

Pleasure's Signs

There's a bump on his brow and a smear on his cheek
That is plainly the stain of his tears;
At his neck there's a glorious sun-painted streak,
The bronze of his happiest years.
Oh, he's battered and bruised at the end of the day,
But smiling before me he stands,
And somehow I like to behold him that way.
Yes, I like him with dirt on his hands.

Last evening he painfully limped up to me
His tale of adventure to tell;
He showed me a grime-covered cut on his knee,
And told me the place where he fell.
His clothing was stained to the color of clay,
And he looked to be nobody's lad,
But somehow I liked to behold him that way,
For it spoke of the fun that he'd had.

Let women-folk prate as they will of a boy
Who is heedless of knickers and shirt;
I hold that the badge of a young fellow's joy
Are cheeks that are covered with dirt.
So I look for him nightly to greet me that way,
His joys and misfortunes to tell,
For I know by the signs that he wears of his play
That the lad I'm so fond of is well.

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)