The Man He Killed

By Thomas Hardy

“Had he and I but met
   By some old ancient inn,
We should have sat us down to wet
   Right many a nipperkin!

“But ranged as infantry,
   And staring face to face,
I shot at him as he at me,
   And killed him in his place.

“I shot him dead because —
   Because he was my foe,
Just so: my foe of course he was;
   That’s clear enough; although

“He thought he’d ‘list, perhaps,
   Off-hand like — just as I —
Was out of work — had sold his traps —
   No other reason why.

“Yes; quaint and curious war is!
   You shoot a fellow down
You’d treat if met where any bar is,
   Or help to half-a-crown.”