

## Understanding

When I was young and frivolous and never stopped to think,  
When I was always doing wrong, or just upon the brink;  
When I was just a lad of seven and eight and nine and ten,  
It seemed to me that every day I got in trouble then,  
And strangers used to shake their heads and say I was no good,  
But father always stuck to me — it seems he understood.

I used to have to go to him 'most every night and say  
The dreadful things that I had done to worry folks that day.  
I know I didn't mean to be a turmoil round the place,  
And with the women folks about forever in disgrace ;  
To do the way they said I should, I tried the best I could,  
But though they scolded me a lot — my father understood.

He never seemed to think it queer that I should risk my bones,  
Or fight with other boys at times, or pelt a cat with stones;  
An' when I'd break a window pane, It used to make him sad,  
But though the neighbors said I was, he never thought me bad;  
He never whipped me, as they used to say to me he should;  
That boys can't always do what's right — it seemed he understood.

Now there's that little chap of mine, just full of life and fun,  
Comes up to me with solemn face to tell the bad he's done.  
It's natural for any boy to be a roguish elf,  
He hasn't time to stop and think and figure for himself,  
And though the women folks insist that I should take a hand,  
They've never been a boy themselves, and they don't understand.

Someday I've got to go up there, and make a sad report  
And tell the Father of us all where I have fallen short;  
And there will be a lot of wrong I never meant to do,  
A lot of smudges on my sheet that He will have to view.  
And little chance for heavenly bliss, up there, will I command,  
Unless the Father smiles and says: ' My boy, I understand.'

Edgar Albert Guest (1881 – 1959)