

THE VETERAN

Eric Yeomans 2020

In hospital pyjamas,
pee-bag quite apparent,
redolent in urine,
crusty geriatric patient.

In X-ray room I said.
“It’s chest X-ray today –
Can you stand for me?”
He grunted, said “OK”.

So he can speak I thought,
somewhat ungraciously.
“Breathe in, hold your breath”.
So professional of me.

Ho hum another chest
image came to display.
Wait a bit... that’s shrapnel.
Don’t see that every day.

“Mr Smith you got some metal
on your chest X-ray I see.
You know how you got it?”
“Yes, I was shot at Gallipoli”.

The breath caught in my throat.
My thoughts they all fled.
The ol’ bloke sitting next to me
had for Australia bled.

He smiled at my reaction.

My disparagement now zero.

This wasn't a crusty old man.

I'd X-ray'd a national hero.