

## Crabbit Old Woman

Attributed to Phyllis McCormack

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*What do you see nurses, what do you see,  
What are you thinking when you look at me?  
A crabbit old woman, not very wise,  
Uncertain of habit, with far-away eyes,  
Who dribbles her food and makes not 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 stocking or shoe,  
Who, unresisting or not, let's 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, you're not looking at me.  
I'll tell you who I am as I sit here so still,  
As I move 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 girl at sixteen with wings on her feet,  
Dreaming that soon now a lover she'll meet.  
A bride 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 build a secure happy home.  
A woman of thirty my young grow fast,  
Bound to each other with ties that should last.  
At forty my young now soon will be gone,  
But my man stays 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 husband is dead.  
I look at the future, I shudder with dread,  
For my young are all busy rearing young of their own,  
And I think of the years and the love I have known.  
I'm an old woman now and nature is cruel,  
'Tis her jest to make old age look like a fool.  
The body it crumbles, grace and vigour depart  
And now there's a stone where I once had a heart.  
But inside this old carcass a young girl 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 so fast,  
And accept the stark fact that nothing can last.  
So open your eyes, Nurses, open and see,  
Not a crabbit old woman, look closer - see me.*