

# *The Christmas Truce*

*Charlotte Chong (C68)*

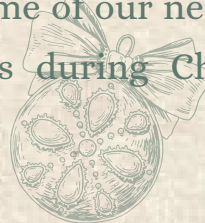
France

25th December, 1914

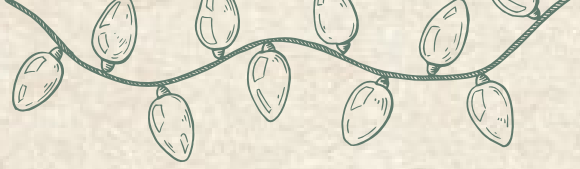
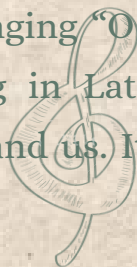
Dear my beloved sister Elizabeth,


How are you back there in England? It is 2:00 in the morning and most of our soldiers are now sound asleep in their dugouts. Actually, I am writing this letter to share with you our incredibly unbelievable Christmas eve “celebration” yesterday.

It was a frosty day, just like the “Winter Wonderland” in England at the end of every year. Although it was freezing cold, we were relieved that the frost had frozen the gooey mud. During the day, there was an unexpected pause of shooting from both sides. Oh, the serenading silence was wonderful! It was the first complete silence we had experienced after months of deafening battle. Suddenly, we spotted the Germans setting up Christmas trees. It reminded me of our neighbours and us setting up the adorable tall Christmas trees during Christmas eve, decorated with vibrant ornaments and lights.



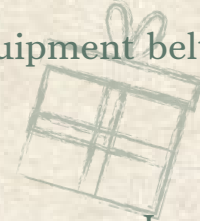
Just as we were excitedly discussing the Christmas trees, the sound of Christmas carols reached our ears. Now, the Germans were beginning to sing “Silent Night, Holy Night” in their own native language. After applauding, we also began to sing “The first Noel”. Of course, we weren’t as good as them, but they responded with enthusiastic applause and continued on singing “O Tannenbaum”. Ah, the song we’ve always loved! Then, we replied by singing “O come all ye faithful”, followed by them singing the same song in Latin. Our songs had broken the barrier between the Germans and us. It was amazing, but what came next was more amazing.





One of the Germans shouted over to us, requesting us to go over, and reminded us that they wouldn't open fire if we did not. After a brief meeting of our captain and the Germans, our captain came back with a German cigar in his mouth and signalled us to go over to the people we were just trying to kill several hours earlier!

As we sat around a bonfire, we chatted about our personal lives. I was impressed that many Germans could speak English! There was one who had worked as a waiter in our favourite hotel, Hotel Cecil. Perhaps he was that polite waiter at our table when we were celebrating Christmas there last year! Those who could not converse exchanged "gifts", for example, our tea for their coffee, our corned beef for their sausage (delicious!), badges, buttons and many more. I myself traded a jackknife for a leather equipment belt. I'll show it to you when I get back home from this battle.



Other than gifts, we also traded newspapers. I realized that our newspapers were completely different from theirs. Nobody knew whose newspaper was the most accurate as everybody trusted their country's own newspapers.



Believe it or not, we all sang "Auld Lang Syne" before returning and making promises to meet again on Christmas. Just as we were returning, an old German soldier asked me when we could have peace and return to our families. I struggled to hold back tears. Of course, everybody wanted a "war-free" world. However, it always seemed so hard to accomplish.....



After this Christmas eve celebration with the Germans, I felt that they weren't the "savage barbarians" that we always read about. They had families, hopes, lives, and love of their country just like us. We really shouldn't treat them as our arch enemies, but instead, embrace them as friends.

That's all for now. I hope I can celebrate Christmas with you and our parents next year. Bye!

Yours sincerely,

*Philip*

P.s. Merry Christmas!

