

AMAZING INFORMAL TRUCES

An excellent account of the informal truce between the Germans and the Allies on Christmas Day, is given in the following letter from Sergeant A. Lovell, A Company, 3rd Rifle Brigade:

Christmas Day, 1914.

My dear Parents,—Christmas Day! The most wonderful day on record. In the early hours of the morning the events of last night appeared as some weird dream—but to-day, well, it beggars description.

Last night as I sat in my little dug-out writing, my chum came bursting in upon me with "Bob! Hark at 'em!" And I listened. From the German trenches came the sound of music and singing. My chum continued: "They've got Christmas trees all along the top of their trenches! Never saw such a sight."

I got up to investigate. Climbing the parapet, I saw a sight which I shall remember to my dying day. Right along the whole of their line were hung paper lanterns and illuminations of every description, many of them in such positions as to suggest that they were hung upon Christmas trees. And as I stood in wonder a rousing song came over to us; at first the words were indistinguishable; then, as the song was repeated again and again, we realized that we were listening to "The Watch on the Rhine."

Our boys answered with a cheer, while a neighboring regiment sang lustily the National Anthem.

Some were for shooting the lights away, but almost at the first shot there came a shout in really good English, "Stop shooting!"

GERMANS ASK FOR TIPPERARY.

Then began a series of answering shouts from trench to trench. It was incredible. "Hallo! Hallo! you English; we wish to speak." And everyone began to speak at once.

Some were rational, others the reverse to complimentary. Eventually some sort of order obtained and lo! a party of our men got out from the trenches and invited the Germans to meet them half-way and talk.

And there in the searchlight they stood Englishman and German, chatting and smoking cigarettes together, midway between the lines.

A rousing cheer went up from friend and foe alike. The group was too far away for me to hear what was said, but presently we heard a cheery "good-night. A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all," with which the parties returned to their respective trenches.

After this we remained the whole night through singing with the enemy song for song.

"Give us Tipperary," they cried. Whereupon an adjacent Irish regiment let loose a tremendous "Whoop" and complied with the request in a way such as only Irishmen can. Presently there came a lull, and, taking advantage of the comparative quiet, someone, we could not tell who, walked out across our front, went almost up to the German trenches, and after a brief conversation with those who came out to meet him returned just as calmly as though he had visited old acquaintances.

And so with these most untoward events turning my thoughts all topsy-turvey I tried to snatch a few hours' rest.

I turned out this morning at dawn, still pondering upon the events of the previous night, and wondering if this continuing. I asked the sentries for their reports, and they laughed. "Reports! Look at this lot, sergeant."

Again I climbed on to the parapet and was staggering at the seeming audacity of our enemies. They were all out upon their earthworks, still shouting and singing, and waving cheery greetings across to us.

"Come out," they cried. "We are friends to-day."

Already many of our chaps were going across to meet them. At first our officers remonstrated but nobody seemed to want to do any harm, and before very long we were all out in the open exchanging souvenirs and smoking each other's cigarettes.

But before we could really feel on easy terms there were some gruesome tasks to be performed. English and Germans returned for spades, and between us we gave decent burial to those poor fellows who had fallen weeks previously, and who had, perforce, to be abandoned on the field.

But to-day I stood shoulder to shoulder with a German and dug a grave for his late comrade. Crosses now mark the spot where for weeks there had lain three gruesome forms.

This business over, we turned to our conversation. At first we were rather chary about talking or chumming up, but after a while everyone seemed to know everybody else, and we laughed and joked and strolled about in a way that would have startled you good people at home.

Many of "our friends" knew London well. One chap cleared a space and showed us how he performed at various theatres in London.

War! We looked at each other and laughed, each showing his incapacity fully to realize the situation in his own peculiar way.

One grey-coated warrior tore off his equipment, and flinging it to the ground, cried: "War! This is War! Well, I'm—!" and he promptly burst into tears.

And so we spent the day. As dusk came on we returned to our trenches and here we sit, wonder more profound than ever holding us, awaiting what next may come.

Even as I write I can hardly credit what I have seen and done. This has indeed been a wonderful day.