

The Things They Mustn'T Touch

Been down to the art museum an' looked at a thousand things,
The bodies of ancient mummies an' the treasures of ancient kings,
An' some of the walls were lovely, but some of the things weren't much,
But all had a rail around 'em, an' all wore a sign 'Don't touch.'
Now maybe an art museum needs guards and a warning sign
An' the hands of the folks should never paw over its treasures fine;
But I noticed the rooms were chilly with all the joys they hold,
An' in spite of the lovely pictures, I'd say that the place is cold.
An' somehow I got to thinkin' of many a home I know
Which is kept like an art museum, an' merely a place for show;
They haven't railed off their treasures or posted up signs or such,
But all of the children know it—there's a lot that they mustn't touch.
It's hands off the grand piano, keep out of the finest chair,
Stay out of the stylish parlor, don't run on the shiny stair;
You may look at the velvet curtains which hang in the stately hall,
But always and ever remember, they're not to be touched at all.
'Don't touch!' for an art museum, is proper enough, I know,
But my children's feet shall scamper wherever they want to go,
And I want no rare possessions or a joy which has cost so much,
From which I must bar the children and tell them they 'mustn't touch.'

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)