

The Painter

When my hair is thin and silvered, an' my time of toil is through,
When I've many years behind me, an' ahead of me a few,
I shall want to sit, I reckon, sort of dreamin' in the sun,
An' recall the roads I've traveled an' the many things I've done,
An' I hope there'll be no picture that I'll hate to look upon
When the time to paint it better or to wipe it out is gone.

I hope there'll be no vision of a hasty word I've said,
That has left a trail of sorrow, like a whip welt, sore an' red,
An' I hope my old-age dreamin' will bring back no bitter scene
Of a time when I was selfish an' a time when I was mean;
When I'm gettin' old an' feeble, an' I'm far along life's way
I don't want to sit regrettin' any by-gone yesterday.

I'll admit the children boss me, I'll admit I often smile
When I ought to frown upon 'em, but for such a little while
They are naughty, romping youngsters, that I have no heart to scold,
An' I know if I should whip 'em I'd regret it when I'm old.
Age to me would be a torment an' a ghost-infested night,
If I'd ever hurt a baby, an' I could not make it right.

I am painting now the pictures that I'll some day want to see,
I am filling in a canvas that will come back soon to me.
An' though nothing great is on it, an' though nothing there is fine,
I shall want to look it over when I'm old an' call it mine.
An' I do not dare to leave it, while the paint is warm an' wet,
With a single thing upon it that I'll later on regret.

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)