

A. E. Housman (1859-1936)

10     *The Merry Guide*  
          (*A Shropshire Lad*, 42)

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  
    Behold a youth that trod,  
With feathered cap on forehead,  
    And poised a golden rod.

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

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

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

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.

60

1896

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