

The Fifty Percent Man

He limped into the place one day, a leg and arm were gone,
'Just half a man,' he told the boss, 'right now you look upon.
An accident did this to me, 'twere better had I died,
It robbed me of efficiency, but left me with my pride.'

The boss said kindly unto him: 'This is a busy place,
It takes two arms and two good legs to hold our daily pace;
It's able-bodied men I need, not crippled men like you.'
'Don't you suppose,' he answered then, 'there's something I can do?'

'Could you not find some sheltered nook where I can fill the day,
Where I can use my one good arm and earn my weekly pay?
Though half of me is stripped away, the other half is proud
And it will do some useful work if only it's allowed.

They've taught me now to use my hand, they've given me a trade,
They've said I need not lose my pride and meekly beg for aid,
But when the bosses look about they never seem to see
A place where they can use a man who's battered up like me.'

Oh, better far that charity, and better for the town,
It is to help the man to rise whom fate has stricken down.
And better for that factory which keeps a job or two
Where speed and strength are not required, which crippled men can do.

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)