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## MEN WORKING IN TREES

"The bastards," he said. . . . "They aim between the eyes, just because it's big, free and beautiful. . . ."

— Romain Gary. *The Roots of Heaven*

The sign astride the narrow green  
Fixed between macadam and the mud  
Performs the function of a staring sidewalk crowd  
And the eye clammers --  
Forcing apart the branches and at last  
Discovers them. They laugh and laugh.  
One saws at lengths; the other  
Stuffs thick liquid in a hole.

Their partner on the ground recovers rope  
And throws dark glances upward as he coils.  
He does not laugh. His heavy, sap-drawn face  
Betrays a quick aversion to the higher air  
Or else his envy of the ones above --  
What if the rope should fail, the thin line give?  
Does such a treacherous thought take root  
Among the simple soil which forms his brain?

Men working in trees. A lesson here perhaps:  
When men fell down from primal jungle gyms  
To earth and left their simian cousins to  
The leaves, did hatred of the free untrammelled  
Life, did murderous impulse toward the floating  
Gift of grace become the only seed  
Of baleful loving in the human heart,  
Thus to creep upward to the heated human head?