

## Introduction to A.G. Gardiner

A.G. Gardiner was an, **English journalist editor and author** who lived from 1865 to 19461. He wrote essays under the alias "**Alpha of the Plough**," which are highly regarded for their wit, wisdom and social criticism. He was also the **chairman of the National Anti-Sweating League**, an advocacy group that campaigned for a minimum wage in industry.

He started his career as a reporter for the Chelmsford Chronicle and the Bournemouth Directory, and later became the editor of the Daily News, a leading liberal journal of his time. He resigned from the Daily News in 1919 over a disagreement with the owner George Cadbury, who was also the subject of one of his biographies.

He wrote several books of essays and sketches, such as Prophets, Priests, and Kings (1908), Pillars of Society (1913), Pebbles on the Shore (1916), Leaves in the Wind (1923), and Many Furrows (1924). He also wrote biographies of Sir William Harcourt, Lord Morley, and Lord Rosebery.

He was known for his keen observation of human nature, his gentle humour, and his liberal views on social issues. He was admired by many readers and writers, such as George Orwell, who praised his "good sense" and "generosity of mind"

## Overview of his essay "On Saying Please"

The essay is about the importance of politeness and good manners in everyday life. The author gives an example of a lift attendant who threw a passenger out of his lift because the passenger did not say "please" when asking to be taken to the top floor. The author argues that the lift attendant was wrong to use violence, but he also sympathizes with his resentment of the passenger's rudeness.

The author then explains that the law cannot punish rude behaviour, because it is not a crime. However, he says that rude behaviour can cause a lot of harm and unhappiness in society, because it hurts people's feelings and provokes anger and resentment. He says that good manners are essential for maintaining a civilized and harmonious social life.

The author also points out that good manners are not only a matter of words, but also of tone, expression, and gesture. He says that a polite word can be made impolite by a sneer or a frown, and vice versa. He also says that good manners are not only a duty, but also a pleasure, because they make people feel good and create a friendly atmosphere.

The author concludes by saying that the best way to deal with rude people is to be excessively polite to them, because this will either shame them or annoy them more than violence. He says that this is the sweetest revenge one can take on them. He also says that good manners are contagious, and if we are polite to others, they will be polite to us. He urges us to cultivate good manners as a habit and a virtue.

## The Power and Politeness in the essay "on saying please"

This essay explores **the issue of politeness** as an extremely important and indispensable feature of **civil society**. Gardiner argues that politeness is that which keeps the social life of civilised man well oiled and friction-free. He illustrates this point by narrating an incident of a lift attendant who threw a passenger out of his lift for not saying "please" when asking to be taken to the top floor. Gardiner then discusses how the law cannot enforce good manners, but only protect people from physical

harm or material loss. He also suggests that the best way to deal with rude people is to be excessively polite towards them, as this will make them feel ashamed or embarrassed. Gardiner concludes by saying that good manners are a sign of good temper, which is essential for a happy and harmonious life.

## Empathy and Consideration

- **GARDINER'S EMPHASIS ON UNDERSTANDING OTHERS' PERSPECTIVES AND FEELINGS:** Gardiner shows empathy for both the liftman and the passenger, as he tries to explain their motives and reactions. He also appeals to the reader's empathy by asking them to imagine how they would feel in similar situations. He suggests that empathy is the basis of good manners, as it helps us to respect and appreciate others.
- **THE CONNECTION BETWEEN POLITENESS AND EMPATHY:** Gardiner argues that politeness is not just a matter of following rules or conventions, but a way of expressing empathy and consideration for others. He says that polite words like "please" and "thank you" are the "small change" we pay on our journey through life, as they show that we value and acknowledge the services and kindnesses of others. He also says that politeness is contagious, as it creates a pleasant atmosphere and encourages others to be polite in return.
- **IMPORTANCE OF CONSIDERING THE NEEDS AND FEELINGS OF OTHERS:** Gardiner illustrates how rude and uncivil behaviour can hurt the feelings of others and create conflict and resentment. He gives examples of how a rude passenger can spoil the mood of a liftman, or how a careless conductor can trample on a passenger's toe. He also warns that rude behaviour can have serious consequences, such as losing one's job or getting into legal trouble. He advises that the best way to deal with rude people is to be excessively polite towards them, as this will make them feel ashamed or embarrassed of their own behaviour. He also urges the reader to cultivate a good temper, which is essential for a happy and harmonious life.

## The Art "saying please"

- **GARDINER'S EXPLORATION OF THE DIFFERENT WAYS TO EXPRESS POLITENESS:** Gardiner shows that politeness is not limited to the word "please", but can be expressed in various ways depending on the context and culture. He gives examples of how different languages and regions have different ways of saying "please", such as "if you please", "be so kind", "by your leave", etc. He also explains how politeness can be implied by using indirect or conditional forms, such as "would you mind", "could you possibly", "may I ask", etc.
- **BEYOND MERE WORDS: THE ROLE OF TONE, BODY LANGUAGE, AND GENUINE INTENTION:** Gardiner argues that politeness is not just a matter of using the right words, but also of using the right tone, body language, and genuine intention. He says that politeness depends on the tone of one's voice, the cast of one's lips, the expression on one's face, and such things that the law can never regulate. He also says that politeness requires sincerity and respect, and that it cannot be faked or forced. He warns that polite words can be rendered meaningless or even offensive by a rude or insincere tone or gesture.
- **EXAMPLES OF ALTERNATIVE PHRASES AND GESTURES THAT CONVEY POLITENESS:** Gardiner provides some examples of how polite phrases and gestures can vary across different situations and cultures. He mentions how a smile, a nod, a bow, a handshake, or a salute can convey politeness in different ways. He also mentions how some phrases can be used to express politeness in specific contexts, such as "after you", "pardon me", "excuse me", "I

beg your pardon”, etc. He also suggests that one can use humour, compliments, or apologies to show politeness in certain situations.

## The Value of Small Acts

One of the main themes of Gardiner’s essay is the value of small acts of politeness in social life. He argues that saying please is not just a matter of courtesy, but also a way of showing respect and consideration for others. By using this simple word, we acknowledge the dignity and worth of the person we are addressing, and we express our gratitude for their service or cooperation. Moreover, saying please can create a positive and respectful environment, where people feel valued and appreciated. Gardiner believes that politeness can have a cumulative effect on individuals and society, as it can foster good relations, prevent conflicts, and promote harmony. He suggests that if everyone were to say please more often, the world would be a better place to live in.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Gardiner’s essay highlights the value of politeness and good manners in social life. He shows how a simple word like “please” can make a difference in the way we interact with others and how it can prevent conflicts and violence. He also illustrates how bad manners and bad tempers are infectious and can spoil the mood of everyone around. He suggests that the best way to deal with rude people is to be excessively polite to them and make them feel ashamed of their behaviour. He believes that politeness is not only a moral duty but also a social necessity that keeps the society civilised and harmonious.