

Too Big A Price

They say my boy is bad,' she said to me,
A tired old woman, thin and very frail.
'They caught him robbing railroad cars, an' he
Must spend from five to seven years in jail.
His Pa an' I had hoped so much for him.
He was so pretty as a little boy- '
Her eyes with tears grew very wet an' dim-
'Now nothing that we've got can give us joy!

'What is it that you own?' I questioned then.
'The house we live in,' slowly she replied,
'Two other houses worked an' slaved for, when
The boy was but a youngster at my side,
Some bonds we took the time he went to war;
I've spent my strength against the want of age-
We've always had some end to struggle for.
Now shame an' ruin smear the final page.

'His Pa has been a steady-goin' man,
Worked day an' night an' overtime as well;
He's lived an' dreamed an' sweated to his plan
To own the house an' profit should we sell;
He never drank nor played much cards at night,
He's been a worker since our wedding day,
He's lived his life to what he knows is right,
An' why should son of his now go astray?

'I've rubbed my years away on scrubbing boards,
Washed floors for women that owned less than we,
An' while they played the ladies an' the lords,
We smiled an' dreamed of happiness to be.'
'And all this time where was the boy?' said I.
'Out somewhere playin'!'- Like a rifle shot
The thought went home- 'My God!' she gave a cry,
'We paid too big a price for what we got.'

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)