

1896

**TO AN ATHLETE DYING YOUNG (From A Shropshire
Lad)**

Alfred Edward Housman

Housman, A. (Alfred) E. (Edward) (1859-1936) - English poet and scholar whose reputation arose from a single volume, "A Shropshire Lad." Housman later became a professor of classics at Cambridge and refused, until shortly before his death, to even speak about his verse. To An Athlete Dying Young (1896) - Opening lines: The time you won your town the race / We chaired you through the market-place; .

TO AN ATHLETE DYING YOUNG

The time you won your town the race
 We chaired you through the market-place;
 Man and boy stood cheering by,
 And home we brought you shoulder-high.

To-day, the road all runners come,
 Shoulder-high we bring you home,
 And set you at your threshold down,
 Townsman of a stiller town.

Smart lad, to slip betimes away
 From fields where glory does not stay
 And early though the laurel grows
 It withers quicker than the rose.

Eyes the shady night has shut
 Cannot see the record cut,
 And silence sounds no worse than cheers
 After earth has stopped the ears:

Now you will not swell the rout
 Of lads that wore their honours out,
 Runners whom renown outran
 And the name died before the man.

So set, before its echoes fade,
 The fleet foot on the sill of shade,
 And hold to the low lintel up
 The still-defended challenge-cup.

And round that early-laurelled head
 Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,
 And find unwithered on its curls
 The garland briefer than a girl's.

THE END