

Punishment

Their childhood is so brief that we
Should hesitate to spoil their fun,
We should be very slow to see
The things that they should not have done.
For such a little while they play
Before the rough, long roads they tread,
We should be careful every day
To send no weeping child to bed.

So soon they'll women be and men,
With all the cares that grown-ups know,
We should be slow to punish, when
Their little feet in mischief go.
Our whippings should be very few,
Yes, very few, and very mild,
We should be careful what we do
In dealing with a happy child.

So few the years that are their own,
So brief the time to romp and play,
So very quickly are they grown
To face the battles of the day
That we should hesitate to mar
With punishment, however slight,
The days that oh, so precious are,
And turn to grief a child's delight.

Too soon will come the long days when
They'll often heavy-hearted be,
And they'll look back on childhood then
And think of you and think of me.
And we should have them then recall
When we are sleeping in the grave
Not how we punished children small,
But how we kissed them and forgave.

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)