



A Shropshire Lad

By A. E. Houseman (1859 - 1936)

Read by:	Alaious - Version 1 John Sindell - Version 2	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
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The sixty-three short poems that constitute *A Shropshire Lad* conjure a pastoral countryside that is remembered sentimentally by the young men who express a melancholy lament for the lost time of happy youth, the transience and unfairness of love, the disillusionment of shattered ideals, and the grim possibility of an early death in the service of the British Crown. There is no single Shropshire Lad per se, and Shropshire itself, although an actual place, is largely an imagined idyll and literary construct. Published in 1896, the book gradually gained popularity during the Second Boer War and then the First World War, owing to the themes of military action and dying young. Poet A. E. Houseman targeted the poems to a young male readership,

and the publisher kept prices low enough to issue small, inexpensive pocket editions which were carried by many British soldiers. All but seven of the poems have been set to music, twelve more than ten times. Composers are naturally attracted to the mix of emotional feeling, lyrical style, and folksy subject matter. W. H. Auden wrote that "no other poet seemed so perfectly to express the sensibility of a male adolescent" of his generation. George Orwell recollects that "these were the poems which I and my contemporaries used to recite to ourselves, over and over."

This audiobook contains two complete readings of the poems.

Alfred Edward "A. E." Houseman (March 26, 1859 – April 30, 1936) was a British poet and scholar who is best recognized as the author of the iconic cycle of poems *A Shropshire Lad*. He was born eldest of seven children in a hamlet in Worcestershire and educated in Birmingham, where he won prizes for his poems and a scholarship to Oxford. He studied classics with an ardent attention to textual analysis but a relative neglect of ancient history and philosophy, which caused him to fail his final exams. He got a job in the Patent Office in London and continued his classical studies independently, publishing scholarly articles and eventually achieving a professorship at University College in London in 1892. He helped subsidize the publication of *A Shropshire Lad* in 1896, which sold slowly at first but took hold when composers set the poems to music, which, combined with the pastoral, traditional and national themes resonated Victorian and Edwardian temper of the times and spurred its popularity. He considered classical scholarship his primary vocation, however, and became one of the greatest in the field, having authored the authoritative editions of Juvenal, Manilius and Lucan. He was appointed Kennedy Professor of Latin at Cambridge in 1911 and published only one more book of poetry during his lifetime, *Last Poems* in 1922.