The Workhouse Door - song lyrics

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THE WORKHOUSE DOOR.
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Words and Music by Felix McGlennon.

Dimly the lights of the city are gleaming,
Drear is the night and so cold:
Grimly the walls of the workhouse are frowning,
Frowning on mis'ry untold.
Close to Its portals a crowd's eager waiting,
Hungry and shiv'ring and pale;
Hark to the cry of the homeless and starving,
Hark to the old soldier's tale:

Refrain.
"I was strong and sturdy in the days gone by,
When the call 'to arms' came, to the front did fly;
For my country fought, nor asked the reason why,
Many a brave heart sank to rise no more.
Man to man we faced them as they stood at bay,
Carried all before us with a loud 'Hurray!'
How does it reward us when we're old and gray?
Sends us to the workhouse door."

Gaze on that urchin, he's houseless and homeless,
Scarcely a rag on his form,
Trembling and crouching against the grim doorway,
Murmurs "I wish I were warm.
What is the use of a poor little kiddy
Trying to earn just a bite?
Bah, I'll turn thief, for I can't die with hunger,
Here goes that man's watch, see, he's tight."

Refrain.
Stealthily he's creeping, see his outstretched hand,
"I shall have that watch now-doesn't It look grand?"
Hark! an angel voice la whispering to him, "Stand!
Would you be a thief, whom all abhor?"
'Tis his mother's voice comes whisp'ring from the grave.
"Never be a thief, Tom, never be a knave."
"Forgive met mother, I was tempted; I'll be brave,
Tho' going to the workhouse door."

See that old couple, so gray and so feeble,
Clinging in life's sad decay,
Soothing each other in sorrow and troubles
'Till death shall call them away.
Once he was strong, ah. but age overtook him;
He'd worked like a slave night and day.
"Why did he not save?" with a sneer asks a passer.
"What! save on a laborer's pay?"

Refrain.
See, the wife is clinging by her husband's side;
"Four brave sons we've reared, they were our hope and pride;
Our country wanted soldiers; in her cause they died-
They were gallant heroes to the core.
Dreams of glory fired them and they joined the fray,
Left as broken hearted, left us here to pray.
They for their country died, yet we must wend our way
Together to the workhouse door."