

The Little Old Man

The little old man with the curve in his back
And the eyes that are dim and the skin that is slack,
So slack that it wrinkles and rolls on his cheeks,
With a thin little voice that goes 'crack!' when he speaks,
Never goes to the store but that right at his feet
Are all of the youngsters who live on the street.

And the little old man in the suit that was black,
And once might have perfectly fitted his back,
Has a boy's chubby fist in his own wrinkled hand,
And together they trudge off to Light-Hearted Land;
Some splendid excursions he gives every day
To the boys and the girls in his funny old way.

The little old man is unusual as can be;
He'd spend all his time with a child on his knee;
And the stories he tells I could never repeat,
But they're always of good boys and little girls sweet;
And the children come home at the end of the day
To tell what the little old man had to say.

Once the little old man didn't trudge to the store,
And the tap of his cane wasn't heard any more;
The children looked eagerly for him each day
And wondered why he didn't come out to play
Till some of them saw Doctor Brown ring his bell,
And they wept when they heard that he might not get well.

But after a while he got out with his cane,
And called all the children around him again;
And I think as I see him go trudging along
In the center, once more, of his light-hearted throng,
That earth has no glory that's greater than this:
The little old man whom the children would miss.

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)