

BELLEAU WOOD – by Joe Henry and Garth Brooks

Oh, the snowflakes fell in silence
Over Belleau Wood that night,
For a Christmas truce had been declared
By both sides of the fight.
As we lay there in our trenches,
The silence broke in two
By a German soldier singing
A song that we all knew.

Though I did not know the language,
The song was “Silent Night.”
Then I heard my buddy whisper,
“All is calm and all is bright.”
Then the fear and doubt surrounded me
‘Cause I’d die if I was wrong,
But I stood up in my trench
And I began to sing along.

Then across the frozen battlefield
Another’s voice joined in,
Until one by one each man became
A singer of the hymn.

Then I thought that I was dreaming,
For right there in my sight
Stood the German soldier
‘Neath the falling flakes of white,
And he raised his hand and smiled at me
As if he seemed to say,
“Here’s hoping we both live
To see us find a better way.”

Then the devil’s clock struck midnight,
And the skies lit up again,
And the battlefield where heaven stood
Was blown to hell again.

But for just one fleeting moment
The answer seemed so clear:
Heaven’s not beyond the clouds
It’s just beyond the fear.
No, heaven’s not beyond the clouds
It’s for us to find it here.

CHRISTMAS IN THE TRENCHES – 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 loved 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,
"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 coming toward 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, shown on that plain so bright
As he bravely strode unarmed into the night.

Then 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, and 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 squeezebox, 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 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 forevermore.

Refrain: Oh, my name is Francis Tolliver. In Liverpool I dwell.
Each Christmas come since World War I, I've learned its 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. [*Repeat twice.*]