

Selfishness

Search history, my boy, and see
What petty selfishness has done.
Find if you can one victory
That little minds have ever won.
There is no record there to read
Of men who fought for self alone,
No instance of a single deed
Splendor they may proudly own.

Through all life's story you will find
The miser—with his hoarded gold—
A hermit, dreary and unkind,
An outcast from the human fold.
Men hold him up to view with scorn,
A creature by his wealth enslaved,
A spirit craven and forlorn,
Doomed by the money he has saved.

No man was ever truly great
Who sought to serve himself alone,
Who put himself above the state,
Above the friends about him thrown.
No man was ever truly glad
Who risked his joy on hoarded pelf,
And gave of nothing that he had
Through fear of needing it himself.

For selfishness is wintry cold,
And bitter are its joys at last,
The very charms it tries to hold,
With woes are quickly overcast.
And only he shall gladly live,
And bravely die when God shall call,
Who gathers but that he may give,
And with his fellows shares his all.

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)