

Taking His Place

He's doing double duty now;
Time's silver gleams upon his brow,
And there are lines upon his face
Which only passing years can trace.
And yet he's turned back many a page
Long written in the book of age,
For since their boy has marched away,
This kindly father, growing gray,
Is doing for the mother true
The many things the boy would do.

Just as the son came home each night
With youthful step and eyes alight,
So he returns, and with a shout
Of greeting puts her grief to rout.
He says that she shall never miss
The pleasure of that evening kiss,
And with strong arms and manner brave
He simulates the hug he gave,
And loves her, when the day is done,
Both as a husband and a son.

His laugh has caught a clearer ring;
His step has claimed the old-time swing,
And though his absence hurts him, too,
The bravest thing that he can do
Is just to try to take his place
And keep the smiles on mother's face.
So, merrily he jests at night—
Tells her with all a boy's delight
Of what has happened in the town,
And thus keeps melancholy down.

Her letters breathe of hope and cheer;
No note of gloom she sends from here,
And as her husband reads at night
The many messages she writes,
He chuckles o'er the closing line.
She's failed his secret to divine—
'When you get home,' she tells the lad,
'You'll scarcely know your doting dad;
Although his hair is turning gray,
He seems more like a boy each day.'

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)