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 '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 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; 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.

"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,

5

10

15

20

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)