

When You Know A Fellow

When you get to know a fellow, know his joys and know his cares,
When you've come to understand him and the burdens that he bears,
When you've learned the fight he's making and the troubles in his way,
Then you find that he is different than you thought him yesterday.
You find his faults are trivial and there's not so much to blame
In the brother that you jeered at when you only knew his name.

You are quick to see the blemish in the distant neighbor's style,
You can point to all his errors and may sneer at him the while,
And your prejudices fatten and your hates more violent grow
As you talk about the failures of the man you do not know,
But when drawn a little closer, and your hands and shoulders touch,
You find the traits you hated really don't amount to much.

When you get to know a fellow, know his every mood and whim,
You begin to find the texture of the splendid side of him;
You begin to understand him, and you cease to scoff and sneer,
For with understanding always prejudices disappear.
You begin to find his virtues and his faults you cease to tell,
For you seldom hate a fellow when you know him very well.

When next you start in sneering and your phrases turn to blame,
Know more of him you censure than his business and his name;
For it's likely that acquaintance would your prejudice dispel
And you'd really come to like him if you knew him very well.
When you get to know a fellow and you understand his ways,
Then his faults won't really matter, for you'll find a lot to praise.

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)