

# The Best Christmas Present in the World

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## The Roll-Top

The author found a roll-top desk in a junk shop. It was in a bad condition but cheap. He thought that he could restore it. So he bought it. He began to work on it on Christmas Eve.

## The Letter

He pulled out the drawers. He found that these had been badly damaged by fire and water. The man who sold it had told him that it was very old. It was of 19th century and made of oak. The last drawer had stuck fast. He had to use much force to open it. When it opened, it revealed a secret space. In it he found a small tin box. On the top of the box these words were written : "Jim's last letter, received January 25, 1915. To be buried with me when the time comes." Inside, there was an envelope with the address : "Mrs Jim Macpherson 12 Copper Beeches, Bridport." The date was December 26, 1914.

## Jim and Connie

The author read the letter. The owner of the desk must have put it in. The letter had been written by a captain of the English army. His name was Jim Macpherson. He had written it to his wife Connie. A wonderful incident had happened on the battlefield on the Christmas day. Jim Macpherson had narrated it in his letter.

## Unforgettable Moments

The English and the Germans were at war. The two armies stood in their respective trenches on the two sides of the no man's land. Suddenly Macpherson saw someone waving a white flag from the enemy side. Then he saw many German soldiers calling out to them. They were wishing a happy Christmas to the English soldiers. Some English soldiers shouted back 'Same to you'. The English thought that was all. To their surprise, they saw many Germans moving towards them. The captain was alarmed. It could be a trick. But it was not. They were bringing with them German wine and canned meat. Now there were no rifles between the soldiers. They were hugging one another. The German officer moved towards Macpherson. They shook hands very warmly. Then the German officer said that he was from Dusseldorf and that he played cello in the orchestra. He gave his name as Hans Wolf. In return, Macpherson also introduced himself. He said that he was a school teacher from Dorset.

## Dorset and Hardy

Hans Wolf smiled. He said he knew Dorset. In fact he had never been to England. But he knew English. His favourite writer was Thomas Hardy. His favourite book was 'Far from the Madding Crowd'. It was from there he had learnt all about Dorset. Macpherson shared with Hans Wolf the Christmas cake his wife had sent for him. Hans Wolf said that the marzipan was the best he had ever tasted. It was a wonderful Christmas party.

### War or Football

Then a soldier brought out a football. The soldiers played while Macpherson and Hans Wolf clapped and cheered. Hans Wolf suggested that the world would be much better if the problems were resolved by a football match instead of war.

### The Celebration

After the football match, all the drinks and eatables were consumed. Now it was time to part. Hans Wolf saluted Macpherson and walked away slowly and unwillingly. That night the Germans were heard singing a carol. The English soldiers replied with a rousing chorus of another carol. They exchanged carols for a while and then it was all silence. Macpherson wrote in his letter that he would treasure those moments all his life.

### The Hope

Macpherson ended the letter hoping that the war would end soon. Both armies longed for peace and he was sure they would be together again.

### The Burnt House

Having read the letter, the author, put it back in the envelope. He decided to give the letter back to whom it belonged. The address was of Bridport, Dorset. So he drove to that place. The house no. 12 turned out to be a burnt-out shell. It was found that Mrs Macpherson was in the house when it caught fire. The fireman had got her out just in time. She was 101 years old. Now she was in a nursing home.

### Mrs Macpherson

The author went to the nursing home. He met the matron. She told the author that Mrs Macpherson was rather confused that day. They had put her in a conservatory. The author found Mrs Macpherson sitting in a chair. Naturally, she looked up at the author vacantly. But her eyes lit up when he called her 'Connie' and gave her the letter. He told her how he had got the letter. But she was not listening to him. She reached out and took his hand. Her eyes were filled with tears. She felt that her Jim had returned. She said that her Jim had kept his promise. He had returned on the eve of Christmas. She made him sit beside her. She kissed his cheek. She talked long and lovingly to him. She said that she had got the best Christmas present in the world.