

Hard Work

One day, in ages dark and dim,
A toiler, weary, worn and faint,
Who found his task too much for him,
Gave voice unto a sad complaint.
And seeking emphasis to give
Unto his trials (day ill-starred!)
Coupled to 'work' this adjective,
This little word of terror: Hard.

And from that day to this has work
Its frightening description worn;
'Tis spoken daily by the shirk,
The first cloud on the sky at morn.
To-day when there are tasks to do,
Save that we keep ourselves on guard
With fearful doublings them we view,
And think and speak of them as hard.

That little but ill-chosen word
Has wrought great havoc with men's souls,
Has chilled the hearts ambition stirred
And held the pass to splendid goals.
Great dreams have faded and been lost,
Fine youth by it been sadly marred
As plants beneath a withering frost,
Because men thought and whispered: 'Hard.'

Let's think of work in terms of hope
And speak of it with words of praise,
And tell the joy it is to grope
Along the new, untrodden ways!
Let's break this habit of despair
And cheerfully our task regard;
The road to happiness lies there:
Why think or speak of it as hard?

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)