

VALE TOM PORTER: POET AND FRIEND

Passed away in Sheffield, UK, on October 29, 2020.

Remembering those who lost their battle

Introduction by Tom Porter

The Christmas day truce of 1914, five months into World War I, was perhaps, in my opinion, an indication of a reluctance of the German and British lower ranks to engage in combat. Their experiences during the truce made them realise that their 'enemies' were no different to themselves - just ordinary sons, fathers and husbands.

In the 14 lines of this sonnet I've attempted to capture the atmosphere as Fritz and Tommy encounter each other in 'no man's land'. But could these loving gestures, on a much larger scale, have changed the whole course of World War I? We'll never know.

I've simply called it -

CHRISTMAS DAY IN NO MAN'S LAND

Christmas day, nineteen fourteen, peaceful and still
Two forlorn figures walk in no man's land
Meeting each other midway on the hill
Hostilities gone with a shake of the hand

Always forced to drink from war's poison chalice
Thinking their likes were the deadliest foes
But their eyes display no hatred or malice
Just timid affection as confidence grows

Sitting there eating chocolate, having a smoke
Showing photos of loved ones in their homeland
They've both learned that war is no bloody joke
But they manage to raise a smile as they stand

With a swift embrace, and eyes full of sorrow
They walk back to their lines to do battle tomorrow

Tom Porter