



*The
Ball of the Woods*

AN EDGAR GUEST COLLECTION

THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL CURRICULUM

Chapter 1

An Introduction

It's wonderful when poems bring you delight as you read them. It's wonderful when poems fill your mind with beautiful images and messages. Nevertheless, it is *astounding* when a poem stays with you for years to come and changes the way you act and think.

This is exactly how poems by Edgar Guest have affected my own life. For example, years after reading a poem by Edgar Guest, I had a newborn baby that cried for hours a day and hardly slept at night. As I exhaustedly took care of my baby, lines from Edgar Guest's poem "Baby Feet" kept flooding my mind:

Tell me, what is half so sweet
As a baby's tiny feet

Those lines repeatedly changed my mood from frustration to appreciation as I cared for my precious baby.

In addition, I often hear lines from Edgar Guest's poem "Silent" when I see flowers or magnificent trees, and my mind is turned to gratitude and deeper joy.

Too well I know what accident
And chance and force disclose
To think blind fury could invent
The beauty of a rose.

I'm not alone in being changed by Edgar Guest's poetry. ESPN.com explains how Guest's poetry affected football player Kordell Stewart, who had a successful 11-year NFL career:

In *Truth*, Stewart's 2016 autobiography, he describes a particularly ugly scene after a game in Pittsburgh. "As I walked off the field and into the tunnel," he wrote,

“someone threw a cup full of beer at my head that gushed into my eyes. I looked up. A man looked me dead in the eyes and yelled ‘[a derogatory term]!’” Stewart walked away. Somewhere in the back of his mind was the Edgar Albert Guest poem “See It Through.” He had memorized it growing up and took comfort in the words “You may fail, but you may conquer/See it through!”¹

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!

Kordell Stewart and I join millions of people who have been influenced by Guest in emphatic

1. Steve Wulf, “Who’s Got Next? The Four Athletes Who Appeared on Our First Cover,” September 10, 2019, https://www.espn.com/espn/story/_/id/27500438/got-next-four-athletes-appeared-our-first-cover.

ways. His sagacious gift with words and his understanding of how to connect to the cares and joys of everyday people gave him the name the People’s Poet and made him one of the most successful poetry writers in modern history, even though other poets of his day didn’t take his poetry seriously.

Truly one of the most prolific poets of all time, Guest wrote well over 11,000 poems during his lifetime. His works appeared daily in hundreds of newspapers across America, making his name known in most homes in the country.

The following quotes give insight into the impact of Guest’s poetry:

“Such poetry as that of Edgar A. Guest has the ring of genuineness, for it is based on

a deep, abiding faith in human nature—an essential goodness and loveliness. It is this human quality in his verse that has made Mr. Guest one of the favorite poets of America.” —R. Marshall²

“He is both wise and witty; he is the best serum I know against pessimistic philosophy, indigestion, and bad temper.” —Rev. Dr. Cavanaugh, President of the University of Notre Dame³

“He had what every person must have who goes far in the education of his fellow-man—enthusiasm, enthusiasm that no worry, no interruption, or disquieting news can take the edge from.” —Edward H. Cotton⁴

2. R. Marshall, *Edgar Guest: A Biographical Sketch* (n.p.: Reilly & Lee, 1920).

3. As quoted in Royce Howes and John S. Knight, *Edgar A. Guest: A Biography* (n.p.: Literary Licensing, 2011).

4. Edward H. Cotton, “Edgar A. Guest, the Fireside Poet,” *The Christian Register*, December 7, 1922, 1161–62.

Chapter 6

Poems about Home

*L*ike many of you reading this book, I didn't have a picture-perfect home during my childhood, although there were a tremendous number of blessings to be thankful for. Edgar Guest's poems often portray ideal homes, and that is, perhaps, one reason I love his poems so much—they are filled with the kind of hope and goodness that we all strive for in our homes.

A Song

Rough be the road and long,
Steep be the hills ahead,
Grant that my faith be strong,

Fearlessly let me tread.
After the day's hard test
Home—with its peaceful rest.

Heavy my burdens be,
Let me not falter though,
Soon I shall come to see
Home, where the roses grow.
Home, where the swallows nest,
Home, with its peaceful rest.

This grant to me at last,
When I have ceased to roam,
When all my cares are past,
I may be welcomed home,
Home, where is none distressed,
Home, with its peaceful rest.

The Path to Home

There's the mother at the doorway, and the children at the gate,
And the little parlor windows with the curtains white and straight.
There are shaggy asters blooming in the bed that lines the fence,
And the simplest of the blossoms seems of mighty consequence.
Oh, there isn't any mansion underneath God's starry dome
That can rest a weary pilgrim like the little place called home.

Men have sought for gold and silver; men have dreamed at night of fame;
In the heat of youth they've struggled for achievement's honored name;
But the selfish crowns are tinsel, and their shining jewels paste,
And the wine of pomp and glory soon grows bitter to the taste.
For there's never any laughter howsoever far you roam,
Like the laughter of the loved ones in the happiness of home.





Results and Roses

The man who wants a garden fair,
Or small or very big,
With flowers growing here and there,
Must bend his back and dig.

The things are mighty few on earth
That wishes can attain.
Whate'er we want of any worth
We've got to work to gain.

It matters not what goal you seek
Its secret here reposes:
You've got to dig from week to week
To get Results or Roses.



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