

Copy Paper

I start the day with paper white,
And put it in my old machine,
And wonder whether, as I write
The night will find my copy clean.
Will this day's finished task be fair
Or full of blemishes and flaws?
Will what my hands have written there
Deserve derision or applause?

Have I put down a single thing
That better would have been unwrit?
Have I let pass a jibe or fling
With venom at the point of it?
This paper spotless came to me,
How will it leave my little den?
What will the printer's judgment be?
And what will say my fellow men?

'Tis mine to do with as I will.
I view the finished work, and pause;
Here is a thought that I must kill,
And here a verse that's full of flaws.
And here's a line that I'd regret
If ever I should let it go,
The paper now is blurred, and yet
I much prefer to have it so.

Tomorrow it will be too late,
Whatever is must stand for aye;
If I have penned a line in hate
That stays the record for today.
And whether it be good or bad
I cannot change one single line;
My chance to be of worth I've had,
And every blemish there is mine.

My life is like the paper sheet
On which I toil from day to day,
And there the bitter and the sweet
Are written down to last for aye.
And, oh, I hope, when comes the call
That takes me from this earthly scene,
The God above who judges all
Will find my copy fairly clean.

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)