

The Test

You can brag about the famous men you know;
You may boast about the great men you have met,
Parsons, eloquent and wise; stars in histrionic skies;
Millionaires and navy admirals, and yet
Fame and power and wealth and glory vanish fast;
They are lusters that were never made to stick,
And the friends worth-while and true, are the happy smiling few
Who come to call upon you when you're sick.

You may think it very fine to know the great;
You may glory in some leader's words of praise;
You may tell with eyes aglow of the public men you know,
But the true friends seldom travel glory's ways,
And the day you're lying ill, lonely, pale and keeping still,
With a fevered pulse, that's beating double quick,
Then it is you must depend on the old-familiar friend
To come to call upon you when you're sick.

It is pleasing to receive a great man's nod,
And it's good to know the big men of the land,
But the test of friendship true, isn't merely: 'Howdy-do?'
And a willingness to shake you by the hand.
If you want to know the friends who love you best,
And the faithful from the doubtful you would pick,
It is not a mighty task; of yourself you've but to ask:
'Does he come to call upon me when I'm sick?'

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)