

The Book of Memory

Turn me loose and let me be
Young once more and fancy free;
Let me wander where I will,
Down the lane and up the hill,
Trudging barefoot in the dust
In an age that knows no 'must,'
And no voice insistently
Speaks of duty unto me;
Let me tread the happy ways
Of those by-gone yesterdays.

Fame had never whispered then,
Making slaves of eager men;
Greed had never called me down
To the gray walls of the town,
Offering frankincense and myrrh
If I'd be its prisoner;
I was free to come and go
Where the cherry blossoms blow,
Free to wander where I would,
Finding life supremely good.

But I turned, as all must do,
From the happiness I knew
To the land of care and strife,
Seeking for a fuller life;
Heard the lure of fame and sought
That renown so dearly bought;
Listened to the voice of greed
Saying: 'These the things you need,'
Now the gray town holds me fast,
Prisoner to the very last.

Age has stamped me as its own;
Youth to younger hearts has flown;
Still the cherry blossoms blow
In the land loused to know;
Still the fragrant clover spills
Perfume over dales and hills,
But I'm not allowed to stray
Where the young are free to play;
All the years will grant to me
Is the book of memory.

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)