

The first edition of the Handbook for Housemen proved a huge success with newly qualified doctors, bridging the gap between the knowledge required to pass finals and the skills needed to survive the reality of ward work.

At first the book sold slowly; the initial printing of copies, some of which were sent to the US, did not clear until Sales revived during the Second Boer War " , due in part to the high-profile given military themes and that of dying young. Its popularity increased thereafter, especially during World War I , when the book accompanied many young men into the trenches. But it also benefited from the accessibility that Housman encouraged himself. Initially he declined royalty payments , so as to keep the price down, and also encouraged small, cheap pocket and even waistcoat pocket editions. By sales were at an annual average of 13, copies, and by its fiftieth anniversary there had been approaching a hundred UK and US editions. Auden and his generation "no other poet seemed so perfectly to express the sensibility of a male adolescent"; and George Orwell remembered that, among his generation at Eton College in the wake of World War 1, "these were the poems which I and my contemporaries used to recite to ourselves, over and over, in a kind of ecstasy". Though the names there can be found on the map, their topographical details are admittedly not factual. He did, however, have one source to guide him, echoes from which are to be found in the poems. Written about the same time as the others, this poem was held over until it was incorporated in Last Poems Not all the poems are in the same voice and there are various kinds of dialogue between the speaker and others, including conversations beyond the grave. There is little time for a lad to live and enjoy the spring II. The ghost of a lad dead of grief begs the consolation of a last embrace XI. The playing of a game of cricket or football consoles a broken heart XVII. But on this dubious sentiment Edith Sitwell commented acidly, "If he means to say that cricket, and cricket alone, has prevented men from committing suicide, then their continuation on this earth seems hardly worthwhile. The poet exchanges a glance with a marching soldier and wishes him well, thinking they will never cross paths again XXII. Seize the day , then, to cultivate friendship XXIV. Man is a chance combination of elements " make the most of him while there is time! London is full of cold-hearted men who fear and hate one another, but he will make the best of life while he has a living will XLIII. These two poems were suggested by a report on the death of a naval cadet in August who had left behind him a letter mentioning these reasons for taking his own life. He was happy before he was born, but he will endure life for a while: If crowded and noisy London has its troubles, so do quiet Clun and Knighton , and the only cure for any of them is the grave L. Though he is in London, his spirit wanders about his home fields LII. Those he loved are dead, and other youths eternally re-live his own experiences LV. Like the lad that becomes a soldier, one can choose to face death young rather than put it off out of cowardice LVI. Take your pack and go: It matters not if he sleeps among the suicides, or among those who died well " they were all his friends LXI. Some mock his melancholy thoughts but he has used them like the poisons sampled by Mithridates and will survive to die old LXII. Perhaps these poems are not fashionable, but they survive the poet to please other lads like him LXIII. In a few cases they wrote more than one work using this material. The revised work was eventually published in as Along the Field: A Song Cycle Op. During the immediately post-war period, two other composers made extensive use of the poems in A Shropshire Lad. Composers outside the UK have also set individual poems by Housman. Other Americans composed song cycles: Some thirty more appeared between then and The first to set the fashion was Housman himself in "Terence, this is stupid stuff" LXII with its humorously voiced criticism of the effect of his writing and the wry justification of his stance in the tale of Mithridates. A poem of three stanzas, it begins with a glum acknowledgement of mortality: O woe, woe, People are born and die, We also shall be dead pretty soon Therefore let us act as if we were dead already. The first of these, beginning What, still alive at twenty-two, A clean upstanding chap like you? The cattle rise and listen In valleys far and near, And blush at what they hear. But when the mists in autumn On Bredon top are thick, And happy hymns of farmers Go up from fold and rick, The cattle then are sick. Dorothy Parker returned it to the context of suicide so prevalent in A Shropshire Lad, and included it under the title "Cherry White" in her collected poems, Not So Deep as a Well Flame the westward skies adorning Leaves no like on

holt or hill; Sounds of battle joined at morning Wane and wander and are still. After closure, the nameplate was auctioned in

Chapter 2 : Clay Houseman - Author

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