

A. E. Housman (1859-1936)

3 *The Carpenter's Son*

(*A Shropshire Lad*, 47)

“Here the hangman stops his cart:
Now the best of friends must part.
Fare you well, for ill fare I:
Live, lads, and I will die.

“Oh, at home had I but stayed 5
'Prenticed to my father's trade,
Had I stuck to plane and adze,
I had not been lost, my lads.

“Then I might have built perhaps 10
Gallows-trees for other chaps,
Never dangled on my own,
Had I but left ill alone.

“Now, you see, they hang me high,
And the people passing by
Stop to shake their fists and curse; 15
So 'tis come from ill to worse.

“Here hang I, and right and left
Two poor fellows hang for theft:
All the same's the luck we prove,
Though the midmost hangs for love. 20

“Comrades all, that stand and gaze,
Walk henceforth in other ways;
See my neck and save your own:
Comrades all, leave ill alone.

“Make some day a decent end, 25

Shrewder fellows than your friend.
Fare you well, for ill fare I:
Live, lads, and I will die.”

1896

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