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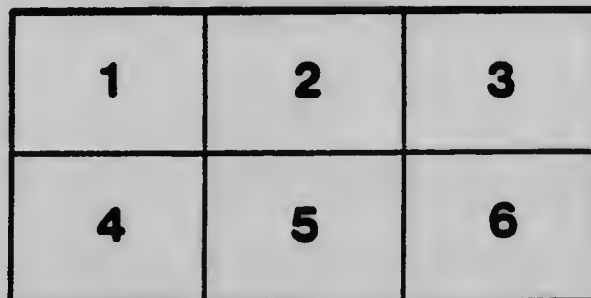
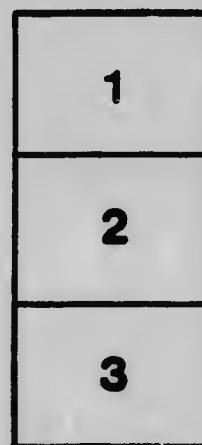
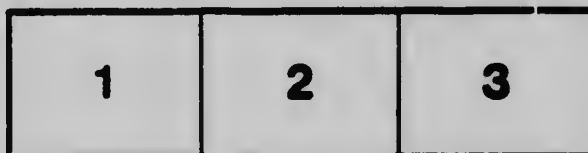
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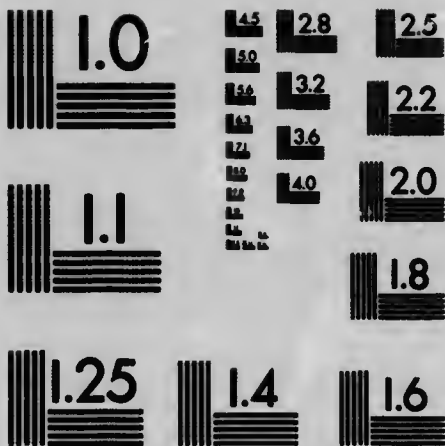
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1919

5

British Prisoners' Bread Fund

Registered Title under the War Charities Act, 1917, of
The Prisoners of War Bread Fund (1917)

DIRECTORS

Sir Edmund Walker, C.V.O., President.
Mrs. G. G. S. Lindsey, Vice-President
Miss Anne Pearson
R. E. Kingsford
Miller Lash
Albert Maccomb
Fane Sewell, Secretary-Treasurer
Auditor: H. T. Jamieson, C.A. of Messrs. Riddell,
Stead, Graham & Hutchison.

For the purpose of helping to maintain Men of The Empire,
British Prisoners of War in Germany, with bread through Berne,
Switzerland, and food through Regimental and Help Committees,
and Red Cross Societies.

The relief of suffering or distress, the supplying of needs or
comforts to sufferers from the War, or any other charitable purpose
connected with the present European War.



Secretary-Treasurer's Office

N.W. Corner Spadina and College

Toronto, December, 1919

*To the Subscribers in Canada
and the United States:*

A year has passed since the Armistice and it is now due to those who co-operated in the relief of British Prisoners of War to receive a summarized statement of collections and disbursements, duly audited, as at the date of the winding up of the Fund, 30th November, 1919.

Receipts	
By : Contributions and donations.....	\$124,593.58
.....	393.13
	<u>\$124,986.71</u>

Disbursements	
To Regimental Committees and Red Cross Societies...	\$123,392.95
To Expenses	
Postages and Cables.....	\$588.56
Advertising and Printing.....	602.55
Auditing and Clerical Assistance.....	310.00
Sundries.....	92.65
	1,593.76
	<u>\$124,986.71</u>

We trust it will also be of interest to receive a short history of the Fund, which began with an initial remittance of \$25, sent H.B. Minister at Berne, Switzerland, in November 1915, with the object of getting into direct touch with those immediately connected with the supplies sent in to Germany for the Prisoners of War who had fought for the Empire.

In response to an interesting circular from the Bureau de Secours aux prisonniers de guerre, Berne, of which Lady Grant Duff—the Minister's wife—was President, a second remittance was forwarded amounting

to \$50. With the information supplied by this circular a start was made at once and an appeal sent out resulting in January, 1916, subscriptions amounting to \$241.00. The February effort rose to \$630, and so on with encouraging success month by month to the end of December, 1918, as will be seen by the following table:

1915 1916				1916 1917			
Nov.	\$ 25.00	May	\$1235.00	Nov.	\$2473.00	May	\$2917.00
Dec.	50.00	June	1558.00	Dec.	2601.00	June	3441.00
Jan.	241.00	July	1796.00	Jan.	2620.00	July	3481.00
Feb.	630.00	Aug.	1881.00	Feb.	2726.00	Aug.	3914.00
Mch.	709.00	Sep.	2014.00	Mar.	2856.00	Sep.	3472.00
Apl.	1053.00	Oct.	2451.00	Apl.	2775.00	Oct.	3791.00
<u>\$13648.00</u>				<u>\$37067.00</u>			

1917 1918				1918 1919			
Nov.	\$4159.00	May	\$4545.00	Nov.	\$9637.00		
Dec.	4249.00	June	5204.00	Jan.	461.00		
Jan.	4033.00	July	5238.00	Feb.	432.00		
Feb.	4220.00	Aug.	5434.00	Mar.	} 1272.00		
Mar.	4516.00	Sep.	5754.00	to			
April	4434.00	Oct.	6090.00	Nov.			
<u>\$57876.00</u>				<u>\$14802.00</u>			

After the Armistice, as cases came under notice calling for urgent relief for the after-care of the repatriated Prisoners of War, remittances were made absorbing the Reserve or Emergency fund which had been slowly created from receipt of special donations, and many stragglers in this Great War holocaust of human suffering were administered to.

From first to last the outlying principle, the keynote of endeavor, was to reach the most needy sailor or soldier Prisoner of War in Germany belonging to the forces of the British Empire, and not to any particular arm of the great services. All were heroes! At the same time the men of the Royal Navy, although upon

them perhaps devolved the greater responsibility, their numbers in Germany were small in comparison, and their own Ships' Associations were easily able to handle their cases, that this Bread Fund did not find its way to them to any extent. Not so the Men of the Merchant Marine and Royal Naval Reserve, gallant fellows without official recognition when the War started, but who, later, through sheer individual pluck and self-sacrifice established themselves and their incomparable service in the minds of the Red Tapists in Whitehall. These men fared very badly. Their ships sunk they belonged to nobody if their Ship masters were ungenerous. Their homes were frequently of the poorest. More often than not they were friendless, or practically so, for the reason their families were too poor to send them anything. In many instances after unspeakable treatment and privation at the hands of the German submarine commanders, they were marched through the German city ports clad only in a shirt and trousers—sometimes simply naked—with the frost on the ground through snow, and placed in sheds unfit for cattle, and like their brother soldiers, herded like sheep in loathesome prisons starved and brutally treated.

We learn from Pte. Walsh: "We was marched to the station, and was hit with belts and knotted ropes by the Germans, and when we got into the carriages, they came in and tried to give us a bit more. At every station we stopped at the people tried to pull us out of the carriages and when we asked for a drink of water the Red Cross Nurses would show it to us and then throw it on the ground and say 'English swine.' . . . To tell the truth it was horrible. It started raining and the wind blew down the tents and we had to walk about all night in the rain—nothing to eat—and wet through to the skin, and the worse was the wounded, no one to look after them, and they would not let us look after them, then the day came for us to go to work—there was

no one able to work carrying trees and pulling wagons of coal with half hour rest at dinner time—so we stand against the German cook house and ask the German for what they left and they throw it on the ground and say: 'you English swines.' We was compelled to do it as we was starved and for the least thing they would tie us up to a tree for a day in all kinds of weather, and when they let us free we would fall to the ground; their punishment was horrible. That was in 1914, 1915 and them that live through it, all I can say he is a lucky man, and I was one."

Private Cawner after his transfer to Switzerland wrote: "I was made to run between two lines of German soldiers who each in turn as I passed, hit me with sticks, butts of rifles, and kicking me, causing me to fall before I got through the line. While I was down they kicked me about the body and dragged me over the slushy ground in a half dazed condition. They marched us into a hollow and made us stand up to our knees in water with barbed wire around, and sentries spitting on us and jeering us all through the night. That is the reason I was struck down with rheumatics for 14 months and some teeth knocked out. To be alive this day is a miracle."

And yet another expresses it in this way: "I have seen men tied to poles, their hands tied and resting on the top of the poles above their heads, the left leg tied around the thigh, and a brick placed under the heel of the right foot. Think of the pain of this! And not only that, while the man was tied up the German in charge taunted the man, and, because the man would not answer, struck him and kicked him. Other men were made to stand at attention with their caps off in the sun, rigid, with the flies buzzing round and biting them. On one occasion they tied up a Russian and when they came to cut him down they found that he was quite dead!"

This Bread Fund through the splendid work of the Hon. Mrs. Neeld, Honorary Secretary of the Merchant Seamen Help Society, led regularly a batch of her uncomplaining heroes many of whom wrote in their rough and ready way expressive of their heartfelt gratitude for the food which they all said was their salvation from starving, and, acknowledged, after their repatriation, the gifts which later helped to place them on their feet. Mr. F. M. Collins the indefatigable superintendent of Sailor Prisoners from the Sailors' Palace was a tower of strength in greeting the men and keeping them in touch with civilization, to whom some of your bounty reached.

Storekeeper Gleason (late Brandenburg): "I don't think I should ever have seen dear old England again if it was not for the parcels of food you sent me. I was the only breadwinner at home and dragged away Prisoner by a German raider without a friend in the world whom I knew could assist me. Five months after I found out I had friends who could, would and did assist me in an hour of terrible need. Tears have rolled down my cheeks with hunger and cold."

Pte. Longbottom remarked from comfortable quarters in Holland "It's a glorious work and I hope you have that satisfaction in knowing that you are really the mainspring in the matter, and our thanks are everlasting yours and those who so nobly respond in the smallest way, to help forward the work. Words are poor things in which to express our gratitude. Your work is keeping Britishers free from starvation."

Again, at the psychological moment, 200 hungry men of the Duke of Wellington's West Riding Regiment—their own funds running low—were placed by the Berne Bureau on the "Spadina & Colk" list (as this Bread Fund was officially known in the Berne bakeries

because of its domicile) and were kept there until repatriation or subsequent Armistice put an end to their privations. When one considers the salvation this Bread Fund proved to be to—not a regiment, but, as the Hon. Anne Macdonnell, the energetic Secretary of the Irish Women's Association once remarked "nearly a battalion"—not a subscriber can ever regret having made any self-denial of a luxury to help the Cause, on the contrary it is thought there are many now who are unhappy they did not make a better effort in such a work, the like of which, please God, may never again be necessary. Many a life has been saved to the Empire and many a heart—men women and children,—has overflowed with gratitude for the comforts provided by the Fund. Pte. Ashton confirms the fact that "Tobacco and cigarettes were very dear, but very comforting; we used to smoke most of the time. Of course I knew how a smoke drives the hunger away when you cannot get enough to eat."

Apart from the Seamen, Sailors, Irish and Dukes, several hundreds of dollars were sent monthly to the Canadian Red Cross Society, London, England, which was so splendidly managed by Mrs. Rivers Bulkeley, special subscriptions from relatives here for the benefit of Fathers, Husbands, Brothers, Sons and Sweethearts. Besides this the "KOYLI" (Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry), Lancashires, Worcesters—the heroes of Ghelevult—Hussars, Durhams, Gordons, Argyles, Black Watch, Life Guards, Scots Guards, R.A.F., Buffs, Inniskillings, Coldstreams, and Civilians at Ruhleben and others when any special beneficiary was named—all had monthly evidence of the bounty of the Fund.

Upwards of two dozen different Regimental Funds, Associations and Societies OUTSIDE our regular remittance to Berne—which more than once cared for 1500 men weekly—were remitted to every month during the last year of the War.

The Berne Bureau used to bake the bread made from the best obtainable flour—much of it came from Canada—and 7 lbs per week per man was sent to the Camps. Regular lists were carefully kept and as the postcards came back (one ready addressed postcard was enclosed in each parcel) the names and addresses were checked over and corrections made. After these had passed through the routine those referring to the men supplied by this Fund were forwarded through the British Foreign Office to us for distribution to the subscribers. This latter part as the Fund grew, became so onerous and expensive (the postages could better be expended upon the bread) that the cards were retained for delivery on application or used at meetings by way of publicity.

Pte. Metcalfe gives a description of the "burn bread" and receipt of parcels: "Try and picture to yourself a dirty piece of bread made from rye, turnips, bran and sawdust, about the size of cigarette packet and you have had nothing to eat for about three days and the word goes round that parcels are in the Camp. Everyone asks 'plenty from Berne?' and when some lucky fellow who helped to unload them says 'Yes' you can hear the sighs of relief. Faces which were gloomy before look as if they never knew what hard luck meant. Shortly after, you can see nothing but a string of boys lining up to the nearest tap with a cap full of 'burns' for soaking. Then they don't care what happens!" Talking about parcels, the following is in order. "One poor fellow who had been amongst us for about six months and had never received a parcel. But one day a parcel did arrive for him. While he was waiting for the parcel distribution he kept saying 'Oh, what a feed I shall have today,' just imagine, if you can, the look upon the poor chap's face when he got the parcel and found it contained a bundle of tracts, a hymn book and a pair of socks!"

Clothes were sent to the Camps at long intervals for many were reduced to the severest straits, as described by a private who had but one shirt, "In the winter of 1914, we were living in tents. My only shirt was simply 'walking.' One bitterly cold day I could stand it no longer so decided to have a scrub. I had first to break the ice on the water trough, and then get my shirt off. I stood scrubbing that shirt without soap for an hour. I then found some wood (which I stole) made a fire and nearly dried my shirt, then hung it on the wires to properly finish. Some joker, while I was buried in straw to get warm, borrowed it. Of course I said a tearful good-bye. A few days after I borrowed a cement sack (when no one was looking) cut a hole in the bottom, two for my arms in the side and there was my new shirt! But I forgot to shake it, and when they cut it off I was a long time scraping the cement off my body. In spite of all we kept smiling." This man soon afterwards escaped, where resource and downright "cheek" saw him through.

As the Funds increased, so the benefactions varied, and \$25 was sent monthly to Sir A. T. Davies, the Founder of the Prisoners of War Book Scheme, which proved a veritable godsend for the mental hunger of the men. Books in many languages on any subject were provided and even musical instruments were sent to the Camps on application, and here again the subscriber was doing a splendid work, to prevent decay in the Empire's manhood.

The sentimental and home influence was not neglected. A regular system of correspondence was maintained as soon as the first postcard acknowledgments for parcels were received. Some of these were taken up and the Prisoner written to. At first the letters were coyly received by the men, but confidence established a healthy exchange of letters was created. Through

the simile of a football match, a game of hockey, description of farm life, or other kindred topic, the very latest situation of the War was placed "between the lines" and as carefully understood, carrying with it cheerfulness and HOPE to the weary Prisoners suffering from the studied, not to say lying, reports of his inhuman captors.

Sgt. Underhill in gratitude remarked: "One can hardly realize the value of those letters. How we all used to read between the lines and get the latest news. I well remember your letter to Pte. Byrne, giving us all good hopes when the big offensive was taking place in 1917." And Sailor Lawrence Howard told us: "All could read the good news 'between the lines.' We always used to wait very patiently for your letters as they were our only source of accurate news." Sgt. Murphy's way of putting it was: "Why, even your letters to the boys in Germany are as good as a parcel. The news which you gave us and the method you adopt in sending such news passes every time."

A story would be appropriate at this point. "In one of the German Camps a Prisoner was called in by the German Censor, who, on the Prisoner's entrance, was seen holding up to the light a letter he was examining. The Prisoner was asked to explain the letter addressed to him. It said: 'I hope you will be able to read between the lines.' The Censor remarked "I have been examining this letter but I cannot see anything written between the lines."—Sgt. Lerpiniere, apparently the life and soul of his Camp, being also a musician of no mean order, from all accounts, was also a trader for he says: "Your last letter I read to the boys and one of them asked: 'Do you keep them letters as souvenirs?' I said, 'Of course I do,' he answered he would like one. 'Well,' I said 'if you will put 20 marks into the Committee Fund I'll give you this one.' Needless to say our funds benefitted by 60 marks because I sold Three. Not bad business, eh?"

In this system was embraced the procuring of the home address of the Prisoner and when obtained the letter was sent to the wife or mother in the Old Country, or Canada. Not only did this letter prove the bone fides of the man's signature (which so many people doubted and for a long time declined to help the Fund in consequence, saying the Germans were sending the postcards back so as to get the bread, which was all bunkum!), but frequently it happened that it had been the only communication received by the man's relatives from Germany for weeks (in one case 11 weeks). The circle thus completed formed one more link for the luckless hero and his belongings. Replies from the Home were in due course transmitted to the Prisoner as occasion presented itself, to his joy and comfort.

Notwithstanding every help which was possible from the outside, but which was often purposely withheld, many men died of cold and starvation, and one of the many statements comes from Sgt. Watkinson: "Most of my time I was working in Russian Poland on the Baltic. From whence I was sent with a party of 500 men to work behind the Russian firing line 42 degrees below zero! This happened in February, 1917. Within four months 87 of our number died of starvation and exposure and the remainder of us were brought back suffering from frostbite. We were living in tents pitched upon about 40 inches of snow with one blanket and our overcoats for covering. I was myself in hospital with almost all the flesh off both feet for 3 months. I celebrated my Peace on my arrival in England when I thanked my Creator for my safe delivery." Again, Pte. Howarth describes his misery at Schneidemuhl where he "found the lager in a very filthy condition, the emptying of the latrines were done away with, and fever stared us in the face where ever we went. We were burying on an average 4 men per day for 6 weeks and there were

still men in the mortuary waiting to be carried out; we were continually carrying men to the hospital with Spanish Grippe. The Russian doctor who volunteered did all he could to help us boys and never seemed tired."

The extent of the heroism of these men will never be known. \$2 monthly was not much to give to help one of them to bear trials as just described, and there were hundreds—aye, thousands—of similar cases, and yet "the trader" with his tongue in his cheek says: "Forget and forgive." As christians we may try and forgive but it is beyond the power of a true Britisher to forget. We owe it to OUR GLORIOUS DEAD to GUARD against a recurrence. "We look bad enough," said one of the Prisoners, "but YOU SHOULD SEE OUR CEMETERIES!"

Many men's names were distributed to subscribers who in turn wrote and kept the lads thinking of other things than their prison surroundings. In one instance a letter written to a sailor in Brandenburg Camp was not only read by the recipient whom "the boys flocked around like a swarm of bees with a smile that was a smile, but some of the men asked who the writer was, others wanted to hear the jokes, then they called for it to be read aloud to the Camp. And, as if that were not sufficient, every man in the Camp insisted upon having it in his own hands and read it to himself." What a revelation! What starvation and heart-hunger for news is portrayed! How many of us could and would have sent a letter very often had they realized the joy it would have been to the Camps!

Nor was the War merely an incident to be forgotten, for the men since their transfer to Holland or Switzerland, have written and kept up—desultorily maybe—a correspondence and after repatriation have sent mementa in gratitude or benefits received. At "Spadina and

College" several rows of photographs of the men and their doings in the Camps are on view for any interested subscriber or their friends. At Christmas, 1918, the first in (for some) four years, a pictorial postcard packet of views of Toronto with seasonable greetings was sent to every man who had been a correspondent with the Bread Fund whose address was known, or in care of his Regimental Committee, many, we are glad to record, reached their destinations and were gratefully acknowledged.

The President and Directors wish to take this opportunity of thanking all subscribers, whose help, material and spiritual, has made the Bread Fund the benefit it has proved. Men and women, aye and children, from Halifax to Victoria B.C., Dawson City to Texas, Southern California to Quebec have cheerfully responded to the Call of the Hungry, and by their steady support have defeated the aims of the Hun. It would perhaps be invidious to draw any comparisons of the different sources of supply, but every walk in life seemed to be represented. Girls Patriotic Clubs, Golf Clubs, women with dauntless hearts and tireless energy from Picton, Lachine, Hartford, Conn., Toronto, Winnipeg and Montreal. I.O.D.E. and Red Cross Societies, and a faithful band of Yorkshiremen in Greystone, R.I., not to add an individual monthly subscription of \$100, made for success. History repeated itself when a lady called with a gold coin, dated 1834, in her hand and said: "I have kept this coin for many years hoping some day it may be valuable, it is all I can spare, but it will buy bread for some poor hungry Prisoner."

The British Prisoners' Bread Fund is now closed, and with it a page of history for Canada has been turned over.

