

A. E. Housman (1859-1936)

10 *The Merry Guide*

Once in the wind of morning
I ranged the thymy wold;
The world-wide air was azure
And all the brooks ran gold.

There through the dews beside me 5
Behold a youth that trod,
With feathered cap on forehead,
And poised a golden rod.

With mien to match the morning 10
And gay delightful guise
And friendly brows and laughter
He looked me in the eyes.

Oh whence, I asked, and whither? 15
He smiled and would not say,
And looked at me and beckoned
And laughed and led the way.

And with kind looks and laughter 20
And nought to say beside
We two went on together,
I and my happy guide.

Across the glittering pastures
And empty upland still
And solitude of shepherds
High in the folded hill,

By hanging woods and hamlets 25

That gaze through orchards down
On many a windmill turning
And far-discovered town,

With gay regards of promise
And sure unslackened stride 30
And smiles and nothing spoken
Led on my merry guide.

By blowing realms of woodland
With sunstruck vanes afield
And cloud-led shadows sailing 35
About the windy weald,

By valley-guarded granges
And silver waters wide,
Content at heart I followed
With my delightful guide. 40

And like the cloudy shadows
Across the country blown
We two fare on for ever,
But not we two alone.

With the great gale we journey 45
That breathes from gardens thinned,
Borne in the drift of blossoms
Whose petals throng the wind;

Buoyed on the heaven-heard whisper
Of dancing leaflets whirled 50
From all the woods that autumn
Bereaves in all the world.

And midst the fluttering legion
Of all that ever died
I follow, and before us 55

Goes the delightful guide,
With lips that brim with laughter
But never once respond,
And feet that fly on feathers,
And serpent-circled wand.

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1896

(From *A Shropshire Lad*. London: E. Grant Richards, 1907)