

The Things You Can't Forget

They ain't much, seen from day to day-
The big elm tree across the way,
The church spire, an' the meetin' place
Lit up by many a friendly face.
You pass 'em by a dozen times
An' never think o' them in rhymes,
Or fit for poet's singin'. Yet
They're all the things you can't forget;
An' they're the things you'll miss some day
If ever you should go away.

The people here ain't much to see-
Jes' common folks like you an' me,
Doin' the ordinary tasks
Which life of everybody asks:
Old Dr. Green, still farin' 'round
To where his patients can be found,
An' Parson Hill, serene o' face,
Carryin' God's message every place,
An' Jim, who keeps the grocery store-
Yet they are folks you'd hunger for.

They seem so plain when close to view-
Bill Barker, an' his brother too,
The Jacksons, men of higher rank
Because they chance to run the bank,
Yet friends to every one round here,
Quiet an' kindly an' sincere,
Not much to sing about or praise,
Livin' their lives in modest ways-
Yet in your memory they'd stay
If ever you should go away.

These are things an' these the men
Someday you'll long to see again.
Now it's so near you scarcely see
The beauty o' that big elm tree,
But some day later on you will
An' wonder if it's standin' still,
An' if the birds return to sing
An' make their nests there every spring.
Mebbe you scorn them now, but they
Will bring you back again someday.

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)