LOT 41

PROPERTY FROM THE DESCENDENTS OF MOSES JACKSON AND GERALD JACKSON

HOUSMAN, A. E.

9 autograph letters signed ("A. E. Housman"), 47 pages (7 x 4 1/2 in.; 177 x 115 mm), Trinity College, Cambridge (except one from Woodridings, Pinner, Middlesex), 12 June 1911—22 December 1932, to Moses Jackson (the last two to his widow Rosa Jackson); horizontal folds, condition generally good, but with foxing to the two letters to Mrs. Jackson. 6 autograph envelopes; condition varies — Moses Jackson. Autograph letter
signed ("M. J. J. Jackson"), 10 pages (8 x 5 in.; 203 x 127 mm), Bed 4, Ward T, General Hospital, Vancouver, 23 November 1922, to A. E. Housman; horizontal folds, small tear at right side of top folds. Autograph envelope; in pieces.

ESTIMATION 30,000-50,000 USD
Lot vendu: 31,250 USD

NOTE DE CATALOGUE
"You are largely responsible for my writing poetry, and you ought to take the consequences": A. E. Housman in his last letter to his friend and muse, Moses Jackson.

A fine archive of letters written by Housman to Moses Jackson, primarily covering the years of the First World War and ending ten days before Jackson's death in Vancouver. The letters, all headed "My dear Mo," begin in 1911 when Jackson had just bought a 160-acre farm in British Columbia. Replying to Jackson's request that he invest in the Canadian farming venture, Housman writes, "I do not want to make an investment on my account in the wild-cat colony you now inhabit, where you have to put Angleterre on your letters to get them to England, but if you happen to want extra capital you might just as well have it from me and prevent it from eating its head off in a current account at a bank." In the next letter (5 July 1912), the poet regrets that he is not able to send the £200 as promised.

Beginning with the 23 November 1916 letter, Housman gives a vivid picture of Cambridge in wartime and airs his views on the war. Because of travel restrictions, Housman could not go abroad and was pleased to find himself doing more work than ever before. In the 8 May 1917 letter, he complains of his meat-less and potato-less meals and his half-pound loaves. He goes on to say, "The war is used very much as a cat's paw by people who have pet aims of their own. Home Rule: to oblige that noble nation (for such we have now discovered it to be) the United States; though they do not offer to oblige us by ceding Maine to Canada .... Female suffrage: because the bitches have not burnt down Westminster Abbey. Suppression of Latin and Greek at the Universities: presumably because Science at the Universities has cut such a poor figure, and all the useful inventions have been made elsewhere .... Deportion of the King: and this ought to commend itself to you, for all the brayings and bellowings about the necessity of interning persons of German origin which we have heard for nearly three years from your type of Briton apply with much more force to him than to anyone else." In his 14 October letter of the same year, he describes war damage seen while on a tour of cathedral towns. He then says, "I will say one thing for Canada: the Canadian government maintains in London a sanitary and well-conducted brothel for the exclusive use of Canadian soldiers. Our government must live in terror lest this should come to the ears of your former pastor Dr. Clifford and his friends. It would enable them to explain the pro-Germanism of God, and the storms of rain he sends to check our troops when they advance." After mentioning the difficulties in getting mail across the Atlantic during wartime, he writes, "For some reason or other I have been dreaming rather a lot about you in the last six months, and your behaviour has been rather less disagreeable than it usually is either in dreams or in real life."

Housman's last letter to his friend was written as Jackson lay dying in a Vancouver hospital in January 1923. "I never was more astounded at anything than at your reproducing my contribution to Waifs and Strays. I remember your reading it at Miss Patchett's, and how nervous I was. If I had known you would recollect it 42 years afterward, my emotions would have been too much for me." Knowing Jackson was dying, Housman assembled Last Poems (1922) in the hopes that his friend would be able to read it. The book sold well and Housman urged Jackson to accept the royalties as a gift: "Why not rise superior to the natural disagreeableness of your character and behave nicely for once in a way to a fellow who thinks more of you than anything in the world? You are largely responsible for my writing poetry, and you ought to take the consequences." The letter ends, "Millington of Bromsgrove, who partly educated me, died the other day at 82. He had been suffering (or rather not suffering) from senile decay. Aphasia and loss of memory are probably the steps by which I shall approach my end."
Also included is Moses Jackson's 10-page letter to "My dear old Hous," written from hospital in Vancouver on 22 November 1923. He comments on Last Poems ("your egregious poems .... I thought of heaping sarcasms on your brain products ... but some of the pieces are good enough to redeem the rest"). He remarks on just how much of Housman's poetry he is able to recall and quotes "Ave atque Vale," saying, "It deserved a place in the Shropshire Lad! It was the condensation of so much meaning into a few words—furiously unorthodox though it might be, that struck me." He goes on to regret that due to his declining health, he will never be able to pay back all the money Housman has loaned him over the years. He closes with a comment on the proposed American edition of Last Poems: "I hope your publishes [sic] will shoo the Americans off. While lying on my back here I have been exasperated to see how they publish well-known English books, curtailed with only a Yankee publisher's name on the title-page, and make their ignorant readers think the author is a Yank. I dislike the arrogant brutes."

This important archive ends with a 22 December 1932 letter from Housman to Jackson's widow, Rosa, thanking her for sending him Moses Jackson's paper-knife.

A superb and revealing archive of correspondence from the usually-reticent author of A Shropshire Lad.