

## What We Need

We were settin' there an' smokin' of our pipes, discussin' things,  
Like licker, votes for wimmin, an' the totterin'thrones o' kings,  
When he ups an' strokes his whiskers with his hand an' says t'me:  
'Changin' laws an' legislatures ain't, as fur as I can see,  
Goin' to make this world much better, unless somehow we can  
Find a way to make a better an' a finer sort o' man.

'The trouble ain't with statutes or with systems—not at all;  
It's with humans jest like we air an' their petty ways an' small.  
We could stop our writin' law-books an' our regulatin' rules  
If a better sort of manhood was the product of our schools.  
For the things that we air needin' ain't no writin' from a pen  
Or bigger guns to shoot with, but a bigger type of men.

'I reckon all these problems air jest ornery like the weeds.  
They grow in soil that oughta nourish only decent deeds,  
An' they waste our time an' fret us when, if we were thinkin' straight  
An' livin' right, they wouldn't be so terrible an' great.  
A good horse needs no snaffle, an' a good man, I opine,  
Doesn't need a law to check him or to force him into line.

'If we ever start in teachin' to our children, year by year,  
How to live with one another, there'll be less o' trouble here.  
If we'd teach 'em how to neighbor an' to walk in honor's ways,  
We could settle every problem which the mind o' man can raise.  
What we're needin' isn't systems or some regulatin' plan,  
But a bigger an' a finer an' a truer type o' man.'

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)