

Mccutcheon John

"Christmas In The Trenches"

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My name is Francis Tolliver. I come from Liverpool.

Two years ago the war was waiting for me after school.

To Belgium and to Flanders, to Germany to here,

I fought for King and country I love dear.

It was Christmas in the trenches where the frost so
bitter hung.

The frozen field of France were still, no Christmas song
was sung.

Our families back in England were toasting us that day,
their brave and glorious lads so far away.

I was lyin' with my mess-mates on the cold and rocky
ground

when across the lines of battle came a most peculiar
sound.

Says I "Now listen up me boys", each soldier strained
to hear

as one young German voice sang out so clear.

"He's singin' bloody well you know", my partner says to
me.

Soon one by one each German voice joined in in
harmony.

The cannons rested silent. The gas cloud rolled no
more

as Christmas brought us respite from the war.

As soon as they were finished a reverent pause was

spent.

'God rest ye merry, gentlemen' struck up some lads
from Kent.

The next they sang was 'Stille Nacht'. "Tis 'Silent
Night'" says I

and in two tongues one song filled up that sky.

"There's someone commin' towards us" the front-line
sentry cried.

All sights were fixed on one lone figure trudging from
their side.

His truce flag, like a Christmas star, shone on that plain
so bright

as he bravely strode, unarmed, into the night.

Then one by one on either side walked into no-mans-
land

with neither gun nor bayonet we met there hand to
hand.

We shared some secret brandy and wished each other
well

and in a flare-lit soccer game we gave 'em hell.

We traded chocolates, cigarettes and photographs from
home

these sons and fathers far away from families of their
own.

Young Sanders played his squeeze box and they had a
violin

this curious and unlikely band of men.

Soon daylight stole upon us and France was France
once more.

With sad farewells we each began to settle back to war.

But the question haunted every heart that lived that
wonderous night

"whose family have I fixed within my sights?"

It was Christmas in the trenches where the frost so
bitter hung.

The frozen fields of France were warmed as songs of
peace were sung.

For the walls they'd kept between us to exact the work
of war

had been crumbled and were gone for ever more.

My name is Francis Tolliver. In Liverpool I dwell.

Each Christmas come since World War One I've learned
it's lessons well.

That the ones who call the shots won't be among the
dead and lame

and on each end of the rifle we're the same.

-- John McCutcheon "Christmas in the trenches

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