

A Preference

I'd rather be considered dull
Than use my brain denouncing things;
I'd rather not be critical
And utter words that carry stings.
I'd rather never speak at all
Than speak as one who seems to feel
That other's faults, howe'er so small,
It proves him clever to reveal.

I have no wish to pose on earth
As born to judge my fellow men;
I'd rather praise them for their worth;
If failures, bid them try again.
If faulty effort I behold,
In silence, let me pass it by,
If I must leave it unextolled,
At least the toiler shall not sigh.

No reputation would I gain
For wisdom, if in gaining it
I cause some humble worker pain
And wound him by my flash of wit.
There is no cleverness in sneers,
A fool can scoff in manner pert;
Great wisdom by this test appears
In never saying things that hurt.

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)