

## The Handy Man

The handy man about the house  
Is old and bent and gray;  
Each morning in the yard he toils,  
Where all the children play;  
Some new task every day he finds,  
Some task he loves to do,  
The handy man about the house,  
Whose work is never through.  
The children stand to see him toil,  
And watch him mend a chair;  
They bring their broken toys to him  
He keeps them in repair.  
No idle moment Grandpa spends,  
But finds some work to do,  
And hums a snatch of some old song,  
That in his youth he knew.  
He builds with wood most wondrous things:  
A table for the den,  
A music rack to please the girls,  
A gun case for the men.  
And 'midst his paints and tools he smiles,  
And seems as young and gay  
As any of the little ones  
Who round him run in play.  
I stopped to speak with him awhile;  
'Oh, tell me, Grandpa, pray,  
I said, 'why do you work so hard  
Throughout the livelong day?  
Your hair is gray, your back is bent,  
With weight of years oppressed;  
This is the evening of your life—  
Why don't you sit and rest?'  
'Ah, no,' the old man answered me,  
'Although I'm old and gray,  
I like to work out here where I  
Can watch the children play.  
The old have tasks that they must do;  
The greatest of my joys  
Is working on this shaded porch,  
And mending children's toys.'  
And as I wandered on, I thought,  
Oh, shall I lonely be  
When time has powdered white my hair,  
And left his mark on me?  
Will little children round me play,  
Shall I have work to do?  
Or shall I be, when age is mine,  
Lonely and useless too?

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)