



## 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."

The next piece is from *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Maria Remarque,<sup>6</sup> The narrator, a German soldier during WW I, is describing a battle with French infantry.

We make for the rear, pull wire cradles into the trench and leave bombs behind us with the string pulled, which ensure us a fiery retreat. The machine guns are already firing from the next position.

We have become wild beasts. We do not fight, we defend ourselves against annihilation. It is not against men that we fling our bombs, what do we know of men in this moment when Death with hands and helmets is hunting us down — now for the first time in three days we can see his face, now, for the

In Thai Binh (Peace) Province<sup>7</sup>

Denise Levertov

I've used up all my film on bombed hospitals,  
bombed village schools, the scattered  
lemon-yellow cocoons at the bombed silk-factory,

and for the moment all my tears too  
are used up, having seen today  
yet another child with its feet blown off,  
a girl, this one, eleven years old,  
patient and bewildered in her home, a fragile  
small house of mud bricks among rice fields.

So I'll use my dry burning eyes  
to photograph within me  
dark sails of the river boats,  
warm slant of afternoon light  
apricot on the brown, swift, wide river,  
village towers — church and pagoda — on the far shore,  
and a boy and small bird both  
perched, relaxed, on a quietly grazing  
buffalo. Peace within the  
long war.

It is that life, unhurried, sure, persistent,  
I must bring home when I try to bring  
the war home.

Child, river, light.

Here the future, fabled bird  
that has migrated away from America,  
nests, and breeds, and sings,

common as any sparrow.

5. First published in 1902. Reprinted with permission of Simon & Schuster from *The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy* by James Gibson (New York: Macmillan, 1978).

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