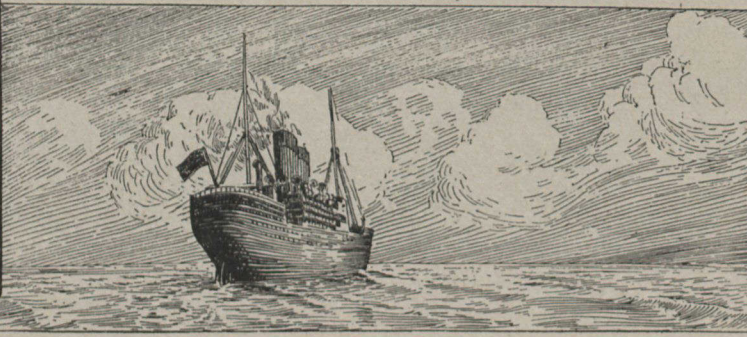


# FOR TOMMY IN THE TRENCHES

## Where a Touch of Home Means Much

By G. C. MARY WHITE



**T**OMMY in the Trenches is all one and the same with Tommy of the Homeland. He has exchanged the playthings of peace for the toys of war. That is all. And maybe he has become a little more intensely all those things which made him so very dear—a little more tenderly loving, a little more bravely daring, a little more unselfish, a little more ready to put trouble to rout with laughter and unbarbed jest, a little more willing to speak of the religion that lies beneath all the frolic and the fighting, a little more sure that Death is only an episode in abundant life.

Tommy sitting soaked to the skin in Flanders mud is the same lad who used to grin delightedly when he strolled into the drawing-room at teatime and found you had some of his own special brand of muffins keeping hot before the grate; the same dear, home-loving lad who used to sit on the corner of the kitchen table and watch you make some goody, while he hindered you in a dozen ways and you wanted to kiss him and slap him all in one breath, and occasionally gave way to your contrary emotions.

That sort of Tommy—and many of them went from Canada—is very lonesome for the home touches now. He's only a boy, though he's far away defending the liberties of the world, and did you ever know the boy living who didn't like a box from home? It's about those boxes I wish to speak.

Many thousands of boxes from home have gone to Tommy across the sea and about fifty per cent. have gone to—Smash!

"Why? Why, because they were badly packed. That's why."

Tommy does not always tell you when his box arrives, a mass of wreckage, with the address clinging to a porridge of jam, and broken glass, cake, sweets, socks, handkerchiefs and insect powder. "Parcel arrived all right, Thanks," he writes, and wishes from the bottom of his disappointed soul that it hadn't been necessary to tell that gilded lie.

How do I know this? Well, because I've seen letters in which Tommy A. has written home to his mother, who knows how to pack, and asked her to give the mother and sisters of Tommy B. "a pointer or two on packing a box so that it will stand more than a lady-like jaunt in a limousine, because Tommy B's last box was nothing but a mess."

You don't want your Tommy to sit disconsolate over what might have been a treat, do you? No; then listen.

Use for transportation either a tinsoda biscuit box or else one of those splendid collapsible boxes made of corrugated pasteboard, and which are made in five and seven pound sizes. A stamped envelope sent to this magazine will bring you information as to where to get them if you can't procure them in your own home town. Just how good they are you may gather from a little story. Last year the writer of this article gave some box-packing instructions in her page on a daily paper, mentioning these corrugated boxes as being capital carriers. She was surprised to receive, shortly afterwards, a letter from an Australian woman, who had picked up the paper in the waiting room of a station near the Thousand Islands, through which she was passing, and who said that she had been trying to get a box through to her brother with the Australian forces in Gallipoli, but that every parcel she had despatched had come to grief, and she would like some further information about this safe-conduct box.

This was sent her and a few weeks ago that lady was in Toronto and came to the office of the paper to say she had got the boxes and since that time her brother, who had moved about to various places with his regiment, had received every parcel she had sent him.

These pasteboard boxes, when filled, must be sewn up in factory cotton, a piece about a yard square being sufficient. Sew firmly, and mitre up the ends neatly, for all the world like a very trim and tidy parcel, and sew them too. Write or print the address in indelible ink, paste on the customs declaration, pay your postage and send it off, sure that unless it is "subbed" on the way, Tommy will get it safely, provided you have packed every thing perfectly firmly inside.

Now as to these firmly packed contents. Many people have been sending glass bottles of preserves, canned chicken and pickles across successfully. They have packed the bottles in a firm bed of excelsior and interlining, as it were, with tins of cocoa, bars of chocolate, packages of cigarettes, socks, anything and everything unbreakable which would make a protecting wall round the excelsior-wrapped bottle, the excelsior between this wall and the sides, top and bottom of the box, giving a further resilient rebuff to all the shocks of transit.

But remember to wedge everything as tight as wax; it is the tight packing that ensures a happy Tommy in the lines in France.



A corrugated card-board box, plenty of excelsior and some thoroughly reliable cord. These are splendid insurance for an overseas package to carry.

If you are a little nervous about the bottle—and glass does sometimes shiver into atoms without any rhyme or reason—why not send jam in the old-fashioned gallipots? The little brown jars and the little white jars in which marmalade comes from Britain, these are the very things to hold your jam or your marmalade against the slings and jerkings of outrageous handling, and you will require less excelsior and acquire more room in your box by using them. Cork the jars, cover the cork and top with a good dip of paraffin and wrap in stout paper.

One mother who has had three boys at the front, has sent a box each week, and she has certainly rung the changes on the contents.

"I always send salted peanuts," she says, "stuffing them into the crevices; and I always send socks, and always sweets of some sort—stuffed dates, sugared nuts and raisins. I never send butter and now the boy that's come back to me tells me they'd have been glad of butter many a time, so I hope others will take warning by my failure."

"I tried to make each box a little different—you know, surprise in a parcel is half the fun of it—and one week I'd send potted cheese and sardines, with chewing gum, and a plumcake—which always keeps—and little sample cakes of soap

and a towel, along with the socks and the nuts. Next week I'd send a pound cake, which keeps as long as plum cake if you make it by an old-fashioned recipe—mine calls for a pound each of sugar, butter and flour, nine eggs and a glass of cooking sherry—and I'd put in a jar of fruit—cherry jam that I made from cherries in our own garden they loved—and tobacco and handkerchiefs and a toothbrush.

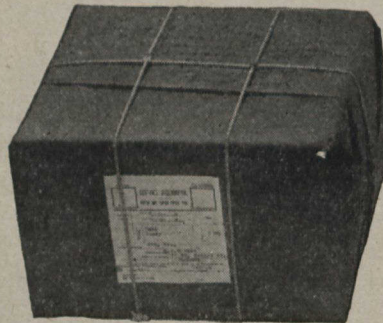


Many of the things that go into even the home-packed box, have been put up especially for shipment overseas. Meats, jams, prunes, puddings, cakes, biscuits and chocolate come in tins or well-sealed packages. These make good auxiliary-walls in your box.

"For the third week I'd try little oatmeal cakes with dates in between, and I've sent tarts too, and sometimes a weeny bottle of perfume. Bottles of olives I used to pack firmly with paper, in a big baking-powder tin or in the long tins in which you buy ginger cookies, filling spaces with odds and ends—nuts, small squares of chocolate and so on.

"I always tried every few boxes to send packages of toilet paper, and tooth-powder was another thing they wanted and couldn't get."

This mother's youngest boy has left in Flanders two brothers who will never come back. He himself has been "over the top" four times, he was encased in frozen clothes for seven days, and is one of the heroes of the Somme. He has been in eleven hospitals in France and England, he has lost his leg at the thigh and he wears three gold stripes



Complete! Everything in this box is wedged as tight as muscle and excelsior can make it. Then the box has been sewn in stout cotton (which will be used as a towel) wrapped, corded, addressed in indelible ink and decorated with the customs declaration. Safe journey to it!

upon his arm, but his face is sweet and handsome, and unlined, his eyes and mouth ever ready to break into a smile. Who can say how much these simple little everyday things that came from home helped to bring him back with a sunny face and an unsoiled heart to make the land whose son he is the better by his presence?

Other mothers have had their successful experiments, too. One tells me that her boy once wrote:

"Oh, mother, if I could have just one taste of your pies, it would be fine!"

"And my heart sank," she says. "There was Jim, asking for pies and how could I send them? I told my troubles to a neighbour."

"Oh, pies are easy," she said, "I bake mine in square, straight-edged cake tins. Then I put wax paper between, turn two together, wrap them in two thicknesses of stout paper, tie them well with strong twine and they're ready to go round the world. Of course I send only mince pie, and though no brandy or sherry goes into our own cooking at home any more, I always put a little in the mince-meat to make sure that it will keep."

"I tried it," said the worried mother, "and Jim got my pies."

One does not want to reiterate tiresomely, but just as one was writing the last few lines a friend telephoned to say that a parcel she had sent her brother had followed him all over England and France, and had just arrived in Canada in his wake, for he had been invalided home. Everything inside was eatable and nothing was broken—that sister is one who packs things tight, tighter, tightest. She was importuned for a few hints, and, after thinking a moment, she enquired:

"Have you remembered to say the boys like short stories cut out of magazines? And some of the fellows who have various bents of genius like articles on their particular hobby—such as stuff out of 'Popular Mechanics,' you know. Anything and everything that brings the old home life near to them seems to help."

A group of girls, one of whom is a capital caricaturist, got up what they call a "Round Robin," and it always goes out in the box to a brother of one of them, and he passes it round. Each girl saves up the funny gossip of the neighbourhood, and writes it up as amusingly as possible, and the caricaturist is called upon to illustrate the idiosyncracies of the personnel. The combined effort would make Mr. Stephen Leacock and Mr. J. W. Bengough look to their laurels, and the particular Tommy who gets the literary and artistic souvenir of the home town's dear peculiarities is usually mobbed till he yields it up for general perusal.

Indeed the way Tommy shares all his treasures is one of the beautiful things of this war.

"No, I never got those parcels you mention," wrote a young officer who had been sent back to England wounded, "but I got a general motion of thanks the other day—but no details—from some of the other fellows in the battalion, who had evidently been sharing the spoils in my absence, and I thank you sincerely for them."

They have certainly become Early Christians in the sense of "having all things common," out in that "sphere of friendly sacrifice," to quote again from the young Canadian university man, mentioned a moment ago.

There is a sweet which those who know say is one of the very best things that can be sent overseas, as it is a thirst-quencher, besides being several other beneficial things. This is a paste made from one pound each of dates and figs, the juice of three lemons and half a pound of chopped walnuts. Let the fruit stand in the lemon juice for some hours, boil in a double boiler for half an hour or so, stir in the walnuts before the mixture is cold, mould into squares and roll in confectioner's sugar. This can be sent by itself in tin Seidlitz powder boxes, or fitted into oxo boxes and stuck in odd corners of the big parcels. Seidlitz boxes make capital carriers for a few pieces of shortbread, which is a much-prized delicacy and will keep indefinitely.

Reams of wax paper are an essential aid to the despatcher of boxes overseas. Wax paper is the saviour of many a sticky situation on the (Continued on page 28H)