

# Christmas In the Trenches

(Words and Music by John McCutcheon)

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  
    'Twas Christmas in the trenches - where the frost so bitter hung  
    The frozen fields 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 lying with my messmate - 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 singing 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 clouds rolled no more  
    As Christmas brought us respite from the war

As soon as they were finished - and a reverent pause was spent  
"Go Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" - struck up some lads from Kent  
The next they sang was "Stille Naucht" "Tis Silent Night" says I  
And in two tongues one song filled up that sky  
    "There's someone coming towards us!" the front line sentry cried  
    All sights were fixed on one lone figure - coming from their side  
    His truce flag like a Christmas star - shone on that plain so bright  
    As he bravely strode unarmed into the night

Soon one by one on either side - walked into No Man's land  
With neither gun nor bayonet - we met there hand to hand  
We shared some secret brandy - we 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 - they had a violin  
    This curious and unlikely band of men

Soon day light 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 wondrous night  
"Whose family have I fixed within my sights?"

'Twas 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 evermore

My name is Francis Tolliver - in Liverpool I dwell  
Each Christmas come since World War I - 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

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