little mother. "Well I think fruit cake may be reckoned a good first; you can see from all the recipes I keep up here on the kitchen shelf that the cake can never be too varied to suit mother's boy at the Front nor too rich if it is to keep."

"Canned meats come second. Besides the ordinary tongue and chicken usually associated with picnics, beef-steak and onions may be bought in tins at the better class stores, and are a pleasure and surprise to the home-sick boy."

"I wanted to send chicken," said a mother who has two boys in France, "and I cooked it and packed it cold, but it wasn't much of a success. Then some one gave me a good idea and I've had no trouble since. Now, I put it on whole, and let it simmer until it is almost a jelly; then I pack it in a sterilized jar while it is still hot and seal it air-tight. It reaches France just fine! I always send mustard, too—the French kind, you know—Jim likes it as a substitute for butter on bread."

### Butter and Eggs

"BUT what about butter?" anxiously asks a mother whose son is in training.

"Really fresh butter, straight from the country," volunteered a very capable woman, whose son is back with an arm less than he took away, "put in a glass jar and securely packed will reach France all right. And listen to me," she went on, "if you want to send something that the boys never tire of, send candy; overseas chocolate is splendid, but don't forget the candy with liquorice in it; it's good for sore throats, you know. Then there are dates and raisins, they keep well."

"I tried sending biscuits," said a woman who had not yet spoken, and whose first born lies in a soldier's grave in Flanders, "but they weren't any good until I learned how to pack them. They must go into air-tight tins or they will get moist and maybe mouldy. And I sent eggs; but you must be sure they are absolutely new laid. Pack them in saw-dust, then pack the box with excelsior in another box and your boy will probably get them unbroken. Some women boil the eggs hard and grease them, but this way has not been a success. Eggs can always, of course, be bought at the Front, and the men pack them in their trench caps for safe keeping. You may smile, but that's a fact."

### Don't Forget the Other Things

I SEND rusks sometimes," said a girl whose husband was one of the first to go. "I do them up in air-tight paper packages and the boys always ask for more; and I've found that prepared cocoa and coffee in tins are always welcome; the milk and sugar are already in, you know."

"Don't forget that there are other things besides eatables," admonished a woman with soft white hair and wistful eyes. "I've given four boys and—I don't expect them all back—Send tooth brushes and paste and some nice scented soap—the boys like a nice smell to their soap out there; and tooth picks—they're handy for a lot of things. Put in a bottle of health salts sometimes, and cigarettes, of course, and every magazine you can buy, borrow or steal."

### But What of That?

THE parcel I sent my boy yesterday," confided one little woman, "cost me eight dollars, and we're doing without things so that we can send that box regularly."

"Every night," said another who has grown old and care-worn in a few short months, "I wake with a start and see Joe, who never spent a night away from home before in his life, up to his knees in water in the trenches. I send him a box every week," her voice dropped to a whisper, "it costs quite a bit, but what of that? It's all I can do, except to write him cheery, bright letters and that's not always easy, but I do it."

The first parcels are usually Mother's choice, but presently they are improved by hints from the boy himself, and many of these hints point to sugar! Sugar is becoming something of a curiosity in Europe and many Canadians are sending sugar to their relatives—peaceful, non-warring relatives—with which to sweeten their tea. The Canadian soldier, whether in England or at the Front, objects to unsweetened tea and coffee; hence the great cry for sugar, and yet more sugar.