

## CRABBY OLD MAN

This poem, "Crabby Old Man," was sent to me by a close friend/patient because of its sentiment but not knowing I would publish it in our journal. Its origin is anonymous but reportedly came from an elderly man who died in the geriatric ward of a nursing home. It was believed he had nothing left of value. But after going through his meager possessions, they found this poem. Copies were made and distributed to every nurse in the nursing home and thence to the world. I am told his sole bequest to prosperity has since appeared in other publications.

It is worth remembering when you next encounter a serious elder who you might brush aside without seeing what was once there. As an elder, it resonated strongly with me. — W.L. Winters Jr., M.D.

What do you see nurses? ... What do you see?  
 What are you thinking ... when you're looking at me?  
 A crabby old man ... not very wise,  
 Uncertain of habit ... with faraway eyes?  
 Who dribbles his food ... and makes no reply.  
 When you say in a loud voice ... 'I do wish you'd try!'  
 Who seems not to notice ... the things that you do.  
 And forever is losing ... A sock or shoe?  
 Who, resisting or not ... lets you do as you will,  
 With bathing and feeding ... The long day to fill?  
 Is that what you're thinking? ... Is that what you see?  
 Then open your eyes, nurse ... you're not looking at me.  
 I'll tell you who I am ... As I sit here so still,  
 As I do at your bidding, ... as I eat at your will.  
 I'm a small child of Ten ... with a father and mother,  
 Brothers and sisters ... who love one another.  
 A young boy of Sixteen ... with wings on his feet.  
 Dreaming that soon now ... a lover he'll meet.  
 A groom soon at Twenty ... my heart gives a leap.  
 Remembering, the vows ... that I promised to keep.  
 At Twenty-Five, now ... I have young of my own.  
 Who need me to guide ... And a secure happy home.

A man of Thirty ... My young now grown fast,  
 Bound to each other ... With ties that should last.  
 At Forty, my young sons ... have grown and are gone,  
 But my woman's beside me ... to see I don't mourn.  
 At Fifty, once more, babies play 'round my knee,  
 Again, we know children ... My loved one and me.  
 Dark days are upon me ... my wife is now dead.  
 I look at the future ... shudder with dread.  
 For my young are all rearing ... young of their own.  
 And I think of the years ... and the love that I've known  
 I'm now an old man ... and nature is cruel.  
 Tis jest to make old age ... look like a fool.  
 The body, it crumbles ... grace and vigor, depart.  
 There is now a stone ... where I once had a heart.  
 But inside this old carcass ... a young guy still dwells,  
 And now and again ... my battered heart swells.  
 I remember the joys ... I remember the pain.  
 And I'm loving and living ... life over again.  
 I think of the years, all too few ... gone too fast.  
 And accept the stark fact ... that nothing can last.  
 So open your eyes, people ... open and see.  
 Not a crabby old man ... Look closer ... see ME!!