

Classic Poetry Series

Edgar Albert Guest

- poems -

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A Toast to the Men

Here's to the men! Since Adam's time
They've always been the same;
Whenever anything goes wrong,
The woman is to blame.
From early morn to late at night,
The men fault-finders are;
They blame us if they oversleep,
Or if they miss a car.
They blame us if, beneath the bed,
Their collar buttons roll;
They blame us if the fire is out
Or if there is no coal.
They blame us if they cut themselves
While shaving, and they swear
That we're to blame if they decide
To go upon a tear.

Here's to the men, the perfect men!
Who never are at fault;
They blame us if they chance to get
The pepper for the salt.
They blame us if their business fails,
Or back a losing horse;
And when it rains on holidays
The fault is ours, of course.
They blame us when they fall in love,
And when they married get;
Likewise they blame us when they're sick,
And when they fall in debt.
For everything that crisscross goes
They say we are to blame;
But, after all, here's to the men,
We love them just the same!

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Father

My father knows the proper way
The nation should be run;
He tells us children every day
Just what should now be done.
He knows the way to fix the trusts,
He has a simple plan;
But if the furnace needs repairs,
We have to hire a man.
My father, in a day or two
Could land big thieves in jail;
There's nothing that he cannot do,
He knows no word like "fail."
"Our confidence" he would restore,
Of that there is no doubt;
But if there is a chair to mend,
We have to send it out.

All public questions that arise,
He settles on the spot;
He waits not till the tumult dies,
But grabs it while it's hot.
In matters of finance he can
Tell Congress what to do;
But, O, he finds it hard to meet
His bills as they fall due.

It almost makes him sick to read
The things law-makers say;
Why, father's just the man they need,
He never goes astray.
All wars he'd very quickly end,
As fast as I can write it;
But when a neighbor starts a fuss,
'Tis mother has to fight it.

In conversation father can
Do many wondrous things;
He's built upon a wiser plan
Than presidents or kings.
He knows the ins and outs of each
And every deep transaction;
We look to him for theories,
But look to ma for action.

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Hard Luck

Ain't no use as I can see
In sittin' underneath a tree
An' growlin' that your luck is bad,
An' that your life is extry sad;
Your life ain't sadder than your neighbor's
Nor any harder are your labors;
It rains on him the same as you,
An' he has work he hates to do;
An' he gits tired an' he gits cross,
An' he has trouble with the boss;
You take his whole life, through an' through,
Why, he's no better off than you.

If whinin' brushed the clouds away
I wouldn't have a word to say;
If it made good friends out o' foes
I'd whine a bit, too, I suppose;
But when I look around an' see
A lot o' men resemblin' me,
An' see 'em sad, an' see 'em gay
With work t' do most every day,
Some full o' fun, some bent with care,
Some havin' troubles hard to bear,
I reckon, as I count my woes,
They're 'bout what everybody knows.

The day I find a man who'll say
He's never known a rainy day,
Who'll raise his right hand up an' swear
In forty years he's had no care,
Has never had a single blow,
An' never known one touch o' woe,
Has never seen a loved one die,
Has never wept or heaved a sigh,
Has never had a plan go wrong,
But allas laughed his way along;
Then I'll sit down an' start to whine
That all the hard luck here is mine.

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On Quitting

How much grit do you think you've got?
Can you quit a thing that you like a lot?
You may talk of pluck; it's an easy word,
And where'er you go it is often heard;
But can you tell to a jot or guess
Just how much courage you now possess?
You may stand to trouble and keep your grin,
But have you tackled self-discipline?
Have you ever issued commands to you
To quit the things that you like to do,
And then, when tempted and sorely swayed,
Those rigid orders have you obeyed?

Don't boast of your grit till you've tried it out,
Nor prate to men of your courage stout,
For it's easy enough to retain a grin
In the face of a fight there's a chance to win,
But the sort of grit that is good to own
Is the stuff you need when you're all alone.
How much grit do you think you've got?
Can you turn from joys that you like a lot?
Have you ever tested yourself to know
How far with yourself your will can go?
If you want to know if you have grit,
Just pick out a joy that you like, and quit.

It's bully sport and it's open fight;
It will keep you busy both day and night;
For the toughest kind of a game you'll find
Is to make your body obey your mind.
And you never will know what is meant by grit
Unless there's something you've tried to quit.

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See it Through

When you're up against a trouble,
Meet it squarely, face to face;
Lift your chin and set your shoulders,
Plant your feet and take a brace.
When it's vain to try to dodge it,
Do the best that you can do;
You may fail, but you may conquer,
See it through!
Black may be the clouds about you
And your future may seem grim,
But don't let your nerve desert you;
Keep yourself in fighting trim.
If the worst is bound to happen,
Spite of all that you can do,
Running from it will not save you,
See it through!

Even hope may seem but futile,
When with troubles you're beset,
But remember you are facing
Just what other men have met.
You may fail, but fall still fighting;
Don't give up, whate'er you do;
Eyes front, head high to the finish.
See it through!

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Thanksgiving

Gettin' together to smile an' rejoice,
An' eatin' an' laughin' with folks of your choice;
An' kissin' the girls an' declarin' that they
Are growin' more beautiful day after day;
Chattin' an' braggin' a bit with the men,
Buildin' the old family circle again;
Livin' the wholesome an' old-fashioned cheer,
Just for awhile at the end of the year.
Greetings fly fast as we crowd through the door
And under the old roof we gather once more
Just as we did when the youngsters were small;
Mother's a little bit grayer, that's all.
Father's a little bit older, but still
Ready to romp an' to laugh with a will.
Here we are back at the table again
Tellin' our stories as women an' men.

Bowed are our heads for a moment in prayer;
Oh, but we're grateful an' glad to be there.
Home from the east land an' home from the west,
Home with the folks that are dearest an' best.
Out of the sham of the cities afar
We've come for a time to be just what we are.
Here we can talk of ourselves an' be frank,
Forgettin' position an' station an' rank.

Give me the end of the year an' its fun
When most of the plannin' an' toilin' is done;
Bring all the wanderers home to the nest,
Let me sit down with the ones I love best,
Hear the old voices still ringin' with song,
See the old faces unblemished by wrong,
See the old table with all of its chairs
An' I'll put soul in my Thanksgivin' prayers.

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The Bachelor's Soliloquy

To wed, or not to wed; that is the question;
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The bills and house rent of a wedded fortune,
Or to say "nit" when she proposes,
And by declining cut her. To wed; to smoke
No more; And have a wife at home to mend
The holes in socks and shirts
And underwear and so forth. 'Tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To wed for life;
To wed; perchance to fight; ay, there's the rub;
For in that married life what fights may come,
When we have honeymooning ceased
Must give us pause; there's the respect
That makes the joy of single life.
For who would bear her mother's scornful tongue,
Canned goods for tea, the dying furnace fire;
The pangs of sleepless nights when baby cries;
The pain of barking shins upon a chair and
Closing waists that button down the back,
When he himself might all these troubles shirk
With a bare refusal? Who would bundles bear,
And grunt and sweat under a shopping load?
Who would samples match; buy rats for hair,
Cart cheese and crackers home to serve at night
For lunch to feed your friends; play pedro
After tea; sing rag time songs, amusing
Friendly neighbors. Buy garden tools
To lend unto the same. Stay home at nights
In smoking coat and slippers and slink to bed
At ten o'clock to save the light bills?
Thus duty does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of matrimony
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of chores;
And thus the gloss of marriage fades away,
And loses its attraction.

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The Little Orphan

The crowded street his playground is, a patch of blue his sky;
A puddle in a vacant lot his sea where ships pass by:
Poor little orphan boy of five, the city smoke and grime
Taint every cooling breeze he gets throughout the summer time;
And he is just as your boy is, a child who loves to play,
Except that he is drawn and white and cannot get away.
And he would like the open fields, for often in his dreams
The angels kind bear him off to where are pleasant streams,
Where he may sail a splendid boat, sometimes he flies a kite,
Or romps beside a shepherd dog and shouts with all his might;
But when the dawn of morning comes he wakes to find once more
That what he thought were sun-kissed hills are rags upon the floor.

Then through the hot and sultry day he plays at "make-pretend,"
The alley is a sandy beach where all the rich folks send
Their little boys and girls to play, a barrel is his boat,
But, oh, the air is tifling and the dust fills up his throat;
And though he tries so very hard to play, somehow it seems
He never gets such wondrous joys as angels bring in dreams.

Poor little orphan boy of five, except that he is pale,
With sunken cheeks and hollow eyes and very wan and frail,
Just like that little boy of yours, with same desire to play,
Fond of the open fields and skies, he's built the self-same way;
But kept by fate and circumstance away from shady streams,
His only joy comes when he sleeps and angels bring him dreams.

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Yesterday

I've trod the links with many a man,
And played him club for club;
'Tis scarce a year since I began
And I am still a dub.
But this I've noticed as we strayed
Along the bunkered way,
No one with me has ever played
As he did yesterday.
It makes no difference what the drive,
Together as we walk,
Till we up to the ball arrive,
I get the same old talk:
"To-day there's something wrong with me,
Just what I cannot say.
Would you believe I got a three
For this hole--yesterday?"

I see them top and slice a shot,
And fail to follow through,
And with their brassies plough the lot,
The very way I do.
To six and seven their figures run,
And then they sadly say:
"I neither dubbed nor fozzled one
When I played--yesterday!"

I have no yesterdays to count,
No good work to recall;
Each morning sees hope proudly mount,
Each evening sees it fall.
And in the locker room at night,
When men discuss their play,
I hear them and I wish I might
Have seen them--yesterday.

Oh, dear old yesterday! What store
Of joys for men you hold!
I'm sure there is no day that's more
Remembered or extolled.
I'm off my task myself a bit,
My mind has run astray;
I think, perhaps, I should have writ
These verses--yesterday.

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