

Safe Conduct

There isn't any danger in the kindly things you say,
There isn't any sorrow in the fine and generous deed,
No deep regret awaits you at the ending of the day,
There's always joy in knowing that you've played the friend in need.

There isn't any anguish in the cheerful words you speak,
The happy salutation never leaves a bitter sting,
No person has met dishonor being gentle with the weak
And unselfishness has never caused an hour of sorrowing.

It's the petty little failures which disturb us most at night,
The little acts of meanness and the trivial things we do;
The conscience never troubles us when we have done what's right,
It's when we've failed to be our best that shame begins to brew.

Oh, most of us are honest in the larger fields of life
And most of us are brave enough in times of stress and woe.
And most of us are fine enough in days of cruel strife.
But it is in the little things the worst begins to show.

The danger of our peace of mind lies in our selfishness,
In cruel little bits of speech which thoughtlessly we say,
In pressing on so eager to achieve our own success.
That we neglect the kindly folks we pass along the way.

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)