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CHAPTER

A Fellow-Traveller

A. G. Gardiner (1865-1946)

➔ About the Author

A. G. Gardiner, a distinguished journalist and an eminent essay writer, was born in 1865. As a journalist, he worked and edited 'The Daily News' for 17 years in London. He wrote several volumes of essays under the pen name of 'Alpha of the Plough'. His prominent works are, 'Priests and Kings', 'Pebbles on the Shore' and 'Leaves in Wind'. He died in 1946 but he will be remembered forever through his unique writings.



➔ About the Lesson

The lesson — '*A Fellow-Traveller*' has been selected from '*Leaves In Wind*'. It is a fine specimen of the personal essay. The author here describes how he develops a feeling of affection for a mosquito regarding him as a fellow traveller and a fellow-mortal.



I do not know which of us got into the carriage first. Indeed, I did not know he was in the carriage at all for some time. It was the last train from London to a Midland town—a stopping train, an infinitely leisurely train, one of those trains which give you an understanding of eternity. It was tolerably full when it started, but as we stopped at the suburban stations, the travellers alighted in ones and twos, and by the time we had left the outer ring of London behind, I was alone—or rather, I thought, I was alone.

There is a pleasant sense of freedom about being alone in a carriage that is jolting noisily through the night. It is liberty and unrestraint in a very agreeable form. You can do anything you like. You can talk to yourself as loud as you please and no one will hear you. You can have that argument out with Jones and role him triumphantly in the dust without fear of a counterstroke. You can stand on your head and no one will see you. You can sing, or dance a two-step, or practise of golf stroke, or play marbles on the floor, without let or hindrance. You can open the window or shut it without provoking a protest. You can open both windows or shut both. Indeed you can go on opening them and shutting them as a sort of festival of freedom. You can have any corner you choose and try all of them in turn. You can lie at full length on the cushions and enjoy the luxury of breaking the regulations and possibly the heart of D.O.R.A. herself. Only D.O.R.A. will not know that her heart is broken. You have escaped even D.O.R.A.

On this night, I did not do any of these things. They did not happen to occur to me. What I did, was much more ordinary. When the last of my fellow-passengers had gone, I put down my paper, stretched my arms and my legs, stood up and looked out of the window on the calm summer night through which I was journeying, noting the pale reminiscence of day that still lingered in the northern sky; crossed the carriage and looked out of the other window; lit a cigarette, sat down, and began to read again. It was then that I became aware of my fellow-traveller. He came and sat on my nose.....He was one of those wingy, nippy, intrepid insects that we call, vaguely, mosquitoes. I flicked him off my nose, and he made a tour of the compartment, investigated its three dimensions, visited each window, fluttered round the light, decided that there was nothing so interesting as that large animal in the corner, came and had a look at my neck.

I flicked him off again. He skipped away, took another jaunt round the compartment, returned and seated himself impudently on the back of my hand. It is enough, I said: magnanimity has its limits. Twice you have been warned that I am someone in particular, that my august person resents the tickling impertinence of strangers. I assume the black cap. I condemn you to death. Justice demands it, and the court awards it. The counts against you are many. You are a vagrant, you are a public nuisance, you are travelling without a ticket; you have no meat coupon. For these and many other misdemeanours, you are about to die. I struck a swift, lethal blow with my right hand. He dodged the attack with an insolent ease that humiliated me. My personal vanity was aroused. I lunged at him with my hand, with my paper; I jumped on the seat and pursued him round the lamp; I adopted tactics of feline cunning, waiting till he had alighted, approaching with a horrible stealthiness, striking with a sudden and terrible swiftness.

It was all in vain. He played with me, openly and ostentatiously, like a skilful matador finessing round an infuriated bull. It was obvious that he was enjoying himself, that it was for this that he had disturbed my repose. He wanted a little sport, and what sport like being chased by this huge, lumbering windmill of a creature, who tasted so good and seemed so helpless and so stupid? I began to enter into the spirit of the fellow. He was no longer a mere insect. He was developing into a personality, an intelligence that challenged the possession of this compartment with me on equal terms. I felt my heart warming towards him and the sense of superiority fading. How could I feel superior to a creature who was so manifestly my master in the only competition in which we had ever engaged? Why not be magnanimous again? Magnanimity and mercy were the noblest attributes of man. In the exercise of these high qualities, I could recover my prestige. At present, I was a ridiculous figure, a thing for laughter and derision. By being merciful, I could reassert the moral dignity of man and go back to my corner with honour. I withdraw the sentence of death, I said, returning to my seat. I cannot kill you, but I can relieve you. I do it.

I took up my paper and he came and sat on it. Foolish fellow, I said, you have delivered yourself into my hands. I have but to give this respectable weekly organ of opinion a smack on both the covers and you are a corpse, neatly sandwiched between an article on "Peace Traps" and another on "The Modesty of Mr. Hughes." But I shall not do it. I have relieved you, and I will satisfy you that when this large animal says a thing, he means it. Moreover, I no longer desire to kill you. Through knowing you better,

I have come to feel—shall I say?—a sort of affection for you. I fancy that St. Francis would have called you "little brother." I cannot go so far as that in Christian charity and civility. But I recognize a more distant relationship. Fortune has made us fellow-travellers on this summer night. I have interested you and you have entertained me. The obligation is mutual and it is founded on the fundamental fact that we are fellow-mortals. The miracle of life is ours in common and its mystery too. I suppose, you don't know anything about your journey. I am not sure that I know much about mine. We are really, when you come to think of it, a good deal alike—just apparitions that are and then are not, coming out of the night into the lighted carriage, fluttering about the lamp for a while and going out into the night again. Perhaps.....

"Going on to-night, sir?" said a voice at the window. It was a friendly porter, giving me a hint that this was my station. I thanked him and said, I must have been dozing. And seizing my hat and stick, I went out into the cool summer night. As I closed the door of the compartment, I saw my fellow-traveller fluttering round the lamp.....

||Glossary||

get into	— entered (प्रवेश किया)
infinitely leisurely train	— a very slow-moving train (मन्द गति से चलने वाली ट्रेन)
understanding of eternity	— an idea of endless time (अन्तहीन समय का विचार)
tolerably	— enough (पर्याप्त)
counterstroke	— attack against attack (आक्रमण-प्रत्याक्रमण)
unrestraint	— freedom (स्वतन्त्रता)
triumphantly	— victoriously (विजयी)
provoking	— exciting (उत्तेजित)
regulations	— rules (नियम)
D.O.R.A.	— Defence of Realm Act in force in England during the Great war of 1914-1918 (द्वितीय विश्वयुद्ध के दौरान इंग्लैण्ड में क्षेत्र रक्षा कानून प्रभावी हुआ)
reminiscence	— memory (स्मृति)
lingered	— stayed (ठहरी हुई)
intrepid	— bold (निडर)
vaguely	— not clearly (अस्पष्ट रूप से)
investigated	— inspected (जाँच करना)
skipped	— leaped over (उछल गया)
impudently	— rudely (धृष्टतापूर्वक)
magnanimity	— generosity (उदारता, सहिष्णुता)
august	— majestic (शाही, राजसी)

impertinence	— disrespect (बेहूदगी, बदतमीजी)
I assume the black cap	— I became a judge (मैं जज बन गया)
vagrant	— vagabond (आवाग, घुमक्कड़)
meat coupon	— a sort of ration card used for buying meat, sugar etc. (द्वितीय विश्वयुद्ध के दौरान इंग्लैंड में प्रचलित एक प्रकार का राशन कार्ड जिसका प्रयोग मांस, चीनी आदि खरीदने में होता था)
misdemeanours	— unlawful acts (अवैधानिक कार्य)
dodged	— cunningly avoided (धूर्ततापूर्वक मना करना)
insolent	— insulting (अपमानजनक)
humiliated	— insulted (अपमानित किया)
vanity	— pride (गर्व)
feline cunning	— cat like cleverness (बिल्ली की तरह चालाक)
horrible	— fearful (भयपूर्ण)
ostentatiously	— for show (दिखावे के लिए)
matador	— a man whose task is to kill the bull in the sport of bull fighting (बुल फाइटिंग खेल में साँड को मार डालने वाला व्यक्ति)
finessing	— artful way of dealing with a situation (कलात्मक तरीके से परिस्थिति का सामना करना)
infuriated	— made very angry (क्रोधित करना)
repose	— rest (आराम, शान्ति)
lumbering	— heavy and clumsy (भारी भरकम)
manifestly	— clearly (खुलकर, स्पष्ट रूप से)
reassert	— to demand again (फिर से माँगना)
reprieve	— postpone the punishment (सजा स्थगित करना)
ridiculous	— absurd (उपहासपूर्ण फूहड़)
derision	— fun (उपहास)
fancy	— suppose (मानना)
mutual	— shared (परस्पर, आपस का)
apparitions	— the spirit of a dead person (प्रेतात्मा का आभास)
St. Francis	— a Christian Saint who taught people to love all the creatures of the earth (एक ईसाई सन्त जिन्होंने सभी जीवों से प्यार करने का पाठ पढ़ाया)
a good deal alike	— very much similar (एक जैसा)
seizing	— holding (पकड़े रहना)

||Exercise||

➡ Passages for Explanation :

Explain with reference to the context of the following passages :

- (a) It is enough, I said awards it.
- (b) It is all in vain so stupid.
- (c) The obligation is mutual about mine.
- Or** The miracle of life is much about mine.
- (d) We are really, perhaps.
- (e) At present, I was I do it.
- (f) Fortune has made night again.
- (g) He played with...spirit of the fellow.
- (h) I flicked him off.....has its limits.
- (i) My personal vanity.....terrible swiftness.
- (j) How could I feel my prestige.
- (k)He was one of.....at my neck.
- (l) I do not know.....of eternity.
- (m) You can open the window escaped even D.O.R.A.
- (n) I assume the black cap about to die.
- (o) But I shall not you little brother.

➡ Short Answer Type Questions :

Answer the following questions in not more than 30 words each :

- (i) Give a brief description of the train, Mr. A. G. Gardiner was travelling by.
- (ii) What is according to A. G. Gardiner, the pleasant sense of freedom, about being alone in a compartment?
- (iii) What can one do freely while travelling alone in a carriage of a night train, according to A. G. Gardiner ?
- (iv) What does the abbreviation D.O.R.A. stand for ?
- (v) What did the writer do while travelling alone in the carriage ?
- (vi) When did the author become aware of his fellow-traveller?
- (vii) What did the author do when the fellow-traveller came and sat on his nose ?
- (viii) What were the charges against the fellow-traveller ?
- (ix) Why did the justice demand the award of death sentence ?
- (x) Why did the author feel humiliated ?
- (xi) Who was the skilful matador finessing round an infuriated bull ? Who was an infuriated bull ?
- (xii) What did the author do when he found himself so helpless and stupid against the mosquito ?
- (xiii) What relationship did the author develop with his fellow-traveller ?

- (xiv) Who was A. G. Gardiner's fellow-traveller ? When did he become aware of it ?
Or Who was A.G. Gardiner's fellow traveller? When did the author become aware of the presence of his fellow traveller in the coach?
- (xv) Why did the author decide to be magnanimous and merciful to his fellow-traveller?
- (xvi) "Magnanimity has its limits." Who said it and why?
- (xvii) When did the author, A.G. Gardiner, feel that he was not superior to the mosquito?
- (xviii) What does "breaking the regulations of D.O.R.A." mean?

➡ Vocabulary :

(a) Give the Synonyms of the following words :

(i) impudently, (ii) impertinence, (iii) august, (iv) agreeable, (v) lingered, (vi) nippy, (vii) intrepid, (viii) derision, (ix) repose, (x) manifestly.

(b) Use the following idiomatic phrases in your own words :

(i) to make one's mark, (ii) to pull up, (iii) hindrance, (iv) public nuisance, (v) all in vain.

(c) Give the Antonyms of the following words :

(i) freedom, (ii) nothing, (iii) ordinary, (iv) enough, (v) right, (vi) outer, (vii) stop, (viii) last, (ix) tolerable, (x) attack.

(d) Fill in the blanks with suitable words given below :

with, into, in, off

(i) I flicked him again.

(ii) He played me, openly.

(iii) I said, you have delivered yourself my hands.

(iv) The miracle of life is ours common and its mystery too.

(e) Fill in the blanks in the following sentences, selecting the most suitable words from those given within the brackets :

(i) I do not know which of us got into the first.

(carriage, courage, cartridge, cottage)

(ii) I can not kill you, but I can you. (replace, redress, reprieve, return)

(iii) It is liberty and unrestraint in a veryform.

(suitable, conducive, approachable, agreeable)

(iv) He played me openly. (without, after, with, in front of)

(v) Justice demands it, and the court it.

(declares, decides, awards, directs)

(vi) I felt my heart warming towards him and the sense of superiority

(increasing, coming, fading, shining)

(vii) Magnanimity and mercy were the noblest of man.

(power, glories, attributes, securities)

(vii) I began to enter into the of the fellow. (mind, ear, mouth, spirit)