

The Cost Of Praise

This morning came a man to me, his smile was wonderful to see,
He shook my hand and doffed his hat then promptly took a chair;
Said he, ' I read your stuff each day, and I have just dropped in to say
You have a line of humor that delightful is and rare.
My dear wife reads it through and through, my aunts and uncles like it, too,
The little children cry for it when they get out of bed,
Your column's full of common sense, your childhood verses are immense,
The equal of them, I am sure I've never, never read.

'Now, you 're a man of great renown, your name is known in every town
From Boston unto 'Frisco, from Atlanta to Duluth;
I've met some of our famous men, I wish to grasp your hand again;
Don't think I flatter you, O no, I 'm telling you the truth.
'I let him once more take my hand, the while I felt my chest expand,
My head began to bulge until I couldn't wear my hat;
'Ah me,' I sighed, ' through all my days, I've never heard such words of praise,
I wish I knew a hundred men who 'd talk to me like that.'

' And now,' said he, ' ere I forget, I want to show a Balzac set
That Jolliers have printed just especially for you;
There are but twenty-six of these, observe this small prospectus, please,
This is the finest work that any publisher can do.
For you we make this sacrifice, just sixty dollars is the price,
Five dollars down and three a month—you will not miss the ' mon."
I signed away my salary. Henceforth, when men come praising me
I 'm going to grab my hat and coat and exit on the run.

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)