

**\_BY THOMAS HARDY**

**The Man He Killed**

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**"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."

### Word Galaxy:

<b>Foe</b>	An enemy
<b>staring</b>	Look at with great concentration
<b>Inn</b>	A small hotel
<b>curious</b>	Eager to know something
<b>Trap</b>	A scheme for tricking or catching someone
<b>Range</b>	Arrange in a row or in a specified manner
<b>Half a crown</b>	A coin formerly used in Great Britain
<b>Infantry</b>	An army unit consisting of soldiers who fight on foot
<b>Nipperkin</b>	liquor container or vessel with a capacity of a half pint or less
<b>Quaint</b>	Strange

Stanza	Vocabulary	Meaning
"Had he and I but met By some old ancient inn, We should have sat us down to wet Right many a nipperkin!	Old ancient inn: Both 'old' and 'ancient' emphasize the age of the object of the sentence. The poet wants to emphasize the established routine of British camaraderie. Nipperkin: This is a West England colloquial term. It is the unit of measurement of volume. Roughly, the half or less than half of a pint.	"If only we'd met in some old pub, we would have sat down and shared many a beer!
"But ranged as infantry, And staring face to face, I shot at him as he at me, And killed him in his place.	Ranged as infantry: The soldiers arranged in troops in their camp, ready for battle.	"But I met him on the battlefield, each of us aiming at the other. We both took aim and fired, but he missed, while my shot killed him where he stood.

"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."

That's clear enough:  
a sarcastic quip - the speaker  
knows the soldier was his  
enemy because they were in  
opposing camps but he can't  
understand how that justifies  
taking someone's life.

He'd 'list: enlist in the army  
Off-hand like: casually; just  
like that  
Had sold his traps: 'traps' is a  
short form of trappings, which  
means one's belongings. It  
means that he had sold all his  
belongings for money.

Quaint: weird; strange.  
Half a crown: money (one-  
eighth of a pound).

"I shot him dead because... well,  
because he was the enemy,  
that's all. He was the one I was  
supposed to shoot, obviously.

"Then again, he'd probably  
joined his army in similar  
circumstances to me, on a kind  
of whim. He was probably out of  
work at the time, just like I  
was. He'd probably had to sell  
his belongings—I can't think  
why else he would have  
enlisted.

"Yup, war is a very strange  
thing! You end up shooting  
someone who you'd get along  
well with in a bar—who you'd  
even give money if they needed  
it."

## Questions & Answers:

### 1. Why does the speaker enlist in the army?

Ans: The speaker enlists in the army because he was unemployed.

### 2. "He thought he had list, perhaps, off-hand like-just as I-was out of work-had sold his traps-no other reason why", what is this saying?

Ans: By saying the above lines, the only reason, he enlisted was because he didn't have a job. And he is assuming that the other man he killed enlisted for the same reason.

### 3. "That's clear enough, although" what is the speaker trying to say?

**Ans:** By saying the above line, the excuse that the other army man was his enemy is not a good enough excuse.

**4. "Because he was my foe", what is the speaker trying to justify?**

**Ans:** He is trying to come up with good excuses on why he killed the other man.

**5. What is the poem trying to say?**

**Ans:** The soldiers are similar-both enlisted in war. They may have been friends if they met at a bar rather than on the battlefield. But they met on the battlefield; therefore, they had to shoot at each other.

**6. Why does the poet call war quaint and curies?**

**Ans:** The poet calls war quaint and curies because it changes you as a person. The same fellow, whom you should have otherwise befriended and offered a drink, becomes your enemy on the battlefield. Like the speakers in the poem, many people cannot think of a valid reason why they maim, injure or kill each other and destroy property in a normal situation.

**7. Explain the lines:**

**"He thought he'd list, perhaps, Off-hand like-just as I-was out of work..."**

**Ans:** The poet says that he had enrolled himself in the army just like that - without too much thinking. Similarly, he feels the other man could have joined the enemy army maybe because he was out of work, or just like that or been in real need of money. Killing, injuring, fighting must not have been in the minds of both these people.

**8. Read the lines given below and answer the questions that follow:**

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

**(a) Who are the people being referred to in the above stanza?**

**Ans:** The two people being referred to in the above stanza are the soldier who narrating an incident and the enemy soldier whom he had killed during the war.

**(b) Where does 'I' imagine that they could have been?**

**Ans:** The soldier 'I' who is narrating an incident imagines that they could have met at some old ancient inn.

**(c) What would they have done?**

**Ans:** They would have sat down together and wet many a nipperkin (had some drinks together).

**(d) Which words in the above verse suggest that the two would have spend a lot of time together?**

**Ans:** The words 'many a nipperkin' suggest that the two would have spent a lot of time together.

**9. Why did the speaker have to kill the other soldier?**

**Ans:** The speaker had to kill the other soldier as he was fighting a battle and the other soldier was the enemy. They had faced each other on the battlefield and were firing at each other.

**10. What would the speaker have done if he had met the other man, in any place other than a battlefield?**

**Ans:** In the poem, the speaker says that he would have greeted the other soldier, socialized with him and even offered him money or other help, if he had met the other soldier, in any place other than a battlefield.