

Haber, Tom Burns, The Making of A Shropshire Lad. University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 1966.

- p. 9 quotes Housman as saying, "I happen to remember distinctly the genesis of the piece which stands last in my first volume. Two of the stanzas, I do not say which, came into my head, just as they are printed, while I was crossing the corner of Hampstead Heath between the Spaniard's Inn and the footpath to Temple Fortune. A third stanza came with a little coaxing after tea. One more was needed, but it did not come: I had to turn to and compose it myself, and that was a laborious business. I wrote it thirteen times, and it was more than a twelvemonth before I got it right.

I hoed and trenched and weeded,  
 And took the flowers to fair:  
 I brought them home unheeded;  
 The hue was not the wear.

So up and down I sow them  
 For lads like me to find,  
 When I shall lie below them,  
 A dead man out of mind.

Some seed the birds devour,  
 And some the season mars,  
 But here and there will flower  
 The solitary stars,

And fields will yearly bear them  
 As light-leaved spring comes on,  
 And luckless lads will wear them  
 When I am dead and gone.

- p. 319 The Library of Congress collection does not contain a manuscript of this poem, and it is Laurence's opinion (Recollections, p. 255) that it may have perished with a page torn from the notebook. He surmises further that his brother destroyed the draft to prevent the solution of the conundrum he set his hearers at the Leslie Stephen lecture, May 9, 1933.

Having mentioned the two stanzas first set down, Housman spoke of the one that came with "a little coaxing" and another that took more than a year in the making. He added, "I do not say which" and it was this tantalizing challenge that set off - as he probably intended - a widening ripple of speculation as to the order in which the four quatrains of the lyric had actually been put down on paper. It was one of his dearest prerogatives to foil inquiry when it pleased him to do so, and it pleased him in this case to turn a stony ear to all who asked him if their guesses were correct. It would have been thoroughly characteristic of him to put solution forever out of reach by destroying the relevant notebook material.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the London Times for Nov. 4, 1936, p. 10, Archibald Y. Campbell ("Housman's Poser") makes the suggestion that stanzas 1 and 2 were done on the walk, the fourth came with tea and coaxing, and 3 was the difficult one. Laurence Housman, in the Nov. 9, 1936, number of the Times, under the same heading, p. 13, agrees with Campbell; and according to Maude M. Hawkins - A.E. Housman: Man Behind a Mask (Chicago:Regnery, 1958), p. 279 - twenty years later Laurence confirmed to her his earlier opinion. No one knows: A.E.H., like his youthful athlete, has taken this small trophy safely with him beyond the low lintel.