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**E.A. Robinson and E. Housman**

William White

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ment." "There is a generous element of earth and soil in this man," writes Professor Osgood of Princeton, "but it is sweet, pungent, and fertile, nurturing the things that grow up towards the light. He has a discerning sense and warm adoration of that which is noble and lovely in human nature." The preface to the *Voyage* tells us something of his profound interest in his art. And Fielding's writings have considerable substance. His books, which included all the great writers of antiquity, are described by Cross as "the largest working library possessed by any man of letters in the eighteenth century, surpassing even Dr. Johnson's." His writings everywhere show that he made good use of them. Incidentally, what would one not give for that odd volume of Serranus' Plato which he took with him to Lisbon (and quotes in the *Voyage*), and which was therefore missing when the other volumes of the set were sold at auction following his death? Did it perish in the same catastrophe which brought to life the "earthquake edition" of the *Voyage* we have just been reading?



E. A. ROBINSON AND A. E. HOUSMAN

By WILLIAM WHITE  
*Ohio Wesleyan University*

THE names of Edwin Arlington Robinson and A. E. Housman have been linked on some occasions, and it may be assumed that each was acquainted with the poetry of his contemporary. All that we know, however, of the Englishman's opinion of Robinson is from a remark A.E.H. made to Mr. Cyril Clemens that he "got more enjoyment from Edna St. Vincent Millay than from either Robinson or Frost." This is reprinted from Mr. Clemens's *Evening with A. E. Housman* (Webster Groves, Missouri, 1937, p. 10) by Grant Richards in his *Housman: 1897-1936* (Oxford, 1941, p. 340). Robinson, on the other hand, thought very highly of *A Shropshire Lad*, a first edition of

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which he found in Boston in 1896 and passed on to William Vaughn Moody after making many allusions and notes in his copy. He told this to Mr. Houston Martin, to whom he wrote in 1934: "There seems to me to be no question as to the enduring quality of A. E. Housman's poetry. I do not think of any living writer whose work is likely to live longer, if as long."<sup>1</sup> Of his great liking for Housman, Robinson wrote to Mrs. Laura E. Richards on March 2, 1923: "When I had read three pages of his first book, years ago, I knew that he had come to stay. . . . His kingdom is a small and not very jolly one, but he is the boss of it, and that's enough."<sup>2</sup>

There has now come to light another interesting letter concerning Housman from the New England poet:<sup>3</sup>

66 West 83 Street  
New York, January 19, 1917

Dear Mr. Brown,

I am sorry to have to refuse any request of yours after your most generous treatment of my book, but I cannot frankly find time now for prose—which is, for me, a hard and dreary grind even under the most favorable conditions. Furthermore, to be honest, it doesn't seem to me desirable to burden *A Shropshire Lad* with an introduction; and from what I have heard of the author, I am pretty sure that he would resent it. The book itself is of course altogether too good to be out of print and I am greatly surprised to learn that it shows any symptoms of that kind.

With all good wishes and with many thanks for your appreciation.

Yours sincerely

E. A. ROBINSON.

The edition Mr. Edmund R. Brown referred to appeared in 1918, under the imprint of the International Pocket Library and copyrighted by The Four Seas Company of Boston; its introduction is by William Stanley Braithwaite. *A Shropshire Lad* never went out of print, this edition alone being reprinted several times.

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Letters of Edwin Arlington Robinson* (New York, 1940), p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>3</sup> Owned by Mr. H. Bacon Collamore of Hartford, this letter is here published by permission of the poet's niece, Mrs. William Nivison.